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**INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

**POSSIBILITIES FOR PLAYFUL PEDAGOGY: A CREATIVE ARTS
TEACHER-EDUCATOR'S SELF-STUDY**

by

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DECLARATION

I, Nosipho Precious Bele, declare that:

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

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Prof Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan

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Dr Bridget Campbell

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DEDICATION

In honour of my grandparents, Zenzele 'Ju' Raymond Bele and Thandiwe Leticia Nozisali.

I dedicate this thesis to myself. This doctoral journey was a rollercoaster that affected both my personal and professional lives. During the execution of this study, I have crawled, walked, and now I run. WENZE KAHLE SIPHO SIKAMAM'SHOZI.

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ABSTRACT

I am an emerging female academic at the School of Education in a research-intensive university in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. When I assumed the teacher-educator role, I assumed I would excel due to my prior experience as a freelance artist and highschool teacher. However, I had never reflected on the skills and understanding needed to teach preservice teachers about teaching. I soon realised that my experience was insufficient for my current role. Suddenly, *how* I taught Creative Arts became as crucial as *what* I taught. I became motivated to focus this research on teaching Creative Arts through playful pedagogy due to self-reflection and observation of the preservice teachers I taught. What I noticed was that they lacked demonstration in their Creative Arts teaching. This observation inspired me to improve my teaching practice and learn about integrating playful pedagogy into my practice. The theoretical perspective of *becoming* guided this doctoral study, and assisted me in weaving the pedagogical threads of my becoming a teacher-educator. The research questions necessitated transparent reflections through memory-work and arts-based methods. In my initial reflections, I identified the salient idea of play and how it had been evident throughout my life. This approach provoked the concept of teaching through playful pedagogy. I explored the impact of play on my life and from my memories, identified ways in which I could teach more effectively. I also sought to understand the possibilities of playful pedagogy in my teaching practice, and learnt about practical ways of integrating playful pedagogy into my practice. My learnings translated into lessons that I integrated into my teaching practice; these benefitted me as a teacher-educator, the students I taught and will continue to teach and, by extension, the learners they will teach one day. This thesis details the methodological and theoretical explorations of my learning and experiences as they were employed to support my doctoral journey. In this quest to integrate playful pedagogy into my teaching practice, my most valuable highlight was the self-discovery and confidence I gained through the process of reimagining and becoming a teacher-educator.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

The following conference papers and research articles and grant awards have emanated from this doctoral study:

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Mbatha, N. (2018, October). *Sowing the seeds of playful pedagogy in Creative Arts: A teacher-educator's self-study*. [Paper presentation], South African Education Research Association (SAERA), Pretoria.

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CHAPTER ONE: ENTANGLED KNOWLEDGE



Figure 1: 'Entangled Knowledge'

Source: Author

1.1 Introduction

I am an emerging female academic at the School of Education in a research-intensive university in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. I come from a theatre and film performance background where I worked as a freelance artist. While being a freelance artist, I also worked as a school teacher and taught the subjects Dramatic Arts and Creative Arts for three years. When I joined the university as a Creative Arts teacher-educator, I was introduced to the importance of research in academia and registered for this doctoral study as I was already in possession of a Master's degree. I was introduced to reflexivity as a crucial component of advanced research and engaged with different sources of literature and various peers on campus to develop my doctoral proposal. I developed an interest in reflexive practice as I found it enriching in my teaching and research practices. I discovered that self-reflexive research engaged researchers to study and reflect on themselves and their practice so that they could ultimately improve themselves and their teaching and be equipped to conduct in-depth research on a phenomenon of interest (Dinkleman, 2010; Russell, 1997; Samaras, 2011).

Figure 1, which I titled *Entangled Knowledge*, is a self-drawn picture which depicts my intellectual understanding of research at the genesis of this study. After entering academia as an emerging academic, I quickly realised there was much I did not know about the space, the people, and the organizational functioning of the institution where I found myself. I had a vague idea about academia but I could not comprehensively articulate this understanding. Drawing *Entangled knowledge* was a way to express the state I was in—not only in terms of my doctoral research, but also in my efforts to express my understanding of the academy, my role in it and, more specifically, my doctoral research. Therefore, this drawing represents multiple perspectives and drawing it at the proposal development stage helped pave the way for this research.

1.2 Focus and Purpose of the study

I began this study as a novice teacher who pursued my *becoming* a better teacher-educator. There is the erroneous assumption that the transition from teacher to teacher-educator happens with ease and that the skills and knowledge of being a teacher can be easily transferred into the new professional identity of teacher-educator (Williams, Ritter, & Bullock, 2012). Therefore, when I assumed the role of teacher-educator, I thought it would be a smooth transition as I had been doing well as a teacher in a high (or secondary) school (Korthagen et al., 2005). However, I had never reflected on the skills and understanding I would need to teach *about* teaching to preservice teachers, and my high school teaching experience was insufficient for the task ahead of me (Bullock & Ritter, 2011). Suddenly, the way I taught Creative Arts became as crucial as my ability to teach the subject knowledge. This reality was daunting, but one day I had an epiphany and understood that *how* I taught was just as important as *what* I taught. This epiphany left me with the complex task of unravelling how to go about doing this, and led me to draw *Entangled knowledge* which reflects my dilemma as a teacher-educator who attempted to deconstruct the complexity of learning to teach while teaching about teaching to preservice teachers as an emerging teacher-educator.

Murray and Male (2005) emphasize that being a teacher-educator demands different types of knowledge and understanding; yet, there is still much to learn about how teacher-educators develop their pedagogies as they integrate knowledge and skills and learn their new role (Bullock & Ritter, 2011). Furthermore, existing research on the lived experiences of novice teacher-educators who transitioned from teacher to teacher-educators shows that there is some difficulty in the transitioning process (Williams et al., 2012). This doctoral study was my way

of smoothing this transition from teacher to teacher-educator as it allowed me to examine my understanding of my role and refining it to improve my teaching practice and the learning experiences of the students I taught, and will teach in the future.

1.3 Rationale

When I became a teacher-educator, assessing teaching practice became an integral part of my work. I got to see preservice teachers plan their lessons and teach their chosen subjects in an actual classroom with learners. As a teacher-educator in the Arts, most students I assessed taught Art subjects, which are Music, Drama, and Creative Arts as offered at the university. During my school visits, I became aware that most preservice teachers did not physically engage with the learners when explaining curriculum-based activities, and they rarely used demonstration as a teaching tool. I believe that demonstration is necessary when teaching Creative Arts subjects as they contain artistic elements that learners need to see and experience rather than be told about. Generally, the preservice teachers I observed used an authoritarian and teacher-centred approach in the classroom. As a teacher-educator who taught Art modules, this was a concern because I had expected the preservice teachers to engage physically with the learners and use demonstrations.

After teaching practice, I began to briefly discuss my concerns with some of the preservice teachers I had assessed. From these informal discussions, I discovered that some did not know how to engage physically with the teaching content. Some even mentioned that they felt silly and shy when demonstrating a physical activity that is required by the curriculum. These conversations led me to reflect on what I was teaching and how I was teaching it. I was trying to find a connection between what I did during my teaching practice and what I had observed during the school visits. This self-reflection process guided me to discover that my teaching was based on assumptions. For instance, I was assuming that either the preservice teachers would come across what I was teaching and then emulate it, or they would easily understand what I was teaching and would then do likewise. I also realised that my teaching was primarily focused on content knowledge and that I had not managed to teach my students *about* teaching.

Upon deepening my self-reflection, I became aware that I had also been very shy when I joined Drama school for my undergraduate degree. However, my training contributed to my confidence and my ability to speak in front of an audience and to be comfortable with my appearance, among other things. My time at Drama school had also made me more playful,

less shy, and more vocal as my voice had become stronger because of the voice training I had received. I had also become more comfortable in my skin because of the contemporary dance training I had received. I had to acknowledge that my time at Drama school had equipped me with artistic skills; however, I was not made aware that those skills would later be useful in my teaching profession.

To allow the reader a deeper glimpse into my rationale, I need to reflect here on my position at the time of conceptualising the study. I must acknowledge that I was unfamiliar with the training the students had received for a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) in undergraduate studies at the various universities from which they graduated. However, I was familiar with the Bachelor in Education (B.Ed.) program our university offers, and because the program caters for different teaching disciplines, it does not offer the training I received at Drama school. The performance degree I obtained prepares students for a career in the performing arts, whereas the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programs prepare students for a career in teaching. Having had the privilege to complete both a performing arts and teacher education program, I felt that I was well equipped to teach Creative Arts and other arts-based subjects by virtue of my dual training. However, my background was not sufficient for many of the students I taught. Therefore, because I was unfamiliar with the undergraduate programs that the PGCE students were exposed to, it was premature for me to make assumptions about their aptitude and competency skills regarding content and method.

Having reached this realisation, I also became aware that I was not using demonstration intentionally and effectively as a teaching method. This was a flaw in my practice that I needed to address. Although there were other reasons that emerged from my reflections, this major realisation prompted me to embark on this research journey.

1.4 Key Concepts

1.4.1 Pedagogy

Playful pedagogy is an integral concept in this doctoral thesis as it encompasses playful and artistic methods that are integrated in arts-based teaching practices. To understand this teaching approach, I researched the words ‘play’ (as discussed in Chapter ten) and ‘pedagogy’ to gain a deep understanding of approaches to teaching. Van Manen (1990) explains that ‘pedagogy’ is the art and science of teaching people by focusing on the relationship between teaching and learning. MacDonald (1990) describes pedagogy as a ‘craft’, arguing that each teacher’s pedagogy may be unique as the teacher may consciously work on his/her craft to improve it. Improving craft ultimately improves the quality of teaching and learning. I came to understand that effective pedagogy improves the educator’s teaching practice as well as students’ learning experience. When I reflected on pedagogy, I thought of it as some intertwined threads that are entangled together into one, as illustrated in Figure 1 titled *Entangled knowledge*. I identified these entangled pedagogical threads as teaching, learning, modelling, classroom management, the curriculum, assessment, and teaching methodology, which are concepts that are detangled throughout this study report.

When I pondered on these pedagogical threads as a novice teacher-educator, I realised that the fundamental importance of developing one’s pedagogy is to detangle the threads from an entangled state and then make sense of them as they merge into a woven pattern, or what I also refer to as a tapestry. This means that within entangled knowledge lies the threads of teaching and learning as well as curriculum and methodology; thus *what* knowledge is taught and *how* it is taught. It is imperative for a teacher-educator to know teaching and subject content to be able to enter the classroom with confidence. It is also important for a teacher-educator to know many different ways of delivering the content, and therefore sound knowledge of content allows the teacher-educator to choose how best to deliver it when teaching.

In the teacher education profession, a lesson can be used to “create opportunities for students of teaching to *see* into teaching” (Loughran, 2007, p. 1). The teacher-educator and the students may unpack the lesson by probing, critiquing, and reflecting on components of the lesson to better understand what goes beyond the content itself, and in this manner theory and practice are linked (Lunenbergh, Korthagen, & Swennen, 2007). As students learn about and acquire content knowledge, they are also involved in analysing the methodological choices of the

teacher-educator, and this process extends into the activity of meta-learning by preservice teachers (Loughran & Berry, 2005). Meta-learning, in my view, is a cognitive process that allows the student to learn consciously and actively about learning. This process promotes critical thinking and aims to improve students' learning quality.

Improving the quality of their learning is equally important for students at higher education level and for learners at basic education level. In writing about play and playful pedagogy, Wood and Attfield (2005) highlight the need to focus on promoting this pedagogy for learning. However, more in-depth empirical research needs to be conducted to understand teachers' experiences and to explore the impact playful pedagogy has on teaching and learning. In a South African study conducted by Smit (2015) on teachers' implementation of learning through play, the teacher participants mentioned that one of the reasons why they struggled to use play as a teaching strategy in the classroom was because they had not been introduced or exposed to such a method of teaching during their teacher training. Therefore, they found themselves limited in using play in the classroom. As alluded to earlier in my rationale, I also heard complaints about 'not knowing how to' from the preservice teachers I assessed during teaching practice. Therefore, as much as this study focused on my own improvement as a teacher-educator, it was also an opportunity for the participating preservice teachers to experience the *why*, *what*, and *how* of playful learning activities so that they could apply them in their professional practice one day.

Modelling is another important pedagogical thread that I identified in my entangled pedagogy. During the proposal development stage when I reflected on my personal lived experiences, I realised that playful pedagogy was a teaching approach I had observed in the classroom of my Creative Arts teacher-educator, Liz van Breda, when I was a preservice teacher. This aspect of my development is discussed in more depth in my discourse on memory 3, Chapter five. I did not realise the impact of her teaching until I began my doctoral study and recalled and acknowledged the magnitude of the effect of her teaching style on mine. Whether it was intentionally or not, Liz modelled her concept of playful pedagogy, and this sowed seeds within me which significantly contributed to the genesis of my doctoral research and my love for playful pedagogy. Modelling can simply be understood as patterned behaviours that are implicitly or explicitly portrayed by practitioners (Crues et al., 2008, p. 3). It may therefore be viewed as an implicit or explicit teaching method as it offers the possibility for the preservice teacher to learn through the embodied teaching of the teacher-educator. Modelling can also be

a way to change educational teaching practices in basic and higher education. Stofflett and Stoddart (1994) state that introducing new practices into teacher education could not only help preservice teachers to become socialized into new ways of thinking, but could also serve to shape (or reshape) their practices. Although Stofflett and Stoddart's (1994) research may be viewed as dated, their thoughts on introducing new practices into teacher education have remained relevant to date.

Loughran (2007) problematizes the word 'model' as it is synonymous with 'correct' and 'right'. This may leave one with the impression that playful pedagogy is the only 'right' way of teaching and that it is so excellent that it cannot be improved upon. In extension of Loughran's view, I do not believe that it is wrong to model ways of teaching, as teaching happens whether we intend it to or not. I also do not believe that there is anything wrong in trying to teach the 'right' way, but for me teaching the 'right' way does not suggest that it is the only way of teaching, which I think is where the major problem may lie. Based on this notion, it is necessary that I acknowledge in my classroom where I engage with preservice teachers that even though the method I use works and may be deemed 'right' by myself and some others, it is certainly not the only way to teach effectively. I therefore encourage my students to develop practices that are fitting for their teaching style and classroom context. I urge them that, through experience and exploration, they should develop and discover better and more innovative methods of teaching that will be synchronous with their unique teaching practice.

Berry (2008) emphasises the importance for preservice teachers to be allowed to find their own way and to embrace opportunities to develop and construct their teaching pedagogy. When preservice teachers enter the classroom, the teacher-educator must be aware that they may already have their preconceptions about teaching, and these may differ from those of the teacher-educator. Therefore, by teaching at a meta-cognitive level, the teacher-educator must utilise opportunities to explain pedagogical reasoning and, by doing so, she will allow preservice teachers to assimilate knowledge and dismantle any negative preconceptions they may have constructed. Such practices also allow for meta-learning to occur in the classroom.

1.4.2 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an approach in teaching practice that premises reflection and critical thinking to enhance learning. Reflection is a long-standing practice that always promotes development

through intentional learning. Dewey (1933) and Schon (1983) were two of the scholars who pioneered reflective thinking. Olmos-Vega et al. (2023, p. 2) succinctly explain reflexivity as “a set of continuous, collaborative, and multifaceted practices through which researchers self-consciously critique, appraise, and evaluate how their subjectivity and context influence the research processes”. One of the fundamental purposes of reflexivity is to learn. Mora (2014) expands on the purpose of reflexivity as transformation and benefit to one's practice and the larger community. Forbes (2008) describes four pillars as pivotal to reflexive learning: to know (acquisition), to do (application), to be (experience), and to live (embodiment). This means that reflexive practitioners strive to learn by virtue of their acquired knowledge by creating opportunities to apply that knowledge through experience, and they therefore ultimately embody their knowledge in practice. As such, reflexivity should not be a “navel-gazing activity” (Mora, 2018 p. 5) as a reflexive practitioner has meta-cognitive ability and can apply both intuitive and inductive reasoning (Vettraino et al., 2019). This ability in reasoning assists practitioners to identify contradicting positionalities (Finlay, 2008) as they can examine the assumptions they make about their everyday practice. Moreover, reflective practitioners are skilled in increasing their self-awareness (Dikilitaş & Mumford, 2023), which in turn enables them to notice the living contradictions (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006) within their lives and practice.

When I tried to engage in reflexivity as a novice teacher-educator, I struggled as I did not understand the depth of reflexivity beyond mere reflection. Reflection assisted me in identifying certain positives and negatives in my teaching retrospectively, but there were no steps that I could follow to shift my thinking into applied practice. Hauge (2021, p. 142) explains that “one of the problems in teaching is that teachers tend to act before they know how things are related or evolved, or [they] act from past experiences and habits without knowing they do it”. Before this study, I taught from the experiences I had gained throughout my short teaching career. These experiences were a combination of my training as a performer, student teacher, and novice high school teacher, and I believed I would manage being a teacher-educator because of my earlier (short) teaching experience. For example, I taught students who were enrolled in the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education program based on the assumption they knew what I knew as many in the group had a degree in the performance arts. Also, some of them were transitioning to education as I had done. In addition to their first degree, I assumed that, because they were seniors and no longer undergraduates, their learning would be easier. This was an erroneous mindset that lingered in my subconscious, and I soon realised that I had

to discontinue this way of thinking through reflexive habits. Examining my approach revealed my blind spots and assisted me in shifting into a more enlightened perspective that compelled me to continually ‘look into the mirror’, as proposed by Bolton (2009).

Bolton’s (2009) concept of reflexivity as a form of self-reflection mirrors Berger’s (2015) notion of turning the lens back onto oneself, emphasising the researcher’s responsibility for the research process, data, findings, and their interpretation. This aligns with my own experience of initially approaching reflexivity guided by a misguided sense of normalcy rather than an ongoing process of self-examination. However, I soon recognised this limited approach as an indication of underdeveloped reflection. Sincere reflexivity, as a practice, cultivates a deeper understanding of one’s work, fostering increased self-awareness within and beyond one’s professional practice. It likely promotes a working environment characterised by genuine and sincere approaches, mindful of the context and the people involved (Dodgson, 2019). Reflexivity can also open up new avenues of thinking and provide fresh inspiration and motivation for both one’s practice and overall outlook on life (Corlett & Mavin, 2017).

1.5 Becoming: The Theoretical Perspective that Underpinned the Study

The study was underpinned and guided by the theoretical perspective of the ontology of becoming. It is a long-standing theory that is closely related to process philosophy and can be traced back to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus who proposed it as a contradicting response to Aristotle’s concept of being. Positing the theory of being, Aristotle believed that the world is static and that nothing changes. This view was challenged by Heraclitus whose theory of becoming is significantly different. Heraclitus posited that everything in the world and in life is ever-changing, and that change and death are the only certain things. Guided by this philosophical belief, many researchers have extended this theory into different fields as it emphasizes processuality (Bergroth & Vuorinen, 2019). Some of these scholars in gender studies are Rosi Braidotti (2000, 2002), Judith Butler (1993, 1999), and Elizabeth Grosz (1994, 2011), while Margrit Shildrick (2002), Maxine Greene, and Ruth Vinz (1997) applied it in educational research, Carl Rogers in psychology, and Soren Kierkegaard (1959) in theology.

Vinz (1997, p. 139) explains that ‘becoming’ is “the continuous reformulations of self” (in this context as a teacher), while Dinkelman et al. (2006, p. 5) describe becoming as “the crafting of a teacher’s identity and practice over a period of time. Dorfler et al. (2017, p. 4) view becoming as “a systematic process of continuous self-making”. I agree with the aforementioned scholars

and understand becoming as a series of synonymous understandings, which are: becoming different, embracing change, making new meaning, connecting through new experiences, and extending perspectives based on experiences.

In the ontology of becoming, ontology and epistemology are viewed as interconnected and therefore they should not be seen as two separate units (Bergstedt, 2021). My understanding of this is that there is an intertwined relationship between the receiver of knowledge, knowledge itself, and how that knowledge affects the receiver. Therefore, knowledge cannot be viewed as sovereign and as absolute from the generator and receiver of knowledge. Becoming also considers fundamental interrelated elements that each individual is connected to continuously. The elements are self, others, and context. In becoming, self is the central and integral part of development as “the construct of the self is always changing. From moment to moment, the self may be experienced and represented in various ways” (Woolever, 2013, p. 19). Rogers (1959) accentuates the significance of the growth of explicit awareness and consciousness of the self in relation to the world beyond the self to realise a person’s potential. To achieve this, it is essential that individuals are conscious of the state of self and how they relate to those around them and the context in which they live.

Throughout this study, I refer to this theoretical perspective as I aimed to achieve self-awareness as a teacher-educator. In this process, I needed to be aware of the people around me, namely the students I taught and the colleagues I worked with, and I also had to be cognisant of the academic context in which I worked. I was guided by Ruth Vinz’s thoughts on becoming and opened myself to *unknowing* and *not-knowing*. Vinz (1998, p. 139) explains ‘unknowing’ as follows:

“[It is] giving up present understandings (positions) of our teaching to make gaps and spaces through which to (re)member ourselves as we examine the principles behind our practices as a way to articulate our theories in practice, or transform pedagogical principles and purposes into new becomings.”

She explains that *not-knowing* is to:

“...acknowledge ambiguity and uncertainty - dis-positioning from the belief that teachers should know or be able to lead or construct unambiguous journeys toward knowledge about curriculum and practice” (p. 139).

Opening up to this process brought me to a liminal state where I accepted my inexperience as a teacher-educator and an academic. I also realised that my knowledge as an academic was limited and, frankly, that I was naïve to believe that the high school teaching experience had been enough for this role. This acceptance of not-knowing opened me to unknowing certain misconceptions. I refer a lot to this in my thesis as ‘unlearning’. Woolever (2013, p. 15) describes acceptance as “the choice to be open to whatever happens to self, and trusting the ability within to be able to deal with whatever happens in a suitable way”. Rogers (1959, p. 20) views acceptance as “an act of growth in explicit awareness and being conscious of self in relation to the world beyond the self for the realisation of a person’s potential”. Accepting that I did not know allowed this learning experience to bring new meaning, to fill in emerging gaps of knowledge, and to help me accept that I did not (and will never) know everything. However, this self-admittance brought vulnerability and caused intellectual discomfort. Fortunately, the doctoral space that I entered provided a safe haven to *unknow* and to allow myself to *not-know* without self-judgement.

1.6 Objectives and Research Questions

The overarching aim of this study was to improve my teaching practice through learning about integrating playful pedagogy into my teaching as a novice teacher-educator.

The objectives were to:

1. To learn about playful pedagogy from my memories and the participants.
2. To explore how artistic methods offer possibilities for playful pedagogy in my practice as a Creative Arts teacher-educator.

To guide the study, I posed two research questions. They were:

1. What can I learn about playful pedagogy from my memories and the participants?
2. How can artistic methods offer possibilities for playful pedagogy in my practice as a Creative Arts teacher-educator?

1.7 Methodological Approach

To answer the research questions, I employed a self-study research methodology using memory-work and arts-based methods. The methodology of these approaches are detailed in Chapter two. Self-study is a self-reflexive research methodology that is used by researchers to inquire into their own experiences in order to improve their approaches and practice. Hauge (2021, p. 140) captures this approach as “...becoming better informed, gaining expanded

understanding, and [engaging in] an effort to improve oneself as a professional educator and one's own practice". An important aspect of self-study is to search for the 'gap' (distance) in and contradictions among personal theory, own beliefs, thoughts, ideas, and how own teaching is actually conducted. I understand that this means that self-study inquiry is about identifying the unlinked, entangled, and complex positionalities that one may possess in one's personal and professional identities. Through self-study methodology, one can embark on a self-premised inquiry that seeks to connect the unconnected and detangle (or untangle) and then weave (or crystalize) understandings into an understandable tapestry of and within the self.

Upon expanding on Hauge's (2021) idea of finding the gap, I identified a gap between how I taught my Creative Arts lessons and how the students I had taught were teaching theirs. I do not suggest that I wanted them to mimic or imitate me in any way. However, the nature of Creative Arts is essentially playful, therefore not seeing that element in their teaching led me to question my own teaching and what I had been exposing them to. One of the simple motivations for choosing arts-based research was that it is fun and flexible. There was room for spontaneity, learning opportunities, fluidity, and commonality as proposed by Blaisdell et al. (2018), and it seemed as if it would encourage students to participate actively in selected activities, which was not the case when I observed their lessons. Therefore, as I had resolved to position playful pedagogy as a key concept in my research, it was expedient to integrate playful activities as a data generation method. Utilising arts-based methods created an environment for my participants to share their lived experiences in playful ways, and this approach allowed even sensitive matters to be shared which relieved the participants from any emotional difficulty. Knowles and Cole (2008) encourage arts-based research, arguing that it is a useful tool to address sensitive topics (van Laren & Masinga, 2022).

1.8 Overview of the Thesis

Chapter one: The first chapter details the overall purpose of the study. This purpose is captured in the sections eliciting the introduction to as well as the rationale for and the purpose of the study. In this chapter I also share the research objectives and questions and I present the key concepts as well as information pertaining to the methodology and theoretical perspectives that were employed to conduct the study and understand the findings. I present these important aspects throughout, and the thesis therefore does not contain a categorical literature review chapter. The key concepts and references to the literature and the theoretical perspective are integrated throughout the discourse. This thesis style is not uncommon as it was adopted by

earlier doctoral scholars such as Kortjass (2020) and Phewa (2021). This chapter also provides guidance on the structure of the thesis and what each chapter entails. It provides insight and evokes expectation as it presents what can be expected in the thesis overall.

Chapter two: This chapter details the research design and I share my methodological understanding of self-study and the qualitative research approach. I explain my use of arts-based methods and memory reflections for data generation. What is important in this chapter is the detail I offer of the methodological processes and the challenges I encountered in executing the study. I also introduce the reasons for the integration of critical friends and explain their significance for my study as I share how they contributed to the methodological processes that I employed. Overall, this chapter aids in guiding the reader to understand the transparency and coherence of the research process.

Chapter three: In this chapter, I begin to share the data by exploring memories one and two. I revisit my childhood experiences of play and memories of events such as inter-township migration, township schooling, and foster homes, which all affected my experiences of play. The second memory details my undergraduate university experiences as well as my experiences of playful approaches to learning. I explain that, overall, these experiences enabled me to acknowledge the value of play from a teacher-educator lens.

Chapter four: I present the third and fourth memories in Chapter four. The third memory refers to some key experiences of being a preservice teacher, with particular focus on my encounters with playful pedagogy that was first presented to me by Liz, my Creative Arts teacher-educator. The fourth memory details my selected experiences of being a novice Creative Arts high school teacher. I share some of the teaching challenges I faced and how I mitigated them. I evaluate the lessons that I learnt based on some memorable experiences and the value of playful pedagogy.

Chapter five: In this chapter, I present the transcriptions of the first and second data generation sessions that involved my student participants. In session one we played memorable childhood games and discussed our experiences of playing these games as adults. In session two, we again recalled our childhood memories of play and discussed the effect of the childhood games we played on our lives. These sessions assisted me in understanding the participants' experiences of childhood play and the value these games had for them as adults.

Chapter six: In this chapter, I present the activities that characterised play sessions three and four. In these sessions, we began our journey of *unlearning* and *becoming* as we engaged in introspection about our abilities as Creative Arts teachers. We identified areas of improvement and reflected on how these were assisted by the standard characteristics we had set for ourselves. We also engaged in a ‘hotseat’ activity in which we shared our positive and negative experiences of teaching during teaching practice.

Chapter seven: Chapter seven continues with the work of *unlearning* and *becoming*. Through short, playful activities, the participants and I reflected on our misconceptions of play and teaching. A key feature that was identified was the importance of being teachers who are open to learning and unlearning in order to improve our teaching practice. We also engaged in letter writing, which was an activity in which the participants wrote a letter to their envisaged teacher-self and their learners. In conclusion, we participated in a tableau activity in which the participants created still (freeze) images that depicted a playful teacher in still mode.

Chapter eight: In this chapter, I detail the last two sessions that were conducted with the participants and where we co-created a poem. We reflected on all the previous sessions. In our reflections, the participants shared their experiences of participating in the activities, and they detailed their high and low moments. This session was also an opportunity to reciprocate our gratitude as we bade one another good-bye. The participants were preparing to write examinations and we would not share a classroom again.

Chapter nine: In this chapter, I present the themes that emerged from the data. I share the discoveries I made and the lessons I learnt. Some of the discoveries were the fear of silence and its value in playful pedagogy, the necessity for teacher preparation, and the discomfort some may experience in playful activities as we do not all share the same personality type.

Chapter ten: This chapter is a synthesised presentation of the knowledge I gleaned from the literature and the data analysis. I extend the play spatial dyad to a triad through offering atmosphere as the third aspect in play as I believe that this factor expands the holistic view of play. I also present my views on *becoming* a teacher-educator subsequent to the completion of the thesis.

Chapter eleven: This is the concluding chapter in which I present my overall learning from this doctoral study. I detail my personal, professional, and methodological learning and offer a retrospective summary of the answers to the research questions. In conclusion, I share my

professed original contribution to the pool of knowledge and reflect on my prospects in light of the completed doctoral journey. Recommendations for future studies are interspersed with my reflections.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the thesis. It presented the rationale and significance of the study by detailing the necessity and genesis of the research project. I also defined and explained the key concepts that were used throughout the study. I presented the theoretical perspective that underpinned the study and introduced the methodology that I employed to assist me in generating rich data for the emergence of findings and the writing of the thesis. To conclude, I presented a brief overview of the thesis, sharing how it was structured and detailing the contents of each chapter to inform the reader of what can be expected. The following chapter presents the methodology that I employed and I share, amongst other key features, how I generated the data to arrive at the findings that are the cornerstone of this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO: WEAVING A TAPESTRY

“Think of your research as a journey toward greater understanding of one’s self, one’s teaching, as well as one’s students” (Samaras & Freese, 2006, p. 83).

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented an overview of my doctoral thesis. I introduced this research study by explaining its focus and purpose and discussing the rationale for engaging in a self-study investigation. I also shared the research objectives and questions, the key concepts, the theoretical perspective, and the methodology that guided this study. The purpose of chapter one was to give insight into the study and what the reader could expect throughout the thesis. In chapter two, I expand the discourse on the research methodology and methods I employed. I also elucidate my understanding of the self-study methodology and the arts-based methods used for the data generation process. I proceed by detailing the data generation process, how I elicited my memories, the recruitment process I used to select the participants, and the methods I used to generate data. I further highlight the sessions I had with the participants during the data generation process and discuss the ethical considerations that I adhered to. I also discuss the use of critical friends who participated in this study. I conclude the chapter by discussing the trustworthiness of the study and the challenges I experienced in executing it.

2.2 Research Methodology

2.2.1 Qualitative research

This doctoral project was qualitative in nature and used the self-study methodology for data generation and analysis. Denzin and Lincoln (2017, p. 47) define qualitative research or inquiry as “an interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary field that is primarily located in the humanities and social sciences. It is multifaceted and multi-dimensional, allowing for various theories, methods and methodologies committed to the naturalistic perspective and interpretive understanding of human experience”. Merriam and Tisdell (2015, p. 1) explain qualitative research as “focused on the discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied and [it] offers the greatest promise of making a difference in people’s lives”. I affirm this explanation as it aligns with my overall focus and the purpose of this study. As Merriam and Tisdell (2015) propose, I embarked on a journey of self-discovery to gain

insight about my teaching practice and thus to improve and develop professionally and make a difference in my career.

In this investigation, I studied my participants' and my own experiences of and perspectives on the integration of playful activities with learning through an exploration of the possibilities of playful pedagogy. I hoped to learn about practical ways of integrating playful pedagogy into my teaching practice while inspiring my students to embrace this tool as a useful pedagogy in their own teaching one day. I also envisaged self-learning; that I would learn more about my attraction to playful pedagogy and what I could reveal about myself through exploring my memories of play and my engagement with the participants in playful learning. My learnings needed to be integrated as lessons into my teaching practice, as I believed that this would benefit my teacher-educator self, the students I teach and, externally, the learners they will teach one day. In essence, this study aimed to improve my teaching practice through learning about integrating playful pedagogy into my teaching as a novice teacher-educator.

Qualitative research assists in understanding human experiences and brings meaning to these experiences while capacitating us with the ability to construct our future based on what we have discovered or learnt from our past experiences (Leavy, 2017). This is one of the motivating factors that guides qualitative researchers to conduct research in natural settings as they attempt to make sense of or interpret a particular phenomenon (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). The natural setting that underpinned this investigation was the classroom. For data generation, I used the same venue I used for teaching. This space was familiar, and I believe it contributed to the rapport that I was able to develop with the participants.

Creswell and Creswell (2017) identify reflexivity and holistic account as other pivotal traits of qualitative studies. My understanding of reflexivity is captured pertinently by Bolton (2009, p. 3), who explains that it as “an ongoing constituent of practice that enables practitioners to learn from experience about themselves, their work and how they relate their personal and professional selves with others from home, work and the wider society and culture”. Some key components that allow for reflexivity are critical thinking, self-awareness, and reflection (Eby, 2000). Reflexivity and holistic account thus allow the researcher to consider and reflect on their background, biases, experiences, and other aspects that may arise during the study. These two components of qualitative inquiry also implore the researcher to have an open mind and consider multiple factors within the data for analysis and findings that address the objectives and research questions. Overall, qualitative research considers various possibilities in the

processes of interpretation and meaning making of the data, which suggests that the researcher must keep an open mind and identify any biasness that might skew the research findings.

2.2.2 Self-study methodology

The methodology used for this research was the self-study approach which is a methodology that engages teacher-educators or other professionals in the study of self to improve their practice and, ultimately, students' learning experiences in the classroom (Samaras, 2011). It also facilitates a focus on the practitioner's personal experiences of teaching (Tucker, 2011). Samaras and Freese (2009) unpack this methodology as one that focuses much on the development of the *self*, as self-study researchers draw on their experiences as a resource for their research. The process of the research in self-study is significant as these researchers learn from experience (Russell, 1998) not only to improve their teaching and learning, but also to produce new knowledge about teaching and learning (Feldman, 2009). In self-study research, the emphasis is on the *self*, and the anticipated results of the research impact the *self* personally and professionally while also impacting the self-study community of practice.

The five foci of self-study as cited by various scholars (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998; Ritter et al., 2018; Samaras & Freese, 2009) assisted me in understanding the central characteristics of self-study. Self-study is situated inquiry, meaning it draws directly from the practitioner's experience. The inquiry begins with questions and experiences emanating from the practitioner's context, and these experiences motivate the researcher to conduct the research. As the practitioner in this study, I was able to examine my practice and explore and identify any contradictions between what I did, said, and believed. Continuous reflexivity as encouraged by this methodology allowed me to identify any "living contradiction" (Samaras, 2011, p. 10) between what I did in my practice and what I believed personally and professionally. Reflexivity also allowed me to refine those identified contradictions, thus producing a refined practice that was not only aligned personally and professionally, but also to the broader teaching and learning community.

Self-study investigation is process driven and, although the result is desired and welcomed, the experience of the process is as important as the result. Hoban (2004) encourages self-study practitioners to document the journey of the inquiry as it contributes to the practitioner's understanding of self and the process involved in reaching this understanding. Moreover, documenting the journey creates the opportunity for transparency, ensures the openness of the

process and the findings emanating from the data, and facilitates openness about oneself as the researcher to other self-study practitioners who may be involved in the research as critical friends. In the current study, I focused on this proposition and was open to myself, my critical friends, and my supervisors as well.

Transparency enhances the research process by taking in differing views and critiques from others, thus creating change. Any change that is wrought through the self-study process is welcomed as it improves the teaching philosophy and practice of the practitioner. In this study, the change began with the *self*. The insight that I gained from the study process and the findings that emanated immediately affected *myself*, first on a personal level and then on a professional level. This personal change improved my understanding of *self* and my relationship with myself and others in the context where I worked. I also came to understand my relationship with and attraction to play better, as the new insights I gained impacted my professional view of play most positively. The professional change of *self* also immediately affected my teaching practice, my relationship with my colleagues, and the students I taught. From a current perspective, I am now able to engage with myself and others from an enlightened view of *self*.

Another central characteristic of self-study is knowledge generation, presentation, and transfer. Samaras and Freese (2006, p. 43) maintain that “self-study *is* knowledge” as it builds self-knowledge that allows for immediate change in the practitioner. This change may occur personally as well as professionally. Change acquired creates a space for transformation within self and immediate reframing of the practice altogether. As a self-study practitioner, I was able to bring the necessary change to my teaching practice and philosophy through my engagement with my memories and my participants that resulted in illuminating findings. So powerful was this change that I believe that it will not be limited to myself and my practice, but that it may also extend into broader teaching avenues in the future, such as curriculum and policy development that will be aligned with my learning. I contend that the value of this study is entrenched, among its many other features, in this vision.

Self-study is multifaceted as its methodological approaches allow practitioners to incorporate multiple theories and methods in their research process (Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020). This is because self-study research is broad and has been utilised in various disciplines, which makes the methodology inclusive of different methods and theories. The self-study researcher may also have more than one purpose for the study, and it can be met through the application of various methods and theories (Bullock & Sator, 2018). In this study, I used multiple methods

to generate data namely memory-work, hotseating, tableaux, letter-writing, poetry, and childhood games. The methods I selected emanated from my artistic background and allowed for in-depth engagement with my inquiry and the research participants as I used arts-based methods.

According to Samaras and Freese (2006), self-study is paradoxical in nature as it is characterised by three dual paradoxes: It is (i) individual and collective, (ii) personal and interpersonal, and (iii) private and public. Self-study is individual and collective because the primary focus of the inquiry is on self and the interests of self. However, the focus and benefit of the inquiry are also equally collaborative in nature. My study's primary focus was to inquire about myself and my teaching practice to integrate playful pedagogy to improve my teaching practice. However, incorporating students as participants broadened the inquiry and created a space for them to make certain discoveries about themselves, whether intentional or not. It also protected me from making discoveries about myself in isolation. Their participation assisted me in generating data that produced insightful learning about myself and informed practical ways to improve my practice as a novice teacher-educator.

The second paradox is personal and interpersonal. Though the aim of self-inquiry may be for self-edification, the process cannot take place in isolation. Self-study maintains a social aspect that encourages the engagement of others in studying self. In the research process, I had regular meetings with my supervisors who served as critical friends. I also attended cohort presentations (see more under the critical friendships section) where I shared some of my work with others and received insightful feedback for improvement. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, cohort meetings were suspended.

Nevertheless, I remained with my supervisors and opened my work to other critical friends who were co-authors of journal publications (see more under the critical friendship section). Moreover, I engaged in therapy sessions with a psychologist to present the data from my memory-work. All these engagements contributed to the development of my study and also to my personal and professional development.

The third paradox is private and public. The rationale and motivation of the inquiry may begin from a private space where the researcher reflects individually, but starting the research process brings the private into the public domain as the researcher engages with participants and critical friends. The motivation to conduct this research was essentially personal as the rationale

emanated from questions I asked myself and could not answer. Some of the questions were: *Why do the Creative Arts preservice teachers not use demonstration when they teach? Why do their lessons not feel like Creative Arts lessons? Do I use demonstration enough when I teach them? What am I doing and not doing in our lessons for them to teach like this?* Although these questions were asked from a private place, through the research they became public. I also had to field probing questions posed by critical friends who attempted to refine my thoughts during this research process and, ultimately, my teaching practice.

Much of the data set that was generated for this research, particularly through the memory-work method (which I explain in the section below), was also private. I had carried these memories with me for many years, many as far back as childhood. However, through this research, it became important to share them as data sources and it became clear through the analysis process that these memories were imbued with answers to questions I had stopped asking and others I could not answer personally or professionally. Presenting my memories to the therapist was another way to analyse my memories truthfully, and her insights extended my thinking which positively contributed to the study. Furthermore, my discoveries will benefit myself and the students I shall teach in the future.

I allowed my study to be guided by these characteristics, which I unpacked when I wrote this thesis. Bullough Jr and Pinnegar (2001) state that some of the aims of self-study are to challenge and illuminate. In multiple instances, I found myself challenged by the research process as I endeavoured to understand myself and refine my identity as a teacher-educator (Hagebeuk, 2018). I was challenged when I remembered some of my memories (as detailed in Chapter three and Chapter four). I was also challenged in various ways when I generated data involving the participants. There were moments when I felt I had lost control when I did not know how to respond to certain situations. Moreover, the silence and discomfort I felt during those moments were debilitating (read more on this in Chapter four). The central, pivotal participant in my research was myself; therefore, my experiences (past and present) and my learning became fundamental to this study. Understanding the importance of self as well as my experiences guided my choice of data generation methods. Broadly speaking, I used memory-work and arts-based methods to generate data for this research.

The self-study approach was best suited for my study as the interest to pursue my doctoral research emerged from engaging with the preservice students I taught. The questions I asked myself reflected the conversations I had in my mind, and they helped to position me at the

centre of my quest for understanding. Therefore, the self-study approach assisted me in probing for answers within myself and in terms of my practice as I aspired to be intentional in improving my teaching.

2.3 Critical Friends

Although self-study may suggest an exclusively individual approach (Loughran & Northfield, 1998), it is grounded in and relies heavily on collaboration. In self-study research, nothing takes place in isolation as successful outcomes are dependent on the involvement of others. Whitehead and McNiff (2006) describe a critical friend as both a critic and a friend. As my friends, these individuals offered support and were also available to listen to aspects of my research. As critics, they were available to offer constructive feedback to enhance my research, identify gaps, or raise ideas that I had not thought of yet. Samaras (2011) describes critical friends as “trusted colleagues who seek support and validation of their research to gain new perspectives in understanding and reframing their interpretations”. Critical friends were thus available to listen to my research progress and assist me through feedback that was constructive and helpful. To progress in self-study research, I could not work alone. I needed to collaborate with other researchers to develop new understandings from the conversations we had, and this allowed my work to be constructively critiqued. In essence, it is my contention that the feedback provided by my critical friends validates the findings of the study (Samaras & Freese, 2009).

2.3.1 Self-reflexive research cohort

I had five engagements with critical friends throughout my doctoral research. The first group was a self-reflexive research cohort of researchers who were interested in or used self-reflexive research approaches such as self-study and narrative inquiry. This cohort comprised of emerging and senior academics from various disciplines within the School of Education at the university, and they all incorporated reflexive methodologies in their respective research projects. By engaging with this cohort, I had opportunities to present my thoughts and discuss the progress of my study. My presentations were regular during the proposal development stage when I received their inputs to improve my proposal before I presented it for review to the proposal review panel. The cohort met once per month, and other presenters also shared their reflexive work. Other than receiving feedback, I listened to these researchers' work and learnt about various ways of doing self-study research. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic

and the implementation of remote working, the cohort was suspended and our exposure was thus limited.

2.3.2 Presentations at a national conference

Another platform where I shared aspects of my research during the proposal development stage was at national conferences. In 2018, I presented my proposed research at the South African National Education Association (SAERA) conference. I delivered a paper and a short visual representation of memories at the Self-Study Special Interest Group (SIG) symposium. I received compliments and constructive feedback about my research proposal in these spaces. Members of the audience made constructive suggestions for my research to improve my proposal.

2.3.3 An emerging academic research group

The third group that served as my critical friends were my co-authors. They were two early-career academics who used narrative inquiry in their doctoral research. We were all employed in the same School of Education and were interested in growing our knowledge in self-reflexive research. Our research publications (Mbatha et al., 2021; Mbatha et al., 2020; Msiza et al., 2021; Ndlovu et al., 2021) discuss reflexive methodologies, narrative inquiry, and self-study. The focus of these publications is on our professional learning through our experiences as early-career academics. My co-authors provided a space where we could share our doctoral work as we appraised one another's work, presented sections of our doctoral research, and received feedback from one another. This platform allowed us to share even our raw ideas and receive feedback on their viability.

2.3.4 Psycho-therapy

The fourth critical friend I had was my psychologist, who assisted me in the analysis of my data, particularly my memories. In our therapy sessions, I discussed my memories with her and she assisted me in analysing them. This platform provided a space where I could safely reflect on my memories and share what meanings I made of my past experiences. Her engagement provided insightful analyses that stretched my thinking about what I had learnt from my past. These engagements taught me to reconcile with past hurtful experiences and that I did not need to hold on to them any longer. I also began forgiving myself, my parents, and other concerned people, which initiated a chapter in my life in which I embraced healing and discarded the pain

and ignorance of the past. Personally, this experience elicited in-depth understanding of my past experiences and relieved the traumatic triggers I had been unaware of. Our therapy sessions also enabled me to understand the magnitude of the impact of play on my childhood life, which alluded to my attachment to and relationship with play as an adult.

2.3.5 Supervision support

The fifth group of critical friends I had were my supervisors. My supervisors and I met regularly (weekly or biweekly, sometimes monthly) throughout my study. Our meetings were initially in person but, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were compelled to transition to Zoom. In our meetings, I shared my ideas and the struggles I experienced during my research. They provided support by listening to and guiding me and I embraced their advice to enrich my study. We also discussed feedback from the drafts I had sent via email and we focused on the points I had identified that needed attention over and above their written feedback. We also sustained communication via a WhatsApp group chat and emails. I often shared my drafts in our emails, which they read and critiqued for improved developments. Our easy and frank communications prompted me to send even the roughest drafts so they could guide my thinking and the development of the manuscript I was writing. Our group chat provided a platform for informal conversations about my research. We communicated through voice notes or messages in which I shared my frustrations, lack of understanding of certain aspects of my research, and raw ideas I wanted to implement in my writing. I also shared my personal challenges that prohibited my productivity from time to time. My supervisors offered continuous support, advice regarding certain strategies, and insight into my lack of understanding. They also shared other tools like podcasts and blogs that could further capacitate me as a doctoral scholar. All our engagements provided step-by-step guidance and support. This platform made me feel that I was never alone and could always reach out via any platform created for this research, for which I am grateful to this day.

2.4 Research Setting

The geographical location of this study was the city of Durban at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. I was employed at this university at the time of the study and lectured Creative Arts modules in the School of Education. At the time of the study, more than 44 000 students were enrolled at the university, with more than 6 941 students in our school (Heda, 2021). I taught a total of nine creative arts modules. Demographically, our school enrolls

predominantly Black isiZulu-speaking students, which contributed to the using of a language policy (UKZN, 2014) that recognizes isiZulu as the second official language of the university alongside English. The recognition of isiZulu at the University was a factor that contributed to the recognition of isiZulu in my sessions with the participants.

Our sessions were conducted in Creative Arts venues. Initially, we used the Drama theatre studio and later moved to a venue where Creative Arts was taught due to its availability. These spaces were very familiar to the participants and myself, but this had positive and negative effects. A positive effect was that we connected with the spaces which allowed a measure of comfort. However, it was negative because our relationship with the spaces was influenced by the teacher-educator-student relationship. Therefore, using the classroom as a research site outside teaching hours to conduct teaching-related research posed a challenge for me and probably for the participants as well, although they may not have been aware of it. The students continued to see me as a teacher-educator of which I was aware, and therefore I endeavoured to forge a researcher/participant relationship and identity. I write more about this struggle in Chapter five and Chapter six, sharing how this relationship struggled to transition into a researcher/participant one.



Figure 2: S303 venue that was used for data generation

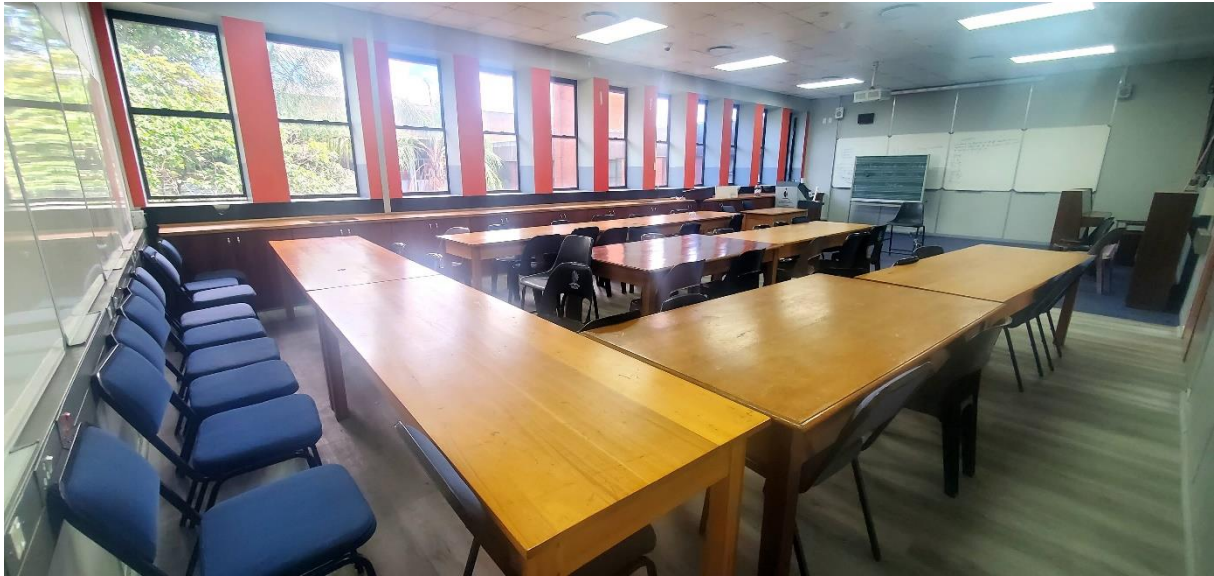


Figure 3: Another image of S303 used for data generation

2.5 Research Participants

The study focused on learning about myself and my teaching practice as a novice teacher-educator teaching Creative Arts modules within the School of Education in the research-intensive university where I was employed. Therefore, I was the primary participant in this study. I am a Black female emerging academic and had been a teacher-educator for six years (2017-2022) when I commenced the study in 2018. I currently still teach and coordinate all seven Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) and two Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Creative Arts modules. I engaged in this study as an individual with a teacher-educator identity who was interested in improving her practice.

2.5.1 Recruitment of the participants

I recruited participants from enrolled preservice teachers who were registered for the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)¹ and who had registered for some Creative Arts teaching modules. The reason for choosing Creative Arts PGCE students was that the campus only hosts the School of Education. As a Creative Arts teacher-educator, I had ready access to students registered for Creative Arts modules. However, as the pedagogy of play may be used as a teaching strategy in any subject, students not registered for Creative Arts were also

¹ Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) is a one-year (full-time) teaching program that allows students with (qualifying) undergraduate degrees to transition into Education and train to be qualified professional teachers.

welcome to participate. The invitation was extended by word of mouth from the Creative Arts students I had emailed and spoken to during the recruitment period.

As a recruitment strategy, I attended Creative Arts lessons to present my proposed study briefly and to ask interested students to write their names on a list so I could contact them. I also communicated via the Creative Arts module group to inform the students of this opportunity and to elicit their participation in the study. I sent emails to the Drama and Creative Arts students as I had ready access to them. The emails explained the project, its aims, and the proposed plan for the duration of the data collection phase. The email also noted a day to convene for those interested in the study to discuss the project in person and to record the necessary participant details. I also informed the students that they could share information about this study with their peers and extend an invitation if they were interested.

2.5.2 The first meeting with potential participants

On the day of the first meeting, I rushed from another workshop to be in time for the meeting. While I was waiting for potential students to arrive, I wrote in my journal:

“...I arrived here after walking briskly from the computer LANs to S303. I am sitting, playing cards on my laptop, acting busy...waiting...waiting for them to arrive. No one is here yet...” (18 August 2019)

S303 is a teaching venue that is usually filled with bodies, sounds of chattering voices, the hum of old aircon machinery, and the movement of furniture. But as my recruiting space, the room was empty. Only I and the humming sound of the aircon occupied the space. With the passing of minutes, my eyes kept shifting between the laptop and the door – I hoped for someone to walk in who had read my email and who was interested in my study. The emptiness and the absence of bodies were loud; my bubbly, confident emotions eroded with each passing moment as no one entered. I was anxious and discomforted and these anxious thoughts infused the room with unease. I constantly wondered whether any students had read my email and if any would show up. As the minutes passed, I continued to wonder whether they had forgotten or simply ignored the call because it had come from me. I had heard jokingly and politely from students in casual conversations that I was strict and could be difficult to approach. I began to think that they did not like me and would not be interested in liaising with me outside my classes. I sank deeper and deeper into those thoughts, allowing the flood of anxiety to drown me.

Amid these self-deprecating and negative thoughts, two female Bachelor of Education² (B.Ed.) students walked into the venue. Rapidly clearing myself of the wallowing pessimistic thoughts that had consume me, I stood up and greeted them. Mihle and Nkazimulo had read the email and were interested in hearing more. So, we had a chat about my intentions. I answered their questions and took down their details.

When they had left, I sat down taking deep breaths, in and out, and stared into the empty space. Then I smiled. I was happy that someone had walked in; that two people had come. I continued to wait, hoping that others might come as well. Time passed, but no one else came. After the two students had left, the waiting, the empty space, and my thoughts had lost their melancholic grip on me. I felt light again. Though I had hoped for more people, having the two students meant something to me because at least someone had read my email and was interested enough to arrive. Although I had not gained a huge attendance, I could conquer my pessimistic thoughts. I walked out of the venue feeling like a winner.

2.5.3 Continuing the recruitment process: Making class visits

In the following week, I sent out another reminder email and scheduled another time for a meeting. I deemed this time convenient as no teaching would take place during that time. However, only one student arrived who needed to consult me about a matter that was unrelated to this project. I then met students informally on campus who mentioned that there had been a student event and that was why they could not come to the scheduled meeting. They promised they would come the following week. I sent out yet another email reminding the students that the opportunity to meet for this project was still open. In the third week, I again went to the scheduled meeting venue at the same time as before, and this time no one arrived in the hour assigned for this session. I could only sigh in despair.

I was disappointed and felt my project was not taking off as planned. I was also running out of time, as I had planned to complete the data generation process at the end of the semester. So, I made alternative arrangements to recruit participants. I asked other Creative Arts teacher-educators for some time to speak to their classes at the end of their lessons. During the class visits, I explained the emails I had sent them, the project I was starting, its purpose, and how it would run during the semester. I also took questions and asked those interested in writing their

² Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) is a four year (full-time) teaching undergraduate program that trains students to enter a career of professional teaching.

names on a page I had circulated to share this information with their friends, even if they were not enrolled for Creative Arts and Drama. My reason for doing this was to expand my reach to potential participants. I believed that word of mouth would deliver this project to more people than I could, and maybe bringing a friend would be a way to increase the number of participants. I also believed that preservice teachers not majoring in Creative Arts could participate in this study as playful pedagogy is not limited to only Creative Arts teachers.

2.5.4 Meeting the potential participants

After various class visits I had 20 names, which was enough for the study to continue. I then emailed those students who had signed up to decide on a convenient time for all. From the responses, they indicated three different times as the most convenient to meet. I scheduled to meet all of them at their preferred times which were on a Wednesday afternoon, a Thursday during the forum period, and a Friday during prayer time.

On the Wednesday, 13 participants arrived, but on Thursday and Friday none arrived. All 13 students who attended the Wednesday meeting were registered PGCE students from a class I co-taught, and the 7 remaining from the original 20 names were registered in the B.Ed. programme. I had intended to recruit both PGCE and B.Ed. students for this study, but that was not possible. Some of the reasons I received from the potential B.Ed. participants were time constrained (they had a tight schedule in the semester and a heavy workload) while some had extracurricular activities after classes and could not join anymore. As a result, I ended up with 13 students who honoured their commitment. Though I had wished for more participants, I was happy with the number I had recruited. The 13 participants were Black IsiZulu-speaking students. They represented both genders as 5 were females and 8 were males.

2.6 Complexity of the Dual Roles as Participant and Researcher

I was both the researcher and the participant as I conducted the study using a self-study methodological approach. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) view this as an intertwined experience. Masinga (2013) notes that, during her doctoral journey, this intertwined experience was challenging and required constant reflection. Working in these dual roles simultaneously was challenged as I was both a participant and the researcher. As a novice self-study researcher, I was unfamiliar with the research process and struggled to interchange these roles appropriately, particularly during the sessions with the participants. I write about these challenges in Chapter five and Chapter six where I share my experiences regarding data

generation involving the students. As a participant engaging in memory-work, there were moments of struggle and joy. These feelings were evoked by the memories I recalled. I share my experiences as I recalled my memories in Chapter three and Chapter four and also in the section below.

One highlight of being a participant was self-disclosure. Probst (2016) explains that self-disclosure is the practice by researchers/participants of sharing aspects of their lives that are relevant to the questions asked as well as the research context. She cautions researchers who are also participants to be aware of the disclosure they give to other participants as it may negatively or positively affect the research data. This research process required much self-disclosure from me. I had to disclose significant memories that contributed to me becoming a playful teacher-educator. As mentioned before, there were both happy and unhappy memories and I also disclosed information about myself to the participant at various stages of the data generation process. Some of these moments were when we discussed our childhood memories, during the hotseating activity, and when we played games, to mention a few. Transparency was necessary during the student-engagement phase as it assisted in building rapport with the participants and enriched our conversations. Being transparent also aided my understanding of self and enabled me to answer the research questions truthfully. I also believe it contributed to the participants' transparency as they witnessed my truthfulness during the conversations we had. This process ultimately helped me to transform my teaching practice through integrating playful pedagogy based on the in-depth knowledge I had gained due to my research.

Transparency and self-disclosure are good research practices as they often increase the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Probst, 2016). Qualitative research also encourages these practices as they 'level the ground' between the recruited participant and the researcher participant. When the recruited participant gets to look into the researcher's world due to disclosure, a bond emerges that strengthens the relationship and generates meaningful data. For example, when we played hotseating, I was the first to take the hotseat as requested by one of the participants. The information we shared from the hotseat produced a range of feelings in all of us who participated and listened. I believe that sharing my teaching experiences as requested by the participants established a sense of trust that led to truthful engagement when they took the hotseat. I also discovered from my self-disclosure that it kept the conversation going and revealed moments of similarity in our upbringing. For example, during our conversations on childhood memories of play, Namhla shared how strict her mother had been

towards her as a child. Her story became a prompt for me to share how strict my mother had been as well during my upbringing. This transitioned the conversation to childhood play and parents' interference or supervision as more participants began to share their memories of their parents'/guardians' attitude towards play. Another commonality was established; not only did we share play as a common activity, but we also shared stories of our parents' attitudes towards play and the common games we played. These conversations occurred in the first and second sessions of data generation, which positively contributed to building a connection with one another.

Professionally, transparency was also important in this study as it promoted "team reflexivity" as proposed by Probst (2016, p. 153). My disclosure of my teaching experiences was also a secondary learning opportunity for the participants as they listened to some of the positive and negative experiences I had encountered during my high school teaching tenure. Sharing my experiences established further connections as they began to see the similarities in the challenges encountered by all parties. This approach to transparency and disclosure created an atmosphere of emotional and psychological safety and engendered mutual respect for the experiences we had been through (Masinga, 2013).

Transparency may also yield vulnerability as the process may lead to sharing sensitive issues (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2012). Personally, my vulnerability did not come through as I shared some sensitive memories; rather, it came through when I felt I had lost control during the data generation process. In some sessions, there were moments when I felt my planning fell short and I did not know how to proceed, which resulted in missed opportunities. I write more about this in Chapter eight. For the participants, there were memories I felt were sensitive, but they shared them with the group (in my view) without much hesitation. Namhla shared how her wig almost fell off during a practical lesson and the learners laughed at her while she laughed at herself (see more in Chapter five, session two). She received the same reaction from us as we all laughed with her, not at her. Milani also shared a story about how she was forbidden from playing and how that deprivation affected her socially as an adult. I write more about these stories in Chapter five. I felt these narratives exposed a deep vulnerability as I sensed a sadness in the participants who shared them. Listening to these experiences indicated that comfort and trust had been established among the participants and between them and myself.

2.7 Data Generation

In this section, I detail the process of data generation through the use of memory-work and arts-based methods.

2.7.1 Gaining insight through my memories

Radstone (2000) foregrounds the use of memory in research as a central and organizing concept, especially in the humanities and social sciences. The use of memory-work in research was prominently developed in feminist research by Frigga Haug et al. (1987) as a social constructionist method to bridge the gap between theory and experience (Haug, 2008; Onyx & Small, 2001; Small, 2007). Fraser and Michell (2015, p. 322) explain memory-work as “an umbrella term for a process of exploring the past, which has multiple meanings, references and methods of communication”. According to Pithouse-Morgan and Pillay (2013), memory-work is underpinned by memories that play a fundamental role in habitual patterns of thought and action. Samaras and Freese (2006) explain memory-work as a self-study method that can present autobiographical work with reflective and critical revisiting. The method offers an opportunity to work consciously with memories to engage creatively with these habitual patterns. I utilised this method to use lived experiences to appreciate the present self and to comprehend how lived experiences could offer possibilities for me to engage with present personal attitudes and behaviours.

As one of the main aims of memory-work is to make meaning and understand how lived experiences have influenced present life and future possibilities (Fraser & Michell, 2015), I chose to use memory-work in my research. This was to understand myself, the way I taught, and how I could improve my teaching. To improve my teaching, I realized that I needed to reflect on how I had been trained as a teacher and to identify the significant moments that contributed to my becoming a teacher. This reflection enabled me to gain a deep understanding of my social construction as a female and black teacher-educator, as my memories also became a key to understanding my identities (Fraser & Michell, 2015).

Arnold (as cited in Bain, 1995, p. 200) states that the “meaning of our memories does not lie in the experience itself; however, our experiences become meaningful as a result of being grasped reflectively”. Small (2007) emphasises the importance of studying memories individually as they are remembered, not judging them or comparing them to what is seen as facts or perceived as real concerning the lived experience because the *self* is constructed

socially through the reflection of their memories. By reflecting on my lived experiences, I was able to be open about my lived experiences so as to provide insight into how my social experiences had holistically contributed to my construction as an emerging Creative Arts teacher-educator.

Memory-work practices have various ways of being done and do not have a set prescribed form of practice (Frost et al., 2012). It is imperative to keep the memory-work process transparent, truthful, and as detailed as possible. Memories may be analysed repeatedly and rewritten as new triggers are integrated and new memories emerge (Frost et al., 2012). It is also critical to understand that, during memory writing, memories may be fragmented, come unexpectedly, and are triggered in various ways by emotions, mood, contexts, and all bodily senses (Fraser & Michell, 2015).

According to Haug et al. (1987), Onyx and Small (2001), and Small (2007), there are various approaches to memory-work. However, a researcher may apply three phases in memory-work. In the first phase, the individual writes the particular memory as it is remembered with as many details as possible. The second phase is when the memory is shared with others, and the collective assists in examining the memories for reoccurring patterns, dominant actions, and any other emergent factor. Thereafter, in the third phase the memory is re-written, revisited through collective discussion, and further examined and layered through theorization. The points of exploration in memory-work commonly look at how space, time, and cultures relate to past, present, and possible futures (Fraser & Michell, 2015).

Haug (2008, p. 358) highlights two significant points that memory-work aims to achieve in feminist studies: (i) discover how women can uniquely assimilate existing power relations, and (ii) identify, from their lived experiences, the sparks of hope that make women who they are meant to be. These points are immersed in the feminist ideology which is relevant to women's experiences. For me, these points symbolised the call to me as a young woman to realize my potential and courageously assert myself as a developing academic, daring me to become my authentic self.

The guidelines developed over the years by Onyx and Small (2001) highlight some important considerations when engaging with memory-work. These guidelines include sufficient trust, privacy, and consistent agreement with the participants. The researcher must also genuinely care for the selected participants and always maintain a respectful distance. It is also important

to refrain from discussions that require participants to relive events of trauma and progress must always be treated with sensitivity. Maintaining these considerations will improve confidence and forge solidarity and trustworthiness among the participants and between them and the researcher (Fraser & Michell, 2015).

In the sessions where childhood memories were elicited, I used the same exercise I had done myself when eliciting my memories (see the section below). I shared my childhood experiences with the participants and engaged in conversations about play in general. This occurred before eliciting memories from the participants. I asked general questions to discover if the participants still played and with whom they played. I answered the questions as well. I also introduced the idea of childhood games in an attempt to build trust and remind the participants that our conversations would be about childhood memories of play.

After they had taken a moment to remember their childhood experiences of play, we discussed their memories. I asked the question: “*What do you remember about playing as a child?*” As an open-ended question, it could be answered in many ways. I did not probe for particular answers and allowed them to answer from what they remembered and for some answers to become a prompt for deeper memories. If a participant shared a memory, it became a probe for another participant to answer similarly or to deviate. In this way, I could share my memories through the narratives we all shared, and this elicited various memories of childhood play. In this way, I participated less as a researcher as I asked fewer questions and became more of a participant as I shared my memories with the other participants.

In the section below, I describe the process of working with my memories by revealing how I elicited them and how I continually remembered them during the research process.

2.7.2 Eliciting my memories

Booth (2008) maintains that memory is the key to identity. I understood this as a prompt to engage with my memories and to make sense of my lived experiences, as that would enable me to make sense of my becoming. This understanding became my ‘permission’ to revisit my memories.

Recalling my childhood elicited salient memories as there were continuous opportunities to play after school, on weekends, and during holidays. To go deeper into a memory, I did a short exercise for two minutes. I limited the activity because I wanted to identify the memories that

surfaced first without dwelling much on thought. I closed my eyes, lay down and allowed my mind to remember a childhood experience of play. I became emotionally involved as I smiled and laughed at my memories and experienced happiness and joy. When the timer rang at the end of two minutes, I sat up and recorded what I had remembered at that time. The first written draft became evidence of my engagement with my memories.

The first trigger of childhood play occurred during the proposal development stage when I was thinking about playful pedagogy and trying to identify significant play areas in my life. Childhood play was the first that came to mind as I episodically thought of how I had played as a child. As I layered each memory at a different time in the writing process, reading about my memories again after the proposal development stage provoked more memories that I could include. The continual reading engagement with my memories assisted me in identifying some gaps in my memory.

The second level of elicitation occurred when I worked with the raw data and wrote the data representation section. This gave me further opportunities to listen to and read the participants' memories of play. That process triggered memories of other aspects of my childhood, which led me to revise my memories for more depth. For instance, during the data generation process (see Chapter five) when Mihlali was sharing her experience of restricted play, I could not connect my experience of restricted play to hers as, at that time, I did not remember having moments of restricted play. I only remembered that I had such times much later when I read her story during the analysis phase.

The last trigger for recalling my memories occurred during the reading of the memories in the analysis stage when I believed I had saturated the data to begin the analysis process. At this stage, I allowed myself to ask questions about my memories, and the answers became triggers that helped me think in depth about certain gaps that I had identified. Some of the questions about my childhood memories I asked myself were: "*Who did I play with?*". I asked this as images of my playmates were not evident in my written memory. "*Were they male or female?*" and "*Were there any childhood incidents worth noting?*" were also questions that I needed to answer, and they sent my mind back to the past to remember more and more details. When some questions were asked, the memory quickly surfaced in my mind, like the memory that surfaced when I asked myself if there were any childhood incidents during play. These were the means I used to probe my mind and to dive deeper into my subconscious to retrieve hidden and forgotten memories.

Memories of incidents during our childhood play were hidden in my subconscious. As with Mhlali when she was sharing her experience of restricted play, I did not make the connection at first when Zakhele shared his story of dangerous play. At the time when Zakhele was sharing his memory, I related dangerous play to physical harm – i.e., when a child is hurt when playing (like I was when I fell from a tree, which is another connection I did not make at first). I also did not associate dangerous play with sexual harm. This was another connection I missed during the data generation sessions, but I remembered this when I analysed the data and was prompted to revisit my memories in more depth. The journey of writing my memories made me realize that remembering was fragmented and would often require multiple forms of prompting (Bryant & Bryant, 2019).

2.8 Using Arts-Based Methods to Generate Data

To answer my second research question, I enlisted the assistance of my participants. The research question was: *How can artistic methods offer possibilities for playful pedagogy in my practice as a Creative Arts teacher-educator?*

I used various arts-based methods during this process to encourage participation and engagement among the participants and myself. “Arts-based research is defined as the use of personal expression in various art forms as a primary mode of enquiry” (McNiff, 2013, p. 5) as it can be used in various academic disciplines where artistic research inquiry may enrich and contribute to the generation of knowledge. Franklin (2012, p. 89) encourages the use of artistic methods when studying self, as the subject of self is a “worthy territory” to investigate. Turning the spotlight on ourselves is necessary as it is one of the ways to awaken our human consciousness and it also “seeks ontological knowing, epistemological discovery, and to contribute to society at large” (Franklin, 2012, p. 92).

In my use of artistic methods, I could monitor my process and capture the work I was doing using various creative forms. Arts-based research is driven by an organic, emergent process (Blaisdell et al., 2018) during which knowledge is unearthed (Meskin & van der Walt, 2014). In the process of discovery of knowing about myself, my memories and artistic methods enriched my study, deepened my understanding, and gave meaning to the data in a way that I believed would be impossible in traditional representations (Samaras, 2010). Franklin (2012) advocates for the use of artistic modes of inquiry because the intersection of art and science creates opportunities for researchers to collaborate to premise process-oriented research that

may yield organic discoveries and unearth the authentic voices locked within self. McNiff (2013, p. 6) applauds artistic research for its “ability to perceive life and present experiences as honestly as possible” over the years. Luton (2018) also advocates for play in research, alluding to Joe Norris, a pioneer in play-building and duo ethnographic research. She states that researchers who integrate play into their research should never see it as a shameful act. Rather, they should view play as serious business, and should embrace play as it offers space for participants to explore and share their stories or reflections on their world. Researchers should continually integrate artistic methods in their research to yield creative ways of knowing and communicating (Meskin & van Der Walt, 2018), which deepens our knowledge of personal and social development as people/researchers/teachers (McNiff, 2011).

Sharing moments of remembering and engaging in sensitive conversations also promote a deeper connection between the researcher, the participants and their practice (Freese, 2006). Therefore, using arts-based methods as a way to generate data, I designed sessions that engaged my participants intellectually, emotionally, and physically. The sessions I developed incorporated arts-based teaching and playful methods, which allowed my participants to recall some of their lived experiences and explore them using various artistic methods. The following sections briefly describe each method that was used in the study.

2.8.1 Games

Drawing from my memories and the possibilities for playful pedagogy, I integrated various childhood games into the sessions I shared with the participants. I also used the body as a tool to play and enrich my research.

I allowed the participants to choose the games they wished to play, and they chose various traditional, indigenous childhood games. I wrote down the games they proposed during the first session. We picked the common games known by all the participants to be played first. Some games incorporated nursery rhymes, meaning that singing was part of the activity. The games

played were *ibhasi lanesi*,³ *korobela*,⁴ *shuba du*,⁵ *jim bafana*,⁶ *ayabhampa amagwinya*,⁷ and *i'insimbi namaketango*,⁸ which are all explained in detail in Chapter five.

After playing these games, I elicited conversations to discuss the participants' experiences. After that, I alluded to the games played. I moved onto the next section of the session, which explored childhood memories of play. In our conversations, there were also discussions about the possibilities of integrating indigenous games for teaching and learning in the classroom. With the use of games as a method, we were able to play and sing as adults – i.e., preservice teachers and a teacher-educator. We were also able to use our knowledge of games as a foundation to discuss our understanding of play as adults and to remember our experiences of playing as children. The opportunity offered by this method enabled the participants to consider how play can be integrated as a teaching and learning method in the classroom and how the physical engagement of the teacher who plays with the learners may also be a demonstrative approach which is necessary in the Creative Arts classroom.



Figure 4a: The participants playing *aya bhampa amagwinya*

2.8.2 Creating tableaux⁹

Creating tableaux, also known as freeze frames, is an activity where a group of people create still images using their bodies (Williams, 2019). This is an activity that is commonly used in the Dramatic Arts. Tortello (2004, p. 204) defines a tableau as “a silent, human sculpture that

³ *Ibhasi lamanesi*, meaning the nurse's bus, is a game that is commonly played by children in townships.

⁴ *Korobela* (no translation) is a game that is played by boys and girls.

⁵ *Shuba du* (no translation) is a hand clapping game that is also played by girls and boys alike.

⁶ *Jim jim bafana*, meaning gyming boys, is another game that is commonly played.

⁷ *Ayabhampa amagwinya*, meaning bumping vetkoek (a type of cake fried in oil) is another we played in a circle where one participant at a time gets to choose whom they like to go the circle and dance and the pattern continues.

⁸ *I'insimbi namaketango*, meaning irons and chains, is a unisex game played in a circle similar to cat and mouse.

⁹ Tableaux is used as the plural and tableau as the singular.

is created by a group of participants to represent an interpretation of an event, action, location, or scene from a book”.

I was introduced to the used of tableaux as a preservice teacher in the Creative Arts module. Our teacher-educator, Liz, used them to teach story-structure and building narratives from newspapers, books, and current news. She encouraged their use as creative arts teachers in our classrooms and she demonstrated how we could use these bodily shapes to help our learners understand the written text better. Using tableaux as a preservice teacher, I was offered a learning experience on creating stories and structuring them (Szecsi, 2008), which is an important aspect that is taught in Creative Arts.

Branscombe (2015) refers to a tableau as a ‘thinking action’. When creating a tableau, the group is usually not given much time to prepare as there is little time to think. The participants are required to form a tableau that aligns with and represents a textual narrative or any other creative stimulant. When creating a tableau, the participants need to avoid the use of furniture or props and physically engage with the text and one another. It is what Branscombe (2015) refers to as embodied text. Lindgren and Johnson-Glenberg (2013, p. 445) explain embodiment as “the enactment of knowledge and concepts through the activity of our bodies”. As mentioned earlier, I gave the participants the brief to portray a playful teacher in a tableau. The image below is the tableau of one group’s ‘playful teacher’ and is an example of how the participants engaged with the phrase ‘playful teacher’; they embodied the word using their bodies and physically displayed their representation of the word through gestures and poses.



Figure 4b: Creating a tableau

2.8.3 Hotseating

Hotseating is another activity often used in the dramatic and performing arts. It requires the participants to sit in the ‘hotseat’ when speaking – hence the name of the activity. In the performing arts, it is used to develop and deepen actors’ thinking and understanding of the characters they portray (Afifah, 2020). In Dramatic Arts, it is used to explore and expand the character in the text, which may be further adapted into a performance (Even, 2011). It has also been widely used in English and Dramatic Arts classes to build confidence and improve vocabulary and speech among learners (Primayadi, 2018).

Hotseating is played by a group of participants. A seat is placed in front of the group and each participant gets a turn to sit in the hotseat while the other participants begin asking questions to the person, and they must answer ‘in the role’. Therefore, it is necessary to have a role when starting the game. As mentioned earlier, when actors use this technique in the performing arts, it is often when they are in rehearsal for an upcoming play. They enter the hotseat in the role of the character they are portraying and they answer questions about that character. The questions are asked individually by the participants who are not in the hotseat (Meskin et al.,

2014). The participant in the hotseat must answer the question speedily, without much hesitation. All questions asked and answered are impromptu, and nothing is rehearsed (Meskin et al., 2014).

In this study, I used hotseating to encourage conversation about the participants' teaching practice experiences. (See more in Chapter six). We sat in a semi-circle and placed a chair – the hotseat in front of the semi-circle. I was the first to sit in the hotseat and role-played a teacher, answering questions posed by the participants. Each participant adopted the role of a preservice teacher when they sat in the hotseat and answered questions in that role. This allowed them to share their experiences, offer one another advice, and share the challenges they had faced. This became an encouraging space to affirm that they belonged in the teaching fraternity.



Figure 5: The hotseat

2.8.4 Poetry writing

The use of poetry in research has become a much-used contemporary practice, and Hanauer (2010, p. 8) emphasizes that poetry writing is a “process, practice and product” that should be unpacked as a form of “deep, personal communication that develops when an individual has something personal to say”. Using poetry writing (see Chapter eight, session seven), the participants generated data that I then used to create ‘found poetry’. Prendergast (2006) describes ‘found poetry’ as “the imaginative appropriation and reconstruction of already existing texts”. It is done by “selecting words and phrases from an original text, then re-arranging these words to create a poem that represents the original text's meaning anew” (Burdick, 2011, p. 3). Found poetry has the potential to reveal an emerging understanding of a relevant topic (Prendergast, 2006). The poem I created (see Chapter eight, session seven) from the participant’s data reveals my insight into the participants’ emerging understanding of play and teaching and thus further highlights their experiences.

2.8.5 Letter writing

Letter writing allows the participant to be truthful and to express deep inner thoughts that may be difficult to share vocally with a group of people (Stamper, 2020). The writer maintains intimacy and reserves the emotional connection between him-/herself and the recipient of the letter (Burt, 2021). Letter writing is also a way to understand ourselves better through writing about ourselves to ourselves or to another person (Flemming, 2020). Using letter-writing, the participants wrote a letter to their future selves and their future learners. Through this activity, they were able to envision themselves as teachers and formulate thoughts on how they would like to teach, the kind of learners they would like to encounter, and the kind of teaching practice they hoped to cultivate. The letter served as a memorandum of understanding between the identities of the preservice teachers and the professional teacher identities they desired. These letters evoked awareness of the teacher identities and their responsibilities the preservice teachers envisioned. Their writing created a vivid image of their desired futures and also served as a landmark that might remind them of their past desires once they enter the teaching profession (Channa, 2017).

2.9 Data Interpretation: Making Meaning of the Data

To analyse the data, I had generated, I approached the data set with an open mind (Byrne, 2022). First, I took time away from the data to clear my mind and ‘forget’ any influences I may

have had while generating the data. I did not look at my notes from the data generation phase. When I returned to my study to begin the analysis process, I used the inductive approach. “Inductive analysis refers to approaches that primarily use detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data by an evaluator or researcher” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). The inductive research approach enables the researcher to find emerging, salient or reoccurring concepts or themes inherent in the raw data (Kyngäs, 2020). This analysis approach is flexible and led by the data and is therefore not limited within the confines imposed by the structure of methodologies (Thomas, 2006). In working with the data, analysis commences with close repeated readings of the textual data to establish familiarity and create a foundation for the in-depth analysis process. Familiarizing oneself with the data allows the practitioner to identify emerging patterns, themes, and narrative threads (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). What follows is an account of how I managed to analyse the data that had been generated and the processes I followed.

2.9.1 Getting into the data

The initial data set that I generated with the participants was audio and video recorded, and I then made transcriptions from the recordings and photographs. To begin the analysis process, I transcribed the audio and video recordings into text. During the transcription process, I listened repeatedly to the recordings by adopting my researcher identity, which allowed me to begin making observations about myself, the participants, and what had transpired during the sessions. I then added additional data about my observations, which are integrated with the transcribed textual data in the data presentation chapters.

Creswell and Creswell (2017) propose the use of an observation protocol when engaging with the data. The researcher makes multiple observations and records everything pertaining to the phenomenon under study (Keay-Bright & Hansen, 2017). These observations could be derived from the data or they could be the thoughts that stem from listening to recordings and reading the transcribed texts. When I listened to the recordings, I noted that I had talked quite a lot during the sessions, and I was able to identify missed opportunities as well as some meaningful moments. During the transcription process, I made meticulous notes of my observations. Samaras and Freese (2006) encourage self-study researchers to record all their observations while analysing the data. This process of recording may occur by highlighting pertinent observations in colour and writing written notes in the margins. They also encourage researchers to allow the ‘mess’ of this process to take form (Baker, 2021). Upon completion of

the transcriptions, I extracted pertinent excerpts to develop the data representations (see Chapter five).

2.9.2 Data categories

While extracting useful data representations that addressed the research questions, I revisited the data sources. The audio recordings enabled me to remember the mood in each session and allowed me to assess the tone of voice. This process allowed me to record the data representations as a memory as I considered my feelings, actions, and words. I also considered the lags and silences in our conversations and during the activities and wrote about those moments to allow me to interpret and give meaning to silences, mood, and tone of voice.

Once the data representations of all the sessions had been completed, I used them as data sources to identify emerging themes and possible concepts relevant to my study. I initially printed the data representations and used coloured pencils and pens to underline and highlight words and phrases that I found relevant. I wrote questions in my journal and in the margins of each page. I also paused to record the burning thoughts and ideas that emerged from this process in my journal. I did not know where they would feature in the thesis or if they would feature at all; however, those thoughts deepened my thinking as they enhanced reflexivity and helped me understand the data better. Samaras and Freese (2006) encourage these methods during coding when the researcher writes in the margins and highlights important patterns and ideas as data. They also implore researchers to continuously read their data and immerse themselves in the process which is, at this stage, a ‘mess’. This suggestion is supported by Baker (2021). Edge and Olan (2021) also agree, and strongly encourage the self-study researcher to work through the ‘mess’ of their research as data analysis at this stage is not as neat as it appears in the completed thesis.

I spent a significant amount of time writing and organising the data during the analysis phase. I often felt lost as I tried to manage and identify salient words, phrases, and themes from such a large body of data. I recognise that I initially failed to make connections and to develop clarity in the primary themes and concepts that would be relevant to the research and aligned with the questions. I was often overwhelmed and procrastinated as I lacked direction. However, I was unaware that my mind was subconsciously processing the information during these periods of procrastination. My supervisors continually encouraged me by affirming my ability and also reminded me that gaining experience was part of the process.

2.9.3 Commencing the data analysis and data interpretation processes

MacKenzie and Knipe (2006) state that, while the data may be presented in a linear and coherent manner, the process of analysing, organizing, and interpreting the data is cyclical in nature. Clandinin (2006) and Clandinin and Connelly (1994; 2000) agree that the process needs to focus in four directions: inward and outward, backward and forward. Inward refers to the internal condition of the researcher's feelings, hopes, and reactions to the entire research process. Outward refers to existential conditions such as the environment and reality. Backward and forward is the continual reciprocal process between the inward and outward processes of interpreting the data (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; 2000).

Before interpreting the data, the researcher must present the most accurate account of the data generation process to establish transparency and validity. Accuracy enables the analysis to be premised on transparency and openness, which is vital in self-study (Hamilton et al., 2020). The sections below on how I generated, gathered, and organized the data present an honest account of how I engaged with the data, which were processes that my supervisors also affirmed. My transparent and honest account of the data generation and representation processes includes the highlights and lowlights I encountered, and this account affirms the transparency of my interpretations that were untainted by a lack of facts or bias.

At first, I felt as if I was overexplaining myself and over-justifying my choices. However, with time, I realised that recording all my insights and impressions was important as I achieved transparency which, in my view, increased the trustworthiness of the study and also gave insight into my motivations for the choices I made. As qualitative research is descriptive and interpretive in nature (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), the researcher must provide details of the where, when, how and with whom the study took place. This includes sharing information on the setting, the participants, how the data were generated, the environment, and other factors that were important to the research process. Understanding and adhering to these requirements enhanced my awareness of what I was writing, and I became conscious of the value of providing as many details as possible.

In the interpretation of the data, the researcher needs to apply the mind to become immersed in the data. This process requires complex, multi-faceted, iterative, and simultaneous reasoning (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). By maintaining the inductive approach during the interpretation phase, the researcher should be able to analyse the data "from the bottom up", thus allowing

interpretation of the data to pave a way through a constant back and forth oscillation between the researcher, the data, and the interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

2.10 Ethical Considerations

Self-study researchers have a moral commitment and ethical responsibility towards themselves, their participants, their critical friends, and the self-study community at large (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; LaBoskey, 2004). I therefore adhered to all the ethical regulations and considerations issued by the university and these guided my methodological practices. The process of data generation only began once approval had been applied for and granted by the university's Ethics Committee. In my first meeting with the participants, I explained the consent form and the necessity of signing it. I also emphasised their voluntary participation and right to discontinue their participation at any point of the study. Approval to conduct this research was granted by the university on the basis of ensuring the safety and anonymity of my participants. My responsibility to ensure their safety was ensured by using a venue on campus which was familiar and accessible to the students while it was also a safe space where interruption would not occur. Furthermore, given the use of memory-work in the data generation process, I also had the responsibility to ensure the emotional safety of myself and the participants. I therefore regularly urged the participants to share what they wanted to share from their memories. I also used anonymity in the activities by using post-it papers and not requiring their names on these responses. This allowed the participants to share what they wanted while protecting their identities within the group. As the main participant who had to deeply reflect on my childhood memories, I invited a psychotherapist to participate in my data generation and analytical processes and to assist me in making sense of my memories. I also adhered to the guidelines of the memory-work method to ensure methodological relevance to my study. Furthermore, I use pseudonyms in this thesis manuscript to protect the identities of all my participants.

2.11 Trustworthiness

To sustain the credibility of my study, I shared my research processes regularly with selected colleagues and members of the self-reflexive cohort, who were my critical friends for the duration of the study. I also had opportunities to share my research with members of the study group of which I was a member. Critical friends served as a validation for the research, as

proposed by LaBoskey (2004). Their participation encourages honesty and transparency in the research process, thereby increasing the trustworthiness of the data and findings.

Among my critical friends were academics who understood my methodology, and some were well acquainted with various research practices. They were able to critique my work in order to add value objectively. They examined my interpretation of data pieces to check my interpretations (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). In self-study, validation is possible “through the construction, testing, sharing, and re-testing of exemplars of teaching practice” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 860). Therefore, being constantly critiqued and being given feedback on my research, assisted and encouraged me to review the process constantly. Furthermore, the regular meetings with my supervisors also provoked new ideas and refined those I had formulated. All these efforts and practices strengthened the validity and credibility of my research.

2.12 Research Challenges

The doctoral journey was a road filled with moments of achievements and challenges. From the time I registered, I experienced both excitement and anxiety. I took strides that surprised me but was also confronted with personal and professional challenges that stretched me as an individual and academic. Below are the challenges I encountered throughout my doctoral journey. Some are not necessarily directly linked to the research, but their occurrence affected my research in some way, and hence I refer to them below.

2.12.1 The imposter syndrome

The imposter syndrome was the greatest challenge that hovered over me when I joined academia and felt compelled to register for a doctoral study. The imposter syndrome can be described as a psychological phenomenon (Clance & Imes, 1978) which manifests as a set of emotions that are often felt by professionals who are overwhelmed with thoughts of inadequacy, lack of belonging, and that they are undeserving while all others are effective (Gadsby, 2022; Wilkinson, 2020). As they struggle with these thoughts and emotions, these professionals fear being viewed by others as incompetent (Leonhardt et al., 2017) and labelled an intellectual fraud (Clance & Imes, 1978). They fear and struggle with the thought of being viewed by others and themselves as ‘token appointments’ (Mbatha et al., 2020).

Since my undergraduate studies, I had always feared engaging in post-graduate studies. During my undergraduate years, I heard the narrative that post-graduate research was not for everyone

but for certain people. Those people were always chosen by professors and invited for post-graduate research – as I had witnessed during my undergraduate years. Having not been selected after I had completed my final undergraduate year, the narrative of not being good enough was etched into me. Transitioning from the Performing Arts to Education gave me a new purpose which led me to register for a Master’s degree in Education. Being a high school teacher, I felt that the teaching certificate was not enough to equip me to teach. I needed to learn more about being a teacher; hence I registered for my Master’s degree. Becoming an academic was another identity I felt unqualified for and registering for a doctoral study needed to come from a need, not a work compliance.

Engaging with my supervisors about my ‘lack of knowing’ about academia and my entrenched narrative of ‘not being good enough’, they listened supportively. They affirmed my belonging on various occasions, which contributed to my current assertive positionality within academia. My co-authors have also played a critical role as we all struggled with imposter syndrome as novice academics. Through the self-study methodology and multiple conversations, we began to shed this imposter syndrome and asserted ourselves within the academic space.

2.12.2 Opening up to the memory-work method

When I chose memory-work as a method for my research, I did not anticipate the challenges I would encounter. My rudimentary association with play was based on happy memories, which I initially recalled when I chose the method. However, through remembering, writing, and re-remembering and re-writing, I began to discover all kinds of memories that were related to play and thus needed to move from the private (myself) to the public (the research). I deeply contemplated the memories I recalled and, through various conversations with my supervisors, co-authors, and therapist, I found the courage and freedom to integrate my memories into my research.

2.12.3 Understanding and writing reflexively

Another challenge I experienced when I started analysing my data was my inability to be reflexive in my writing. Much of the feedback I received from my supervisors was about writing reflexively. There were moments in my writing when I wrote reflexively but was unaware of it. My supervisors would identify those sections for me in the drafts that I had written. Their comments enabled me to develop my writing skill reflexively as I took those

highlighted texts and examined them compared with the writings of others to determine what I had done ‘right’ and how I could replicate that.

Another mechanism that assisted me in my writing was the supervision meetings we had, which we recorded on Zoom. I spoke a lot during these meetings and one of the comments I got was to go back and listen to the recordings and transcribe the conversation. I began to identify using the transcriptions that a lot I had said was reflexive; however, I struggled to articulate these insights in my writing. Therefore, transcribing assisted me in making these connections and, at times, extracting what I had transcribed and integrating it into my thesis writing. Apart from reading, these practical methods I applied consistently developed my reflexive writing skill.

2.13 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to share my methodological understandings and elaborate on the methodologies and methods I had employed in the study. I explained each data generation method and how I analysed the data that had been generated. I also explained my relationship with my critical friends and the role they played in the research process. I gave an account of the participant recruitment process and the challenges associated with it. I also described other challenges I encountered and explained the ethical considerations and trustworthy requirements that I adhered to in the execution of this study. In the next chapter, I begin to present the data, starting with my childhood memories. Chapter three expounds two memories, while others are presented in Chapter four.

CHAPTER THREE: UNEARTHING THE THREADS OF MEMORY

3.1 Introduction

I commence this chapter by presenting two of the four memories I referred to in Chapter two. Overall, the memories I recalled and analysed were my childhood memories of play, my memories of being an undergraduate Drama student, my memories of being a preservice teacher, and my memories of being a novice school teacher. As I engaged with these memories, I identified and analysed the learning moments that I found pivotal to playful pedagogy. In this chapter I highlight significant learnings that answer the first part of the first research question: *What can I learn about playful pedagogy from my own memories?* I shall explore the second part of this question – the participants’ involvement – in a later section.

The first memory I explore is my childhood memories of play and what my experiences of play were. These memories were overcast by events of inter-township migration as I had to move a few times because I was foster cared by my maternal relatives. Some of these memories were uncomfortable but, through the method of memory-work and my continual conversations with my therapist (who also became a critical friend), I managed to process the uncomfortable memories in a manner that prevented emotional or psychological harm. I discuss my favourite games and how we played them as children. I also identify how play became a critical component that contributed positively to my well-being. I conclude this chapter by discuss forms of play restriction that I was able to identify and the dangers associated with some play activities.

3.2 Memory 1: Inter-Township Migration during my Childhood

When I was young, I lived in one of the townships in Durban and we played many games outside in the streets. I lived in a township¹⁰ North of Durban known as Kwa-Mashu, which is similar to other townships in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. Townships are internally separated into different sections and these are referred to by the letters of the alphabet. I grew up in the area known as Kwa-Z, meaning area Z. My grandfather’s house, which was later inherited by my father, was located there, but my father sold it during his separation from my mother. Between the ages of 8 and 11, I moved from my family home to Kwa-R (a relative’s home)

¹⁰ Township – a racially segregated underdeveloped residential area generally located on subsidiary land historically reserved for the Black population of South Africa.

and Kwa-Q (another relative's home). Both were maternal relatives who fostered me for a number of years after my parents' separation. When I was 12, I was reunited with my mother. She had finally found a house for us to live in, which was a new one-roomed RDP house which she received from the government through the low-cost housing project initiated after South Africa had transitioned to democracy in 1994. Through the benefit of this house, my mother was reunited with her three daughters after a challenging separation.

3.2.1 Playing in the township

In Kwa-Z, where my family home was and Kwa-R, where I lived in a relatives' home, I was allowed to play with neighbourhood children in the street. Times for play in the neighbourhood was after school during the week and in the mornings on weekends. Seeing my friends gathering in the street through a window was one of the ways that indicated it was time to play. Children were sitting on the street as early as sunrise on a Saturday or Sunday morning. Some were in their front yards behind fences, and some children were nowhere in sight. Sitting on the road early in the morning indicated to other children that you were ready to play. Children could still be in their pyjamas or could have changed into their 'play clothes', but if they were on the street, they were ready to play. Children sitting in their fenced yards in the front of the house was another indication that they were ready to play. However, a locked gate was their parents' or a guardian's way of letting the children of that family know that it was not time to play yet. Therefore, when the children were on the street, they would visit those in their fenced yards and find ways to play with them through the fence. The fences were commonly wire fencing, making it possible for little hands and small objects to pass through the fence as children created opportunities to play. The children who were not in sight soon after sunrise usually lived in strict households and played at a set time after certain chores had been done. Upon reflection, I must admit that I grew up in very strict homes.

In both Kwa-Z and Kwa-R, I had friends and played as often as daytime allowed. If my memory serves me right, our parents and guardians did not have a problem as long as we played in our street during the day and in the afternoon. Scoldings, and, at times, hidings were administered when we played too far from home or returned when the sun had set. As we were generally oblivious of the time, the sun was always our timekeeper.

Whether after school or during the day on weekends, we created play times for ourselves. After school, when I had returned home, I would change out of my school uniform into play clothes

that I would only wear at home and in which I was allowed to play. These clothes were the kind that I could not wear anywhere else but at home, as they were generally tattered. Instilling responsibility and self-care from a young age, my mother gave all her three daughters chores to do in and around the house. As the last-born child, I was responsible for washing my undergarments and socks every day after school and my eating bowl in the mornings and after lunch. My older sisters looked after the house under the instructions my mother would leave for them. My mother was strict and worked 12-hour shifts, which meant she was not at home in the evenings or the mornings when I woke up unless she was on leave or not working. My mother's work schedule allowed me to play at sunrise, up to sunset or away from my street sometimes, even though I knew it was not allowed. So, I would change into my play clothes, wash my socks, vest and underwear, and eat whatever was available in the house before heading out to play.

3.2.2 The games we played

My first memory of play was that I played with my childhood friends the kind of games we played in the socio-economic context in which we lived. The games we played included those mentioned in Chapter two, as well as the following: *ingqathu* (skipping rope), *ushumpu* (girls playing ball), *ukudlala izindlu* (playing house), *ukushaya izinyoni* (hunting birds), *ibhola* (playing soccer), *izimoto* (making cars), *u3-tin* (girls playing a ball game), *uqithi* (the jumping from the tree game), and *amagende* (playing with stones/pebbles).

When playing in our backyard, children would gather and decide on a game such as *uqithi* (jumping from the tree) and choose the person to start the game. Donkey was played with a tennis ball and a space for players to run. We would each pick a number, and the person starting the game would take the tennis ball and wait for us to spread out. S/he would then throw the ball high up in the air while shouting a number. If your number was called, you had to catch the ball before it landed on the ground while everyone else was running away as far as they could from the catcher. If your number was called and you failed to catch the ball and it fell on the ground, everyone ran away from you and stopped only once you had the ball in your hands and shouted "Stop!". You then threw the ball trying to hit someone nearest to you. If the ball hit them, a D was recorded to their number. However, if you missed them, the D was recorded to your name. The D was for 'donkey', and once the full name ('donkey') appeared against your number, you were out of the game. Playing on the street made hitting other players with the ball easier as there were no obstructions. However, playing in my backyard made it

challenging because the trees were obstructions and made it challenging to find people to hit with the tennis ball. We loved the added challenge of playing around trees. I enjoyed this game because I was usually one of the last standing players in the game. I was a fast runner and could always run away from the ball or towards it when my number was called. I also enjoyed climbing trees even though I ended up being forbidden to do so by my mother because I broke my arm three times falling out of trees before the age of ten.

Playing *ugithi* – jumping from a tree required a stick and one or more trees, depending on the number of players. If there were more players, then more trees would be needed. Our backyard was big and accommodated quite a large group of children as we did not have outbuildings in the backyard. This was the norm in the township due to large families. We had mango, paw-paw, peach, banana, and mulberry trees, so we had plenty of trees to climb as children. The players would draw a circle next to the tree and then place a stick on the ground in it. Depending on the unanimous decision who would start the game, someone would then throw the stick as far away as possible. Another player then fetched the stick while the rest climbed into the trees. Upon returning with the stick and placing it back in the circle, s/he would also climb a tree, trying to touch another player. If any player was touched while in the tree, both the toucher and the touched would begin the chase. The chase was on when they climbed down or jumped from the tree, rushing for the stick. Whoever got the stick first would throw it far away and climb up again, while the other player would have to run for the stick, bring it back into the circle, and climb up the tree in an attempt to touch another person. In this manner the game was repeated over and over. Unlike in the donkey game, there was no winner in this game. However, those who managed to climb highest and could move among the branches avoiding being touched, and those who were able to jump down the tree faster when they were touched, were considered masters of the game. Having broken my arm three times jumping down trees, it was clear that I was not a master of this game.

When we played these games in our backyard, there was a lot noise such as laughter, excited voices, and footsteps as we ran around the yard. Children would climb into the trees and kick up dust due to their excessive running. However, if someone saw my mother coming from the bus stop walking up the road toward our house, a shout ‘*nangu umaka Sipho!*’ (here comes Sipho’s¹¹ mother) would ring out from the one who had spotted my mother first. That shout abruptly ended the game, with children running away from our yard into the street, or returning

¹¹ Sipho is a shorten name for Nosipho. However, it is a full name when given to male children.

home, leaving our yard dusty. My mother's firm demeanour was widely known by many children in the neighbourhood, resulting in children running away when my mother walked by. Running away mostly occurred in the evenings as children tried to reach their homes before curfew time. The sight of my mother sent them into their yards in fear of being scolded for being on the street at night. Running also occurred when we played in our family backyard and heard the shout to announce my mother's arrival. Entering our fenceless home, my mother would see the dusty yard, handprints on the walls, fallen tree leaves, and settling dust as evidence that we had played there, and she would enter the house scolding us for the messy yard.

deepening my memory of childhood play, I remembered the childhood friends I had played with. My childhood playmates mostly lived on the same street or in homes on streets in the vicinity. This was the same in both Kwa-Z and Kwa-R. I remembered that, in Kwa-Z, I had a mixture of male and female friends, which was the same in the primary school I attended. However, in Kwa-R I had more male playmates. In Kwa-Z there were also times when we went to cut sugarcane which we ate as a sweet delicacy, and to do so we had to travel kilometres from home, passing nearby dams and deserted construction dumps. In my memory, there were moments of designated gender roles, but we all went to cut sugarcane regardless of gender. The only time we did not go with the rest was when we were prohibited from going as instructed by an adult, as this activity was fraught with extreme risk and danger. Sugarcane cutting was an activity reserved for adults. Apart from that, no other reasons stopped us from going. It was the same for other games we played. From what I remembered, there were no gender limitations in our play at that time.

In school, we also played jointly as males and females but there were particular games in sports that were played separately. Besides sports, I remember waiting outside for the school transport to pick us up. We usually played the *ushumpu* (a girls' ball game) or *ingqathu* (skipping rope) games while waiting for our transport after school. I associated my school memory of play with the time I lived at Kwa-Z, as that was when I had access to school transport. When I moved home at the age of 8, I lost that privilege and had to travel by public transport, which included buses and mini-bus taxis. There was no waiting after school, thus no playing occurred any more.

In Kwa-R I frequently played with boys. We often played on the street as it was long and open. Very few houses were fenced, and children were often outside. I could not recall any other

salient memory of play during my stay at this particular relative's home. In Kwa-Q, another relative's home, I was not allowed to leave the yard and I was not allowed to befriend or play with the children in the neighbourhood. As a result, I played only at school. This memory centred mostly on the restrictions that were placed on playing. I recalled some significant memories of play when I first arrived at this place. Boys and girls played *uSikotshi* (hopscotch) in the cul-de-sac that joined our street. We also played *ufihla bande* (hiding the belt). This was at the last home where I lived before I was reunited with my mother. I lived here when I was 10 and 11 years old. The houses in Kwa-Q were like those in suburbs and very different from the two-roomed (one-bedroom) house I had lived in in Kwa-R with seven other people and the four-roomed (two-bedroom) house I had lived in in Kwa-Z with my two sisters and both parents. In Kwa-Q the homes usually had three bedrooms or more with a separate lounge, kitchen, and dining area. They were also gated, had fencing, and had car garages.

Ufihla bande (hiding the belt) was a gender-neutral game that we often played indoors requiring only a belt. It required a space that had multiple places to hide, so a house was very suitable. A house without adult supervision was even better as there were no restrictions to access. The most common areas to hide were the lounge, dining area, or the children's bedroom. A player in the game started it by hiding the belt in the house where no one could see it. Upon calling that the belt was hidden, the other players would start looking for the belt. The player who had hid the belt would prompt or guide other players by calling "Hot!" or "Cold!" if a player looked in a particular area. Hot meant you were looking in the right place and were close to finding it, while cold meant you were looking far from where the belt was hidden. As the players were directed by the prompting of the one who had hidden the belt, this meant that everyone crowded to the 'hot' area of the room, looking for the belt. The one who found it would take a turn to hide it, and the game began again.

One day when we were playing this game, the belt was used to lock the door in one of the bedrooms in a nearby house. A few of the boys had placed one end of the belt between the door and frame which served as an extra layer of support that stopped the door from being opened. I remembered being locked in with boys and another girl who helped me to try and pull the belt from the door so that it would open. There was a commotion as some were pushing the door to prevent it from opening and others (myself included) pulling at the belt and pushing away the people standing against the door. I remembered being pulled from the back, held tightly around my waist, and falling on my back on the bed with the person who had pulled me attempting to

get on top of me. At that moment, the room was filled with both laughter and screams, sounds of moving bodies, and bashing against furniture. I remembered fighting to get up from the bed, pushing to join those pulling the belt and pushing the door open. The door was finally opened with the assistance of the children who had been locked out of the room. I remembered a further commotion when the door was opened. I remembered laughter again, exclamations, and chatter. I remembered feeling fear and panic, and tears filling my eyes. I did not make sense of anything about that moment apart from the realisation that I had just escaped a rape attempt. I did not know whether the laughter, exclamations, or talk were directed at me, and I could not remember what occurred afterwards.

3.3 Salient Impressions in my Memories of Childhood Play

As I engaged with my childhood memories of play, salient impressions leaped from the text, especially while I was writing down my memories. Analysing these memories, I recalled who I had been playing with, the impact of inter-township migration on my games as a child, the sense of abandonment I experienced when my father and mother left, and the effect that restricted play had on me.

3.3.1 The sustenance that childhood play provided

In my reflections on being an abandoned child and the games we played, there were many things I did not understand about my parents' separation. However, after my mother had moved out of the house leaving us behind, play time outside became the norm. I even played far away from my street and often stayed out late. My mother's absence left us unsupervised and unprotected. My sisters and I knew her instructions about playing, self-care, and housekeeping; however, at our age her words were not enough to parent us. We needed her presence. During this time without my mother and living with different relatives, I became an unguarded child as I used public transport and was free to travel to school in any way I chose.

Fortunately, I enjoyed school, had developed a sound sense of responsibility, and was involved in multiple activities that gave me a sense of value and instilled in me the importance of attending school. Nonetheless, the vacuum created in my life at this time had the potential to steer me away from my mother's words and to adopt the negative habits pre-teens succumb to in the absence of active parenting. However, regardless of the many challenges I encountered, I remained a happy child. I continued playing and could make friends where I lived, except in Kwa-Q, where I was held in check by multiple restrictions. As I reflected on this time, I

understood that playing had become a way of escape for me. It was a time in which I experienced comfort and happiness as I engaged in the games I loved and the ones I also thrived in. We still played games like ‘donkey’ in Kwa-R, which provided me with opportunities to win as I was already good at this game. The academic success I achieved, the responsibilities I had in school, and the success I enjoyed in the games I played provided me with a sense of stability after my primary space of stability, my home, had been taken away from me. I looked forward to school because I was a top performer. I was also the only child who was requested to sing the National Anthem during special events. The positions of prefect and class representative were important and special to me. Even though I lost the privilege of playing outside with school friends as we waited for our transport, I leaned towards sport and participated in cross country events. I ran in the 800m and even 400m events, even if I was not very successful in the 400m. I also participated in the high jump and long jump during sporting events. The engagements I had in school made it impossible for me to go home straight after school, as the void I could have felt was filled by my enjoyment of school sports, leadership activities, and academic achievement. There was no need to fill the void with the precarious activities that other children engaged in after school. In fact, play allowed me to continue being a child and thrive in the childhood activities I engaged in regardless of the difficulties I was experiencing with my family. The vacuum left by a broken home was filled through play at my foster homes and at school.

3.3.2 Play as a socio-communal activity

Having identified this theme, I explored the opportunities that play provided in the social aspects of my life. In the township context, children were able to play openly and regularly. The proximity of the houses and sometimes the lack of fencing inadvertently created opportunities for the development of friendships among children and their neighbours. However, adult neighbours often experienced this freedom to play differently. For instance, feeding children from other homes when they fed their own was an opportunity to develop neighbourly friendships and trust. Children also united adult neighbours by forging familiarity among them because neighbours’ children played with one another. Adults’ concern for children’s safety and a lack of trust among neighbours (if it ever occurred) was not often projected onto the children. Depending on how adults addressed childhood delinquency and minor incidences of conflict, children created the potential for neighbours to be friends or foes. Therefore, how we played as children could bring neighbours closer or create animosity among

adults. Although there were disputes among the children, they easily dissipated as holding onto them interfered with our playing. So, children could argue during play, cry, and even fight, but they would put it quickly behind them and play happily again the next day as if nothing had happened. This was a trait that some adult neighbours struggled with, but essentially the games children played and their engagement with play increased the sense of community within the neighbourhoods where I grew up.

As my mother was a strict parent, the neighbours did not take offence when she scolded the children she met on the street in the evenings. They appreciated it. I remember instances when my mother would give us a hiding with a belt when we fought in her presence. When I grew up, if a child reported receiving a hiding from another parent/adult, the chances were that they would receive another hiding at home as parents believed that the adult would not have given you a hiding unless it was deserved. This is typical of the African motto that ‘it takes a village to raise a child’. Therefore, while we played there was always a level of surveillance in the areas we played although we were unsupervised. This unspoken parental collaboration solidified the sense of community that permeated our neighbourhoods, as playing had a compelling ability to unite.

3.3.3 Restrictions on my childhood play

As a child who was generally allowed to play quite freely, play was not without its limitations and conditions. For instance, I could play after I had done my chores such as washing my socks, undergarments, and eating bowl. Occasionally on weekends, especially during spring cleaning of the house, I would be allocated other chores such as picking up litter and leaves in the yard. Even though I had enough socks and undergarments for school, I was responsible for washing them every day after school. My mother would rewash them on the weekend with a firmer hand that restored the fabric to its perfectly clean condition. The primary aim of giving us chores was to learn responsibility and self-care from an early age.

My mother also put some limitations on my play. Based on her instructions, I came to understand where the acceptable and prohibited spaces for play were. She also outlined acceptable times for me to play, which were quite different from those of my sisters, who had more domestic chores than I had. Reflecting on and understanding the dangers of teenage life better, I think my mother limited them by adding chores so they would stay in the house more often. This seldom restrained my middle sister, who roamed the streets until late in the evenings

and did very little to contribute to the cleanliness of the house. I recalled that she was the only one of the three sisters who was severely scolded. I realised that the limitations that parents put on our play were to protect and not restrict us.

Kwa-Q was a clear space of restricted play. When I first moved there, I tried to make friends and play after school and on weekends as I had done in Kwa-R and Kwa-Z. However, in a short space of time, I was explicitly prohibited from playing at any time and on any day. My grandmother believed that girl children should stay at home and learn to do all the house chores and never be on the street. Consequently, I did various household chores, cleaned the yard, and weeded her garden whenever I was not at school. Four gates gave access to the yard. Two were for pedestrians and they were locked with padlocks at all times of the day. In my first year living in Kwa-Q where I was the only child, I struggled to adjust to this lifestyle. I looked forward to going to school and my heart sank when the bell rang after school. The second year was more bearable as my eldest sister joined me. We both lived the same way by doing household chores when we were not at school. At the beginning of the third year of my life in Kwa-Q, we moved in with our mother in the RDP house and experienced the solace we had longed for over the years of our separation from her.

3.3.4 The causes and effects of dangerous play

As a child, I was not aware of the harm dangerous play activities could cause. After having fallen three times from trees playing *uqithi*, I still did not protect myself by disengaging from this game and my mother had to step in to protect me from this self-inflicted and painful harm. Limiting my play was necessary and justified, as I was not responsible enough to play without hurting myself.

My playmates and I were all cautioned against cutting sugarcane, but we still took chances, usually during the school holidays. This was the time when parents/guardians were at work and we stayed at home. We had heard stories about a multi-headed monster in the lake that ate people or drew them into the quarry pool if he connected his gaze with that of a human. But we had also heard that a pint of milk was enough to protect one from the monster's harm if it was dropped into the quarry pool while passing by. We knew that one of the ways to cross the quarry pool successfully was to look away until safely on the far side. These stories were always told when cautioning people, particularly children, from going near the quarry. Using this knowledge, we pursued sugarcane cutting with a pint of milk that we would buy with

money we collected among ourselves. Sugarcane cutting was also illegal because it meant entering a farmer's land without permission and taking his sugarcane. Some people worked in the sugarcane fields, and most were isiMpondo¹² speaking from the Eastern Cape Province. The sight of children on the farm created chaos as we would be chased away. To avoid being seen, we would walk between rows of sugarcane, scared of snakes and other animals we might encounter. We proceeded nonetheless, cutting as much sugarcane as possible and running out of the field with whatever we could carry on our heads or under our arms.

Regardless of all the perceived danger, we always returned safely. There were stories of people who had fallen into the quarry pool or children who had played near the quarry, fell in, and succumbed to death. Some older people had been caught by farm workers and whipped for stealing sugarcane. If any of the dangers had befallen us, there would be no end to the repercussions we would have suffered at the hands (or canes) of our parents/guardians. However, we continued with this dangerous activity. I do not think we understood the risk and implications of the dangers we exposed ourselves to.

A frightening form of dangerous play I experienced was the rape attempt. On face value, the kind of play we engaged in when we were in that house was innocent and not out of the ordinary. However, some of the youngsters involved were devious and deceitful. How the belt had been used to lock a bedroom door had clearly been orchestrated by some boys with nefarious intent. On that day, the game was fraught with potential emotional and sexual harm that was not anticipated by some players, including myself. I experienced a dangerous situation that could have had life-long repercussions. Some children might have considered the actions of the boys a game, but they did not identify the potential harm. At the time I was prevented from opening the door and leave, the game stopped being play. This means that an innocent play tool (the belt) had been used for something else other than its intended purpose in the game. Restricting me from play in Kwa-Q, the neighbourhood where the incident occurred, was not as a result of this incident as I never shared my story with anyone at home. However, the restrictions placed on me by my guardian protected me from a similar experience while I lived in Kwa-Q. All the limitations placed on us by our parents/guardians were usually to protect us from harm, and they did not intend to limit our play without cause.

¹² IsiMpondo is a South African indigenous language that is closely related to isiXhosa.

3.4 Conclusion

I shared my childhood memories of play with reference to the games we played, the restrictions that hindered play, and the dangers associated with play. This memory also illustrated the importance of occasional adult intervention during play and how our playing as children had the power to unite or separate the neighbours. Overall this memory has evoked strongly both fond and sad memories of my childhood experiences. Nevertheless, my highlight was the opportunity to integrate these memories into the therapy sessions, which assisted me to make sense of my experiences and to reconcile with my uncomfortable childhood experiences.

3.5 Memory 2: Unlearning and Becoming

This memory details my lived experiences as an undergraduate student in the School of the Performing Arts at a South African university. In this memory, I share how Drama school, which I experienced as a liberal, emancipating space, challenged my adolescent socio-cultural conservatist views. I detail the different forms of culture shocks that I struggled with and elaborate on how my experiences in Drama school elicited a fundamental understanding of transformation, thus sowing a seed that continued to grow post-Drama school until it has flourished and now permeates my entire life.

3.5.1 My experiences of a socio-behavioural culture shock

As a Zulu-Christian teenager¹³ who adhered to traditional values in her young life, various things made me anxious about Drama school. Upon my arrival, I experienced a profound culture shock which filled me with apprehension. My dissonance deepened as I witnessed people who were my peers living quite differently from me. They dressed differently. Women wore above-the-knee shorts and skirts, shirts that revealed their cleavage, and body-tight pants and dresses. Many walked barefoot at times on campus and let their hair hang loose, styling it in different colours. This was different from me as I dressed quite conservatively compared to them, as the picture below depicts.

¹³ Zulu-Christian girl is my cultural and religious identification. Zulu is South African tribal ethnic group of people who follow conservative traditional practices.



Figure 6: A picture of me taken in my first undergraduate year

There were also socio-behavioural practices that were different from mine and foreign to me. Many drank alcohol and smoked and were not mindful of how they spoke. They addressed their elders by their first names and were overly friendly with strangers. In my view, many were ‘delinquents’ who had no place in a policy-regulated institution such as a university. Until I arrived at university, I had never called an elder by their first name. I had not smoked or consumed any alcohol or attended parties, night clubs, or any similar social gatherings, particularly not at night. I understood that engaging in such practices was wrong as I had been socialised to interpret such behaviour as rebellious. With this perspective as a first-year student, I was in for quite an awakening. I had so much to learn. My ‘unenlightened’ views left me shy and reserved and I hardly spoke to anyone in the Drama class or on campus. I lived in a residence on another campus and travelled daily using the university shuttle. As the only isiZulu-speaking student in my class, I struggled to make friends. The university was diverse and there were many students from Africa and other parts of the world in my classes. I heard a lot of languages in the residence and in the shuttles. Building on commonalities such as ethnicity, a high school, language, and home cities was how the first-year students initially established friendships and cliques. In my class, there were seven other black students; however, they spoke isiXhosa and came from the same city, so I struggled to feel at home in the group.

This was quite different from my experience in the residence, where I made friends with people from various parts of KwaZulu-Natal, which is my home province. Being in the residence was comforting, as some people spoke my language and came from backgrounds like mine. Based on these factors, we established friendships which helped us find our place at the university. However, I was uncomfortable on the Drama campus as I struggled to find those who were like me. I therefore relied on the comfort of the residence as it brought a sense of belonging and I managed to establish a community for myself with people like myself.

After a semester in which I struggled to forge genuine friendships in Drama school like the other students had done, I changed my study field. Initially, I was accepted in a program that was dually taught in English and Afrikaans. Having studied Afrikaans in high school, I believed I could continue with it at university level. However, the socialisation struggles in those classes affected my engagement in class and overall grades as I struggled to find people to work with collaboratively. I thrived only in individual tasks. At the end of the first semester, I asked to change from the Afrikaans-English class to the isiXhosa-English class, which had only seven other black students. This choice was still difficult for me, as I anticipated my struggles to continue due to two factors. The first was that even though I knew isiXhosa as it is a Nguni¹⁴ language just like isiZulu, I still did not believe I would be able to speak it. I was familiar with Afrikaans and had never been introduced to isiXhosa apart from watching television news or shows that were presented in isiXhosa. Secondly, I was concerned that I had missed the first semester to establish friendships in this class and I had already noticed an ensemble on campus. I felt that I would join them as an ‘outsider’. Being the only isiZulu speaker, the isiXhosa-speaking students in the class usually laughed at me when I spoke in their language. I felt ridiculed. However, the challenges of belonging that I encountered in the Afrikaans-English class were much greater and more overwhelming for me than the ridicule I encountered in the isiXhosa class.

To my surprise, when we grew closer, I learnt that the jokes the students made about how I spoke were not meant to ridicule me at all. In fact, they expressed their admiration for me and did not come from a place of belittling. They explained that isiZulu was a language they often heard on television but they were not used to speaking it. Having someone who spoke it around them daily was something they needed to get used to. So, they mimicked me a lot when I spoke.

¹⁴ Nguni is group of South African languages that comprise of isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati and isiNdebele. These languages have similar dialects and click-pronouncing words.

It was not ridicule but rather a humorous way of becoming acquainted with me. They also wanted to learn isiZulu. Soon I was integrated pretty well into the group. I was accepted, established new friendships within the class, and formed part of the existing ensemble. I was also allowed to speak isiZulu freely, which relieved my language acquisition anxieties. This acceptance opened me up to learning the isiXhosa language, in which I eventually became fluent. It also opened me to a different way of life as I grew to trust this group and allowed myself to understand how others lived.

3.5.2 The gender non-conforming culture shock

On my journey of understanding and accepting how other people lived, I had other struggles on campus as I could not understand and accept some of the people surrounding me. Having studied for a semester in Drama school, I had become familiar with the social behaviours and dress codes that were different to mine. I was not, however, accepting of the gender non-conforming behaviours I witnessed and began when I joined the isiXhosa class. This was an overwhelming and uncomfortable experience that affected me during the rest of my undergraduate studies and challenged me daily until I had learnt to adjust and be less judgemental. This feeling of discomfort was caused by the presence of a gender-non-conforming male student in my class. Some students and academics were openly homosexual on campus; however, I was challenged particularly by this student because of my proximity to him. I shall refer to him as Nkosana. He attended the isiXhosa class I joined. He was a black, isiXhosa-speaking student and exuded an extroverted, non-conforming gender confidence that made me uncomfortable. He identified as gay and often dressed revealingly in shorts and vests in the summer. He was friendly, smiling, talkative, funny, and loved the attention he so obviously sought. He loved giving hugs and cheek kisses to those he greeted. Coming from a conservative Christian family and a Zulu cultural community, these institutions had influenced my upbringing to the point that I did not accept people who were in same-sex relationships. I struggled when I was in his presence in the classroom, on the shuttle, and pairing up with him to do assessment tasks. I had never been in the presence of a gender non-conforming person but had heard of them and seen them in videos and the print media. I harboured judgemental and condescending remarks in my mind; however, I never shared them with anyone because I knew they were hurtful. I was seen as shy and conservative because I disagreed with many of the behaviours I saw around me. Therefore, keeping my judgemental opinions to myself gave me a better chance of being accepted.

This was my dilemma. My university application for this program was motivated by the high ranking the university received and the geographic location of this institution. Cape Town was a city I wanted to go to, and my further education was the only reason my mother would approve my relocation. My high school Drama teacher had encouraged me to consider pursuing Drama at university as she believed in my talent. I also aspired to be an actress, which motivated me to apply for enrolment in this program. Therefore, being accepted at the only university I had applied for and for the only program I had applied for was a dream come true. However, I did not like my classmates much as I did not understand them because we came from such different worlds. I was uncomfortable, but I needed them to like me; to choose me as a partner for assessment tasks and for castings, and I wanted people to sit with during breaks. For most of my first year, I grappled with these uncomfortable feelings and thoughts, and on most days when they overwhelmed me I cried, yearning to go home. I kept to myself by going to the library during breaks. I was conflicted as I wanted to be at this university, in this program, but I did not like the people around me. I also did not like feeling so discomfited as I tried to make friends and being accepted. I felt compelled to engage with people who were different from me and who ridiculed me when I spoke, and I did not like it.

3.5.3 The module activities culture shock

Besides my social acceptance and integration struggles, I also grappled with the study program. We had daily acting, dance, and voice classes. There were constant physical activities in each class; activities that required teaming up with other students, and activities that required physical interaction depending on the nature of the lesson. I struggled as working with others in this manner meant finding comfort and trust in being touched by others and sharing some close spaces with them. I was not used to that. There was nothing I could think of at that time in my upbringing that could have prepared me for that.

In the early weeks of the first year, during a dance class, we learned a warm-up routine led by our dance professor. One of the movements was to place our hands akimbo and slowly move the hips from side to side, front to back, following the count of the professor. The dance room walls were covered with mirrors, and I watched myself and others participating. I found this movement too sensual, and it made me uncomfortable especially I was making these movements in the presence of people I was still trying to get well acquainted with. Seconds in, while doing this movement, I heard a sporadic burst of giggles in the room. Staring into the mirror to identify where they came from, the professor and others in the room, including

myself, could not pinpoint who the culprits were. With the professor trying to maintain his counting and upholding the seriousness of the warm-up, students in the class just burst into laughter, which brought the warm-up to a halt as the professor allowed the wave of laughter to dissipate. The class continued, but not without receiving a talk about the seriousness of the profession we were aspiring to join and the importance of holding what we were doing as emerging thespians in high regard. Even though I understood this was a dance class and having seen some videos of how sensual contemporary dance could be, I was very uncomfortable moving this way and being touched by another person I was unfamiliar with, let alone a male peer. I did not want to participate but wanted to be part of the program. This was another serious dilemma I had to face.

3.6 The Yellow Book: Planting the Seed of Transformation

3.6.1 A life-changing experience

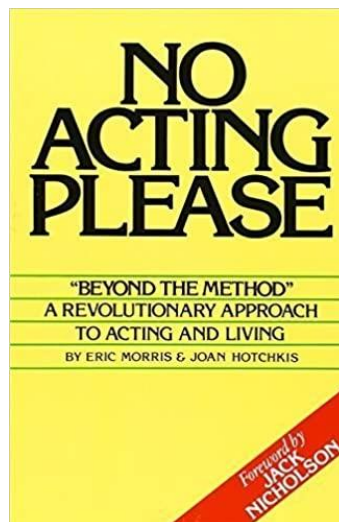


Figure 7: A picture of the yellow book

At the beginning of my second year, one of our directors recommended the class to read a book titled *No Acting Please*. This book had a yellow hardcover and was available in the library. I honestly did not read all the books cited in the book list. However, there were those mandatory books that one had to read and the ones that caught my curiosity. The book's title provoked my curiosity, which was the foremost reason I took an interest in it as I was an actress in training. So, why would our director recommend a book with such a contradicting title? I had to know.

I remember borrowing the book from our small campus library, and I often read it in the library and in my room in the residence. I always found it difficult to finish a book because, for most of my time as an undergraduate student, I was overwhelmed by academic pressure. I struggled to juggle academic written tasks with my performance tasks, which took much of my time as the class spent an inordinate time training our voices and bodies in voice and dance classes. We also rehearsed regularly for upcoming assessment tasks or public performances. Nonetheless, the yellow book held significant value as what I read was instrumental in my transcendence from an actress in training and an undergraduate student to my life beyond Drama school. I was not profoundly influenced by the book when I was still an undergraduate student; however, as a doctoral candidate and novice teacher-educator, I must acknowledge the book's impact on my life.

The yellow book was meant to assist us in our learning about acting. It efficaciously engaged the reader in the concept of *becoming* the character and not *acting* in the character's role. This required the actress to thoroughly research the character's life in numerous ways to embody the character and not just to act out what she may think is right for the character. In embodying the character successfully, the actress has to internalise the character's life: the emotions, thought process, appearance, the physical and vocal expressions, among many others. For the actress to optimally portray and internalise the character, she needs to identify personal traits about herself that may prohibit her from portraying the given character truthfully. In identifying those inhibitions, she should engage with self and others who may assist her in understanding where the inhibitions emanated from, why they are there, and how she can overcome them. In doing so, she must also unlearn the things that will prevent her from embodying the character truthfully. At some stage, this process will challenge the actress's values, upbringing, beliefs, outlook towards life, and many other aspects of her life, depending on the character she must become.

In my reflections when I wrote about this memory, I realised how reading this book had contributed to my transformation as a young adult. Although the yellow book was meant for thespians, it assisted me personally in identifying perspectives that were stifling my inter- and intra-personal growth. It enabled me to be open-minded and it increased my tolerance and acceptance of people who were different from me. It also capacitated me with the courage to evolve from the naïve views I had held as a teenager and to discover new forms of comfort

about and for myself. I was able to retain the perceptions that I believed were fundamental to me but to let go of those that had ceased to be useful.

3.6.2 Transformation in action

By my final year, I had managed to find some sense of belonging among my classmates and had come to accept those whom I deemed ‘different’. I had managed to work through the discomforts I had experienced when I first arrived. Having Nkosana in my daily circle of friends forced me to confront the homophobic ideologies I had held. As part of the group of students in the isiXhosa class, I got opportunities to explore the city, learn the language, meet other actors, and become part of the greater clique of black actors in the city. Exploring the city, going to different townships, and attending various artful events meant socialising more with people who were different to me. These encounters always challenged me, but eventually increased my tolerance and acceptance of ‘different’ people.

Notwithstanding working on myself, some still perceived me as quiet, introverted, and conservative in class. This was also due to the roles I took, which some feedback was that they were ‘safe’ roles. Another critique I received was that even the roles I took had room for boldness. I was critiqued for not taking my characters in that direction or playing them convincingly to show the distinction between *acting* and *becoming* the character. I struggled with that kind of feedback as it frequently resurfaced over the years as I played different roles.

In my defence, I disagreed with that kind of feedback as I knew how some of the roles challenged me as a person. Yet I never voiced my disagreement during feedback. I was aware of the change that was taking place within me and understood that I was evolving. My behaviour, my outlook, and my friendships had evolved. In my way, I found a way to unlearn the religious and cultural conforming ideologies that I had grown up with, but I never rejected those institutions entirely. I sought a more spiritual rather than religious perspective, and a more liberal rather than cultural stance. A lot was happening within me, and those who had become close friends on campus and in the isiXhosa class recognised the change in me. So, I never accepted the feedback I received from the directors and my seniors because I felt that they could not see the process of evolvment I was going through. During social gatherings on or off campus, we would jokingly refer to the people we had been in our first year and how we had dressed and spoken, and we even joked about some of our differences. That was when I picked up that people around me knew I was changing. In their way, they had also changed.

In the last semester of the final year, all graduating students were required to create a series of short performances showcasing their various talents. This was the most important performance for each student as it determined the completion of their degree and was attended by external examiners, various agents for artists, managers, directors, and the theatre-going public in the city. I had chosen three pieces for this performance: a short dramatic isiZulu scene, an English-heightened text from the Greek mythology, and an American monologue as my final piece.

I gave my last performance at Drama school in a theatre that was full to capacity and I performed the pieces I had spent months rehearsing for on a large proscenium arch stage. My performance was awarded with a standing ovation as I bowed and left the stage, clearing it for the next student. I had received standing ovations for group performances before during my time in Drama school, but this was the first time I received such an accolade for a solo performance on stage. It left me with mixed emotions. I was happy and teary and felt I had accomplished something and contributed to the esteem of the Drama school. I thought I had proven some people wrong with that performance and that I had managed to assert myself as a professional artist in the industry. However, although the feedback was encouraging, my grades did not change much from the grades I had achieved in previous years. I felt that my grades neither reflected my hard work for this performance nor my growth. A part of me was deeply hurt. However, I was encouraged by the many who applauded me during the celebratory event after the performance.

Soon after, I received multiple job offers for film and television recordings and was approached by various top artist agents who wanted to represent me. Our professors always told us that such opportunities were offered only to the best upcoming talented artists. In an induced competitive environment, we were always told that the industry had space for only the best, not the second best. Our professors had identified the 'best' and we could see that through the opportunities offered to some students and not the rest. We could see how some directors would use their influence or networks to award their 'best' with remunerated contracts from production houses in the city. Therefore, the high accolades and an invitation to be represented by a top management company and film and television recording offers affirmed that I belonged in the industry regardless of the perception the students and professors on campus might have had of me. These opportunities were what any final-year student aspired to and worked hard for, and I felt I was a worthy recipient. I was not the only student to receive such offers, but what made it significant for me was that many on campus, including my professors,

had never identify me as one of the students who would be rewarded in this manner. They had always positioned and treated me as second best, which affected my confidence throughout my time at Drama school. However, agents and professional artists in the industry who had come to watch that day placed me among ‘the best’.

3.7 The Role of Play in my Unlearning and Becoming

3.7.1 Voice classes

Being in Drama school, the major approach to learning was through play. Reflecting on this memory, I realised that playful pedagogy was a teaching and learning approach that had been introduced to me in Drama school. I understood that the program I had enrolled in at Drama school had predominantly used playful pedagogy for teaching and learning and that, for a significant time when I studied for this degree, I had been engaged in playful learning. For instance, the voice, acting, and dance classes we attended every day and the rehearsals afterwards all focused on aspects of play. In the voice class, we trained our voices for characterisation and audibility and strengthened the vocal cords and muscles. To achieve this, we engaged in various warm-up exercises, vocal games, and other activities depending on the focus of the lesson. Our classes were practical, and the activities had playful teaching approaches. A common example of a vocal warm-up to improve pronunciation is called *Peter Piper* and is recited as follows:

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. Did Peter Piper pick a peck of pickled peppers? If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers, where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked? (Pesce, 2007).

This tongue twister had to be recited as part of a warm-up exercise for specific activities to train the mouth muscles and improve pronunciation. In addition to improving pronunciation, the tongue twister was recited in various vocal characterisations individually or as a dialogue with a partner. In a noise-filled class, we would all be reciting the tongue twister to each other in an emotive-filled voice accentuating the use of muscles in the mouth. The main aim was to improve pronunciation, but the sub-aim was to develop vocal characterisation and build teamwork among partners.

3.7.2 Dance classes

Our dance lessons were also completely practical. We built physical strength and learnt the contemporary form of dance and depth of movement of the body for theatre and movement as dance. To achieve this, we engaged in physical warm-ups that included dance routines and exercises that would assist in developing physical strength. We worked in pairs or small groups of three or four. One example of a dance exercise to build trust was to work with a partner and mirror each other's movements while maintaining eye contact. Once the partners became in sync in movement and were absorbed in their eye contact, the exercise evolved into physical contact between the partners. At this stage, the partners would move in the space, maintaining synchronicity of their bodies and continuing the exercise by removing the mirroring and continuing moving by touching parts of their bodies. The exercise would begin in silence, and as the exercise transitioned into physical touch of the bodies, the professor would softly play classical music to heighten the mood as the exercise evolved into small, improvised dance pieces shared by partners. We would continue the exercise in deep concentration until the professor stopped us.

3.7.3 Acting classes

Like the voice and dance lessons, our acting classes were also practical and comprised of warm-ups related to the lesson's focused activity. We engaged in ice-breakers and improvisation and discussed play texts we were working on for assessment. We also worked on learning about physical characterisation through various exercises, aiming to develop the characters we were working on for assessment. The following is an example of a physical characterisation exercise in an acting lesson:

The students would spread out in the classroom and the professor would also be present somewhere in the room. He would say the name of anything (an animal, person, or object) and we would have to impersonate it through physical and vocal characterisation. During the impersonation of the person he had called, without notice, he would clap his hands once and call out another name and, quickly, we would have to change to impersonate the characteristics and traits of the name he had called. This exercise would explore various physical characterisations and how our bodies adapted to them. Though we found many of the names called out quite funny, we learnt to maintain concentration and complete the exercise and share our laughter after class.

3.8 Reflections on my undergraduate experience

These highlights were some of the exercises we engaged in when learning and developing as thespians in training. Not only did we engage in these exercises, but our professors also demonstrated what was required. They took the time to show us what to do using the same or a similar exercise depending on the activity. In our first year, we often giggled at some of the exercises we were asked to do, like the dance exercise where we had to move our hips from side to side. Thinking back, I realised that all our practical learning had a playful approach.

One of the ways in which play assisted me was to help me get rid of the feeling of discomfort I had about people whom I deemed 'different'. The activities we engaged in were discomfoting for a conservative girl like myself even though we explored how the body could be used differently for performances. Working with different exercises meant finding comfort in what I was doing. I had to find comfort in working with other students in the dance classes and I had to develop trust in them to allow them to touch my body. I also had to find comfort in exploring my voice and body for vocal and physical characterisation. The class activities we engaged in assisted me in developing that sense of comfort, and this unconsciously helped me to unlearn and shed the limiting views I had held when I first arrived. The class activities were meant to assist us in becoming thespians; moreover, they assisted me in my personal becoming.

As I was so reserved, when they teased my speaking of isiZulu I experienced it as ridicule, whereas they were actually building rapport among us. I realised that the play activities I had engaged in during childhood were buried beneath significant constructions of 'a girl child must...'. Much of my teenage life, when I did not play but rather focused on my studies, was also filled with the social construction of 'a girl child must...'; 'a Christian girl child must...'; 'a Zulu girl child must...'. All these social constructions buried the confident, playful, happy child I was under the challenges I faced as a child. Thus, when I entered university, these constructions weighed heavily upon me, positioning me to live fixated on the things I 'must not do'. The playful approach of the Drama school program was a tool that continuously chiselled away at the ideologies that were entrenched in my identity.

I understood the importance of social construction and that the way I had been shaped as a teenager had assisted me greatly in the communities where I lived. Growing up in communities where drugs, teenage pregnancy, school dropouts, and crime were prevalent, I believed that adhering to the teachings that guided a girl child would keep me 'safe' from those social ills.

However, when I arrived at university, I encountered a radically different community. I had to learn new social constructs to survive in this context, which meant unlearning the social constructs that had sustained me in my teenage life. The playful approach to learning in Drama school assisted me in deconstructing the ideologies that had run their course. In saying that, I am not entirely shunning the ideologies I imbibed when growing up as I still significantly identify as Christian and a Zulu. However, during my studies as an undergraduate, I had the opportunity to think critically about them as an individual and let go of what I believed was no longer working for me without the need for approval or the pressure to please everyone. This opportunity gave me time to chisel what was already within me and to adopt a new form of construct that I believe aided my becoming and brought me to a state of continual chiselling and etching.

I completed my primary and high school education in an Indian-dominated school¹⁵ which did not offer IsiZulu as a subject and did not teach any subjects in IsiZulu. I received my learning in English and only spoke isiZulu with my school friends. My significant relationship with isiZulu increased my ability to speak, read and write it and this came from speaking the language at home, in my community, and reading the Bible in isiZulu, which was a requirement at home and Sunday school. This exposure to isiZulu did not mean much to me. As a high school learner, I did not think about the importance of being proficient in my home language. However, arriving at Drama school and being allowed to speak and be assessed in my language, which had never been the case during my primary and high school education, I built a new understanding of and forged a love for my home language. I took the opportunity to speak isiZulu in class, be assessed in it, and to generally converse in it throughout the day to vernacular speaking students who used other South African languages. Though we spoke different languages, we understood one another. Being assessed in isiZulu meant choosing isiZulu play texts, which kept me in the isiZulu literature section in the library where I immersed myself in isiZulu written texts. This opened my mind in a significant way as I was exposed to various isiZulu writers, stories, poems, and other literature. My love for my home language deepened as I began to understand the importance of speaking and learning through it. The approval to use isiZulu in my learning allowed me to introduce childhood rhymes as ice-breakers in class, integrate isiZulu dance moves in my dance classes and assessments, and

¹⁵ Indian-dominated school was designated to the classified Indian race during the reign of the apartheid regime. Even after South Africa became a democratic country, there are still schools where one race tends to dominate due to the dominant race that resides in a community and its proximity to the school.

even to present acting scenes performed by isiZulu and isiXhosa speakers for assessment. In my acting classes, I confidently introduced myself using my clan names and praises after a plethora of research in the library and various discussions with my mother. Playful learning created these opportunities for me.

My encounters and interactions with various people as a child were familiar memories that I drew from, as they assisted me with the integration challenges I experienced as an undergraduate Drama student. Upon reflection, I recalled that I had often moved as a child and had played with different children, male and female, and that I had never struggled to engage in play. When I arrived at university, I could have used these memories to make sense of my context but, due to my very traditional social construction as a teenager, I could not see the possibilities of better social integration that awaited me past my limited perceptions. In brief, my early social construction limited my sight of opportunities. I spent the time at Drama school unlearning and could not fully capitalise on the opportunities around me as I was unravelling. However, I came to realise that the nature of the program was based on playful teaching and learning and that this approach assisted my unlearning and becoming.

3.9 Conclusion

When I explored this memory, I remembered my experiences and emotions as an undergraduate student and the kinds of culture shocks I faced. I detailed how I was introduced to playful pedagogy and the kind of playful learning activities I experienced. As stated in my reflection, I detail how my undergraduate experience assisted me in my unlearning and becoming which extended beyond being a thespian. In the following chapter, I detail my analysis of the two remaining memories. The third memory concerns my experiences and learning as a preservice teacher, and the fourth details my experiences and learning as a novice high school teacher.

CHAPTER FOUR: UNEARTHING THREADS OF MEMORY IN CONTINUUM

4.1 Memory 3: Nosipho, the Preservice Teacher

I explored this memory to share what I recalled about my learnings and selected experiences as a preservice teacher. I recall what prompted me to become a teacher and share some of my salient preservice-teacher experiences. I detail the psychological, financial, and accommodation challenges I experienced as a preservice teacher and how I managed to mitigate some of them. I also recall the relationship I forged with a significant lecturer whom I refer to as Liz (who we also called also Mama Liz) when I was a student in her class, and I share how she taught about and through playful pedagogy. It was from her that I learnt to incorporate various mechanisms that contributed to my becoming a Creative Arts teacher in the true sense of the word. In this memory, I also detail Liz's teachings that I implemented practically in my lessons and reflect on the changes that I should still make in my teaching to improve the learning experiences of the tertiary students I teach.

4.1.1 The call to teach

After I had volunteered as an intern and tutor at a non-profit organisation (NPO), I discovered my passion for and interest in teaching. This led me to apply for the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) at my former university. At the NPO, we offered after-school tutoring to high school learners in all subjects. The branch of the NPO was located in one of the townships near the city, which meant that our clientele were learners from under-resourced schools in the area. I tutored English, Geography, History, and Life Sciences. During the winter school holidays, we offered a one-week boot camp for the Grade 12 learners away from the township, and assisted them with their university and funding applications.

When I registered for the PGCE teacher certificate, I was accepted but funding and accommodation challenges hindered my registration. Nevertheless, I continued to pursue registration and make arrangements that allowed me to register, but my learning during the semester was impeded. I squatted with various friends before settling into a more permanent place to stay. The place I found was 50 minutes' drive away by private car. However, it took me over two hours to travel to campus by public transport. Therefore, to be in time for my 08h00 classes, I had to leave at 05h30. On days when I had a class at 16h00, these classes ended

at 17h45, and I only arrived at my place of residence just after 20h00. This extensive travelling each day was tiring. However, as I had not been allocated a room in a residence or had access to private accommodation close to campus as all were either full or too expensive, I was forced to stay in another suburb, much further from campus. My accommodation challenges remained the entire first semester and only changed for the better when the university therapist, who was assisting me with my depression, referred my case to a social worker at the university clinic. She wrote a motivation for my placement in a residence, which happened within a week. During the semester break, I moved into a university residence that was one shuttle drive away from campus. However, at this point, my funding and mental health challenges remained.

4.1.2 Teaching practice experience

I had two teaching practice experiences during my teacher training, each lasting between four to six weeks in two different schools. As a preservice teacher, I was registered to study Dramatic Arts (grades 10-12) and Creative Arts (grades 7-9). The latter Learning Area includes dance. The school where I did my first teaching practice stint was two mini-bus taxi rides away from where I lived. It was an arts-focused school that offered Dramatic Arts, Dance, Music and Visual Arts as subjects in grades 10-12. Most arts-focused schools have designated arts facilities such as venues, instruments, and painting and drawing materials. Some even have arena-like theatres that were sponsored or paid for from these schools' funds. I did my teaching practice at two arts-focused schools, but my experiences differed significantly.

When I did my first teaching practice stint, the Dramatic Arts teacher went on sick leave the day I arrived. All she could do was show me where the classroom was, what I should teach, and what forms of assessment I should prepare. She also introduced me to some learners she taught that day. Hearing the news of her leaving left me overwhelmed. I informed Liz, who swiftly attended to my situation, pressing the school to find a replacement as it became clear to her that I was to fulfil all the teaching responsibilities of the teacher on leave. Within two weeks of constantly visiting the school and discussing my lack of mentorship in the school, Liz offered to recruit a qualified Dramatic Arts teacher (referred to as the Drama teacher) who would mentor me and substitute until the teacher on leave returned. The school had to pay this person as a school-governing body post as no other formal arrangements had been made when the Drama teacher went on leave.

My first teaching practice stint was at a school that was prone to violence. In our introductory meeting with the principal as preservice teachers, he cautioned us never to confront or discipline the learners. He advised that if we were challenged, to call another teacher or send those learners to the office. He was worried about our safety, so it was important not to do anything to aggravate some of the learners. This talk filled me with anxiety. It was clear that my search for a school where I would gain experience was lacking in some pertinent information. The school had met the criteria that I used to choose it as it offered the subjects I studied and was near where I lived. I did not add other criteria in my search, and my experiences at this school taught me to add additional criteria when searching for a school, such as researching the school environment.

Fortunately, I did not have confrontational experiences with the learners. Liz visited the school weekly to check on me. She assisted me with my teaching preparation, and my anxiety diminished as I could rely on her support, which she generously gave. The remaining challenge was for me to stand in front of the learners each day and teach according to the Drama teacher's timetable. No one could do that for me and I needed to fill that role. It was a challenge I faced daily for two weeks. Therefore, I was relieved when the school finally appointed a substitute teacher.

I taught Dramatic Arts and Dance again during my second teaching practice stint. Although I was meant to teach Dance in grades 7-9, when the Dance teacher learnt by whom and where I had been trained, he entrusted me with the grade 10 class and gave me the responsibility of leading the dance warm-ups and developing the learners' body strength as well as their foot and leg work. While I appreciated this opportunity, I was severely challenged as I had already been diagnosed with major depression, and I felt unfit to teach dance, especially because it required a fit body and mind. So, in order to rise to the occasion, I developed individual training sessions to prepare my mind and body for the responsibility.

I also taught Dramatic Arts (usually referred to as Drama) at this school. The Drama teacher welcomed me, shared her teaching file, and gave feedback on my teaching. She remained in class when I taught. Her presence was a classroom management tool that kept the learners attentive and less disruptive during the lessons. She gave me good feedback, never interfered in my teaching, and never left the classroom. She was kind yet firm with the learners. They admired and respected her and displayed very little mischievous behaviour in her presence. I admired the way she taught and how she engaged with the learners. She was friendly yet firm,

always on her feet when teaching like Liz, and when she explained a concept, she used relevant examples and engaged her learners in activities.

4.1.3 My encounters with playful pedagogy

As alluded to before, I met Liz on my journey as a preservice teacher. She was my Creative Arts teacher-educator and our first meeting occurred in my second undergraduate year. In the second semester, she and another professor taught the Drama in Education (DIE) and the Theatre in Education (TIE) models. In our encounters in the lecture theatre and during our rehearsals for public performances, she was passionate about drama and what she was teaching. Many students thought she was too energetic for her age, as she frequently disclosed that she was above 60. During our rehearsals for the practical tasks in the school module, she displayed concern for our work and was interested in our well-being. It was evident she wanted us to give our best performances as we toured different schools in Cape Town. She also wanted us to pass the module – which we did.

When I registered for the PGCE qualification, I met Liz again as a Creative Arts teacher-educator. This time, emulating the name her previous students had called her, I also started calling her ‘Mama Liz’. There she was again, always filled with energy. She surprised the students when she taught as no one expected that much energy and passion for someone her age. She never sat down during her lessons and always participated in class activities. She demonstrated everything she wanted us to do and was never afraid of being ‘childish’ or ‘silly’ in our presence. She was loud and energetic, passionate and playful, and was involved in the activities she required us to do. As students, we sometimes talked about how tired she would be when she got home. Liz taught us as though she were teaching schoolchildren; not in a condescending way, but her approach was performative, defined, and carefully considered. Her voice was audible with variations in tone and pitch. Her facial expressions were as expressive as her voice and often dramatic, which gave a performative element to her teaching. She moved around often among her students, making eye contact with those around her as she spoke. She hardly laughed but often received our comments and answers with a smile. She often clapped her hands when calling for attention or giving instructions that required us to get up and get practical. Her lessons always had time for student activity, during which we participated practically in our learning. Sometimes she taught us outside in the foyer and we played ice-breaker games. She sometimes invited Creative Arts teachers to teach us selected concepts or

art forms. And at times, she sent us to nearby schools where we were taught in a Creative Arts classroom by a Creative Arts school teacher.

I remember this experience, where we had the opportunity to visit a Creative Arts classroom at a nearby school and be taught a lesson there. The classroom was quite different from ours at university. It was a designated Creative Arts venue and was decorated with learners' drawings and paintings, posters, and other learning material and craftwork. It also had textbooks in one corner of the room and a few cupboards with tables and stools for the learners. Going to this classroom as preservice teachers showed us how a Creative Arts classroom could look. Sitting there and being exposed to a lesson was a learning experience that illuminated our understanding of what active learning experiences in the Creative Arts classroom should be like. Upon deeper reflection, I realised that the lesson had been infused with complex aspects of play, which was a deep learning experience from a preservice teacher's perspective. As preservice teachers in that classroom, we not only engaged in learning in our preservice teacher identity, but also as learners in this classroom. We experienced first-hand what it was like to be taught and to learn in an actual interactive play-based classroom. As preservice teachers, we could also start visualising how we would set up our Creative Arts classes one day to enrich our learners' learning experiences.

4.1.3.1 An illustration of Liz's teaching

I remember Liz teaching a lesson on tableaux. She instructed us to get into small groups and create a story by making any still image we could think of, using our bodies. She used those still images to help us understand how tableaux were constructed. She then asked us to create four to five tableaux to portray a short story from history, newspaper headlines, or current news events. When each group had completed developing their tableau, they would showcase their work, and the class would analyse each tableau, attempting to figure out the story as the group transitioned into the tableau. From our understanding of tableaux, Liz then layered her lesson with further teachings of story structure and dramatic elements, and she also used tableaux to teach these concepts. This lesson inspired me to teach the concept of constructing tableaux as a teaching method. Her meta-teaching ability also assisted my understanding. Meta-teaching can simply be understood as 'teaching about teaching'. This is when the teacher-educator makes their teaching process understood by the students in class (Chen, 2013). During the lesson, Liz allowed us to *see* into her teaching (Loughran, 2007). She would pause and unpack her pedagogical approach, identifying the critical moments of the lesson. She opened a space

for us to discuss our understanding of her pedagogical approach before moving on to the actual lesson.

Liz also showed much concern for her students. To my benefit, I was allocated to Liz as my teaching practice supervisor, which further developed our relationship as we met outside class for teaching practice mentoring. She displayed care and interest as she took the time to know me and the struggles I faced then, especially as they affected my studies. She offered emotional support and encouraged me to stay in the program. After a challenging first semester, I called Liz during the winter break and informed her of my intention to deregister and return to my home province. I was challenged, and the depression I suffered was at its peak. Liz blatantly refused to accept my decision, calling for an immediate meeting. She reminded me of this certificate's importance, spoke strength into my life, and reprimanded my ignorance. It felt desensitised at the time, but I trusted her and I listened. She encouraged me to continue with the medical attention I was receiving and alerted my Drama teacher-educator, who was also aware of the psychological instability I was experiencing. Both Liz and Freda 'mothered' me through the program in ways that were beyond their teacher-educator role, and they assisted me in completing the teacher education program.

4.1.4 Memory 3: Reflections on my learnings as a student-teacher

In exploring this memory, I shared many salient points about my teaching practice experiences. I described the multiple challenges I faced as a preservice teacher and discussed how these challenges affected my learning. I also shared how I met Liz and how our relationship extended beyond the lecture room. I unpacked my experiences of being a student under Liz and shared what I had witnessed and imbibed through her teachings. In this memory, I learnt the importance of modelling. As a student-teacher, I witnessed Liz modelling playful pedagogy. Her voice, personality, teaching and learning activities all contributed to and enriched her pedagogical approach. This discovery has given me the impetus to be intentional in my teaching through playful pedagogy and to think of more creative ways to improve my practice.

4.2 Memory 4: Lessons from highschool teaching experience about Teacher Identity

In this section I share my memories of teaching Creative Arts as a novice school teacher. I discuss how Liz's support contributed to the completion of my undergraduate studies and obtaining my teaching certificate. I recall my first experiences when I taught Creative Arts in grades 8 and 9, the challenges I faced, the pivotal turning point I experienced, and the changes

I had to make in my teaching to improve my practice. I also share a fond memory of receiving a letter from Jodi, a learner who gave me a farewell letter when she found out I was leaving the school. The lessons I learnt based in this memory are directly linked to my practice, and I detail this throughout my discussion of this memory.

4.2.1 Being a novice Creative Arts teacher

Due to the many challenges I faced as a preservice teacher, the Principal of the Education Faculty granted me a medical extension, allowing me to focus on my health and catch up on the missed assessment tasks. This concession decreased my anxiety and enabled me to focus on my mental health. Liz was with me throughout this personal journey, and I got better and managed to submit all my assessments, making me eligible for graduation. Therefore, when Liz called me at the beginning of the following year as her first preferred candidate for a school needing a Creative Arts teacher, her walk with me as a preservice teacher and my trust in her all became worth it. I spent only three weeks of the festive holidays at home, and I quickly returned to begin my journey as a Creative Arts school teacher.

When I began teaching in this high school, I was anxious because I was unsure what to expect as I would be teaching without Liz's support and without supervision. I was also excited that I had found employment so soon after completing my teacher certificate. I was grateful to Liz for the opportunity she had given me, but I was also overwhelmed for several reasons. The school where I was appointed to teach was located in an inner-city suburb with residential apartments and a few schools. It was in a prime area for the creative arts industry, with various recording studios, galleries, museums, and restaurants. The learners attending the school came from communities as far as 30 km away that were plagued by gangsterism, violence, crime, and unemployment. They were also not exposed to recreational and extra-curricular activities after school, on weekends and during holidays.

The learners were sent to this school even though some parents could not afford it, and the school was consequently in financial deficit. Some of the learners' challenges manifested in late-coming, high absenteeism, delinquency, and verbal and physical bullying, among others. My teacher challenges included managing a class on my own, a heavy teaching schedule and work load, and the administrative work that came with teaching. I found teaching tiring and strenuous. I relied on the teaching file I had developed as a preservice teacher and used the ice-breaker games we had played as preservice teachers. I also used the simple games we had

played in Drama school, but classroom management remained a challenge. I struggled to contain the learners' unruly behaviour when they came to class, when I taught, and even when we played games. Playing games allowed for better engagement in our lessons, but at times I would struggle to facilitate these games and lost control of the class as learners wanted to play more or played poorly, which ruined the purpose of these game and thus negatively affected learning. I felt as though many learners wanted to play for fun without understanding the purpose of the activity.

4.2.2 The iron fist of a novice teacher

My authoritarian approach to teaching was one challenge in my classroom management that transitioned into a learning opportunity for tolerance and patience. A major challenge was that the learners I was teaching were teenagers and had boundless energy. I could not keep up with them. I got home tired and took time to recover as I needed to engage with my Master's studies. Failing to understand the learners I taught and the dynamics of a Creative Arts classroom, I misinterpreted their high energy as mischievousness and frequently resorted to raising my voice and shouting at them whenever I felt I was losing control. This often occurred and became an approach I leaned on in every aspect of my teaching, which was tiring in itself as I was generally not a person who shouted. In retrospect, I think I resorted to teaching how I had been taught in high school where it was common for teachers to raise their voices to learners to get their attention and to issue instructions. I also grew up with a strict mother who raised her voice a lot. The same happened in the maternal families where I grew up after the separation of my parents. Raising your voice was what I knew about controlling those younger than me. When I started teaching, the only teenagers I had had a relationship with were from the tutoring program and church which were spaces where mischievous behaviour was uncommon, so I had no practical experience of dealing with teenagers' mischievous side.

I knew teenagers could be difficult, but I had never been in such a situation. I was underprepared and lacked the skill to work with teenagers. When I started teaching, I believed my age would be an advantage as I was still a young graduate, petite, and short in stature. I discovered the opposite. My misconceptions also discouraged me. The eagerness I had at the beginning was decreasing each day. Even though I had the teaching file and was finding other creative ways to develop my lesson plans, I discovered that curriculum preparation was insufficient. Discouraged and lacking ideas, I was forced into reflection.

During self-reflection that was prompted by the difficulties I was facing in the classroom, I realised I was too impatient with the learners. All that time, I had kept shifting the lack of success onto the learners' behaviour, removing myself as the cause of poor classroom management. As I reflected, I faced the uncomfortable reality that I was as much to blame as they and that I could no longer shift the blame onto the learners. I was sitting in a library, working on my studies, when this reflection occurred. This moment made me think more deeply about my lack of patience towards teenagers. I realised that the patience I had was categorically reserved for people who were the same age or older than me and those who reasoned like me. I did not extend that tolerance to people younger than me and more likely to be different from me or different from the teenager version of myself. I still needed to unlearn some entrenched concepts and learn more about 'new' self and the contexts in which I worked and lived.

4.2.3 Exploring my earlier learnings for answers

I resolved to lean on my teaching file that reminded me of the many games that we had played as preservice teachers and Drama students. My struggle with poor classroom management had to be addressed, and to do this I had to rely much on what I already knew. It was then easy for me to remember demonstration as a teaching tool as that had been used by Liz many times. My performance background also capacitated me with confidence to teach without fear. I recalled Liz's active involvement when she was teaching and that she had taught by demonstrating aspects as demanded by the subject. She had articulated herself well in her explanations and exuded a nurturing spirit. Delving into my memory during my daily teaching, I began to integrate my learning into my classroom practice, which meant that I had to unlearn many preconceived ideas about how I should teach. I realised that I had learnt to demonstrate practical activities and to engage in class activities. This learning became a positive aspect of my teaching, but it was not enough. I was also developing my ability to prepare my lessons, deliver content, and demonstrate it, but I still lacked knowledge on how to manage unruly learners.

Attempting to understand what was happening in my classroom, I began paying attention to my learners' behaviour. I became aware of my interactions with learners and sought to identify the moments that resulted in my intolerance. I noticed that it happened when learners did not listen to my instructions and that I then began to shout. Continuing along this road of reflection and self-assessment, I sought ways to encourage my learners to listen to me. I further discovered that, due to my authoritarian approach, the learners were either disinterested in the

subject or simply did not like me much. I realised that, when I had started teaching, I had not taken the time to build rapport as I had not realised how important it would be to develop a relationship of mutual trust with my learners, and therefore they would not engage honestly with me in their answers or during reflection.

Reflection was an important aspect of my lessons, as at the end I expected the learners to reflect and share their thoughts on their learning experience. I struggled to get them to speak up and be honest about their feelings. Answers came from only a handful of learners with general responses such as “It was okay”; “It was nice”; “I enjoyed it”, etc. Such responses did not give me any insight into the learners’ learning experience. I tried to integrate reflection as Liz had shared its importance but, honestly, I did not know what I was doing wrong and how I could inspire the honest reflection I sought to improve my lessons. Unlike Liz, whose teaching had leaned towards the learning of her students, I seemed to be teacher-focused and not learner-focused. The struggles I encountered with the learners pushed me to focus on what I could do to plan and improve my teaching. I felt I was missing the most crucial aspect of my teaching, which was learning. I knew that teaching and learning needed to be intertwined, but I failed to apply this knowledge in practice.

Through reflection, I tried to find ways to focus on learning which meant that I needed to focus on the learners’ behaviours that challenged me. I realised that their choice not to listen to me was one of the things that aggravated me and caused my poor relationship with them. I then began to manage my classroom with more focused intent, and I used the introductory sections of each lesson to play. For instance, some ice-breakers focused on curriculum-based physical and vocal developmental concepts, while others were part of the theoretical concepts I would teach that day.

Moreover, not only did I use demonstrations, but I also participated in them. However, although the demonstration technique was valuable as the learners would see the teacher doing it first, I might have left them with the impression that my way was the ‘better’ way. Therefore, at times, I would ask learners to introduce a game and demonstrate it, giving them a leading role in the lesson, and I then followed the learners’ lead in that demonstration. By doing this, I showed that I trusted their ideas and versions of the activity. I wanted them to belong in the Creative Arts classroom. I also often became a participant in the lesson and not always the leader. I also began speaking their indigenous language, which brought much laughter as I was not proficient in it at the time. I allowed the learners to see my vulnerability when I spoke the language and

they saw a side of me that was not ‘perfect’ as I struggled with proficiency. They saw the struggle, which allowed them to be ‘experts’ as they corrected my pronunciation and use of diction and they even began teaching me new words.

These minor changes to my approach changed the dynamics of my teaching and, overall, the classroom experiences for my learners and I began to build genuine rapport with them. Some still continued to disobey my instructions, but I learnt to pause when I felt the urge to raise my voice. I would instead ask other learners to participate or allow other learners to volunteer to respond. I distributed responsibilities like chalkboard dusting, handing out worksheets, and reading aloud by learners who displayed eagerness and those who were often disruptive. All these were efforts to lessen tensions and improve my classroom practice.

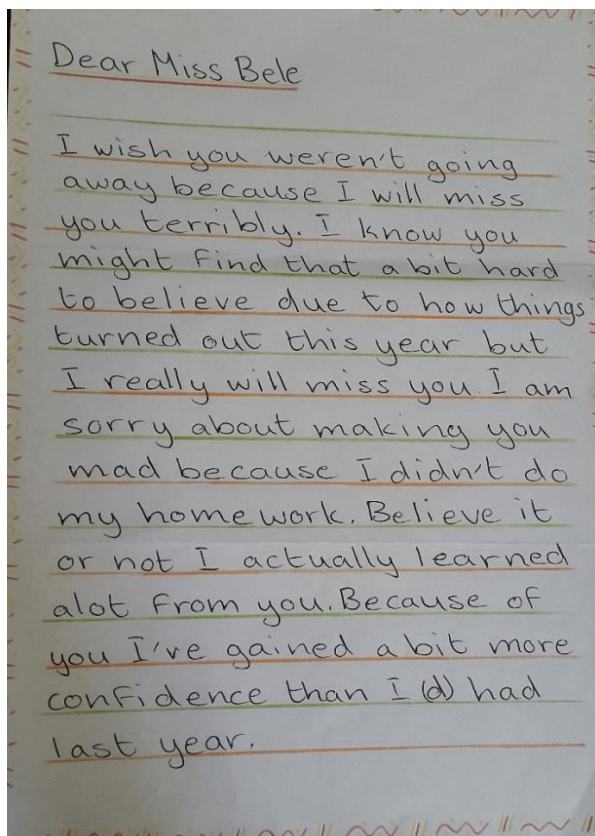
Eventually, I succeeded in improving my classroom management skills by changing my strategies and my relationship with the learners improved. As I fostered a good relationship with my learners, like Liz had done, some learners gravitated towards me. They opened up about their challenging subjects, post-school prospects, and even the challenges they experienced at home. Remembering my struggles as a student, I also shared relevant aspects of my life with them as a form of encouragement. We discussed teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, crime, and dropping out from school which were prevalent challenges. So, when I left at the end of my third year of teaching at this school, it was difficult for both the learners and me.

4.2.4 Jodie’s farewell letter

Jodie was a learner in my Creative Arts class who wrote me a farewell letter when she heard I was leaving. She was in one of the first classes I was given to teach when I arrived at the school. Having taught her when I first started teaching, she was among the learners who may have noticed my struggles when I started. She was a pleasant learner to teach. She was shy but spoke up when probed. She actively participated in the practical activities and was not mischievous. In my final days at the school, Jodie wrote a letter of gratitude to me. In the letter, she wrote about the lessons she had learnt from having me as her teacher. I was grateful to know I had positively impacted the lives of some of the learners I taught.

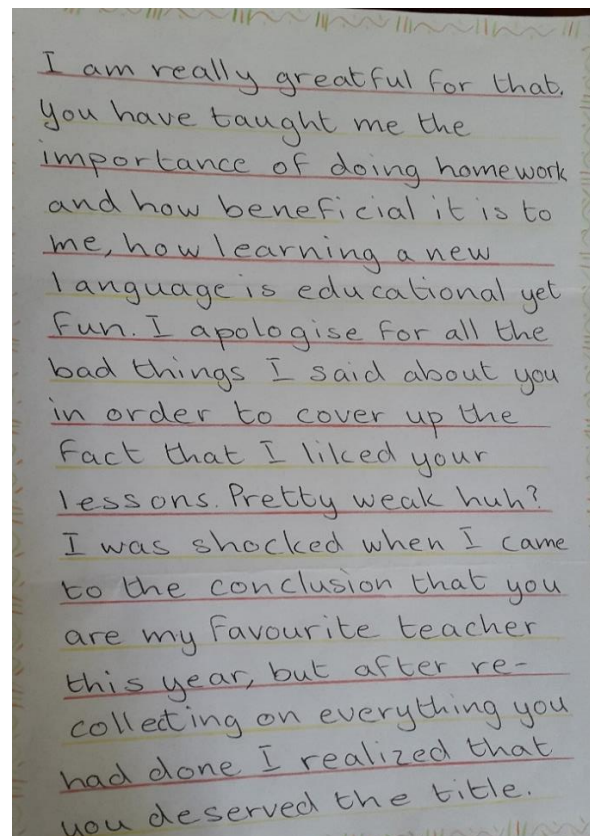
Receiving a letter from Jodie moved me as it was an indication of my success as a teacher and validated my decision to become a teacher. It proved that the tension I had once had with learners had dissipated and it was proof of the admiration some learners had for me. It also indicated that my teaching had genuinely shifted to focus on learning, which affirmed my

growing success as a teacher. Receiving the letter and many other warm farewell wishes humbled and encouraged me. Even though I was leaving the school, I would always have the fond memories I had created with my learners from different grades. I also stayed in touch with the Principal, who expressed his disappointment at my resignation but wished me well in my future endeavours. When the cohort of learners I started teaching in grade 8 were in grade 12, I was invited to their valedictory awards ceremony. It was a pleasure to accept the invitation and to speak encouraging words as they were about to begin writing their final National Senior Certificate exams. My attendance allowed the learners and I to reminisce on our teaching and learning experiences and for me to learn of the challenges some learners had faced as they adjusted to my departure.

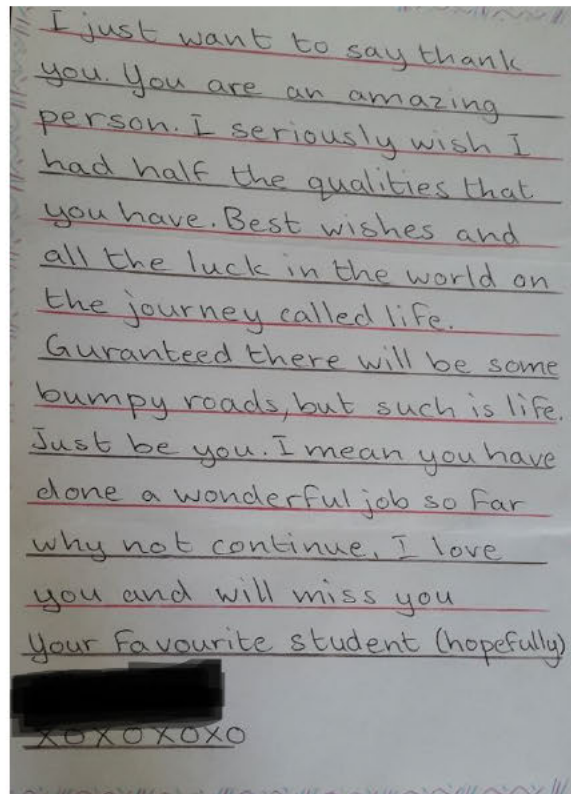


Dear Miss Bele

I wish you weren't going away because I will miss you terribly. I know you might find that a bit hard to believe due to how things turned out this year but I really will miss you. I am sorry about making you mad because I didn't do my homework. Believe it or not I actually learned a lot from you. Because of you I've gained a bit more confidence than I had last year.



I am really grateful for that. You have taught me the importance of doing homework and how beneficial it is to me, how learning a new language is educational yet fun. I apologise for all the bad things I said about you in order to cover up the fact that I liked your lessons. Pretty weak huh? I was shocked when I came to the conclusion that you are my favourite teacher this year, but after reflecting on everything you had done I realized that you deserved the title.

A photograph of a handwritten letter on lined paper. The text is written in cursive and is underlined. The letter expresses gratitude and good wishes for the recipient's future. At the bottom, there is a redacted name and a series of 'xoxoxoxo' symbols.

I just want to say thank
you. You are an amazing
person. I seriously wish I
had half the qualities that
you have. Best wishes and
all the luck in the world on
the journey called life.
Guranteed there will be some
bumpy roads, but such is life.
Just be you. I mean you have
done a wonderful job so far
why not continue, I love
you and will miss you
Your favourite student (hopefully)
[Redacted Name]
xoxoxoxo

Figure 8: Jodie's farewell letter

4.2.5 Memory 4: In-depth reflections on my learnings as a teacher-educator

As I wrote about this memory and reflected on my learnings, I realised that my approach to teaching had not been well considered. However, as I encouraged the learners to play games, it was an indication that I understood the value of playful pedagogy involuntarily. I had experienced Liz's teaching about and through it, and the seed had been sown was slowly growing. However, as a novice teacher I struggled to develop and apply that skill in my teaching. When I reflected on this during data analysis, I understood why the learners had struggled to learn through playful pedagogy because I could not teach *through* it effectively. They understood play as a game only from a child's perspective and could not identify that it was a tool to generate learning. In theory, I knew games have educational value but I struggled to operationalise that knowledge in practice. As a novice teacher-educator, I still carried the knowledge I had been taught by Liz, and I tried different ways to integrate it into my practice over the years. However, I had not been able to develop a pedagogical teaching that was underpinned by playfulness, hence the need for this study.

As a novice teacher, I thought about my practice: what I did and what I was supposed to do. Unfortunately, at first I thought more about myself and less about the learners and I emphasised

teaching and not learning, which meant my teaching approach demonstrated a level of ignorance about my learners' needs. This ignorance could be what the learners picked up, which manifested in rebellion as I did not show interest in *them*. I did not attempt to get to know them and build a relationship with them. The overwhelming feelings I felt clouded my ability to see the importance of a learner-centred approach and I failed to strike a balance between teaching and learning. I failed my learners by the poorly considered mechanisms I kept implementing. However, honest reflection brought an epiphany and opened my mind at a pivotal moment in my teaching. Through reflection, I managed to identify the causes of tension in my classroom and I was able to face the implications of the difficulties I faced.

Moreover, I had the opportunity to reflect introspectively on my behaviour, and the success of this introspection led me to practical implementations in which I sought to improve my lessons and my demeanour. The changes I wrought yielded positive results for myself and my learners. I learnt the importance of taking an interest in the learners and being a participant and not always the leader when teaching. I understood that making room for students to share their knowledge and taking the lead in an activity were vital in my lessons as this built their confidence and allowed me as the teacher-educator to refine their knowledge and learning without contention. Being given opportunities to lead also allowed some learners to 'climb out of their shell' to develop confidence, while others' existing confidence was enhanced. I also learnt that displaying vulnerability was not a sign of weakness but a tool that created a deeper bond, elicited trust, and strengthened the rapport between myself and the learners.

As I reflected on my experiences as a novice teacher, I remembered my experiences and, having listened to various narratives by preservice teachers, it was evident that the issue of classroom management is challenging for novice teachers. Therefore, as a former Creative Arts teacher, I shared my experiences of classroom management challenges and the various changes I had made with my preservice teachers, which yielded positive results. I could also develop appropriate case studies from their teaching practice experiences which we would unpack to expose key classroom management challenges and to discuss possible practical solutions for them. This was a way in which I showed my interest in my preservice teachers based on my experiences as a novice teacher, which was a space I knew they would soon enter. I also capacitated them with some skills to implement in their teaching during teaching practice and, hopefully, as teachers in the classroom one day. These interventions might not have solved all their classroom management challenges, but they may have exposed them to certain scenarios

where they could use techniques to diffuse tensions and support learning, as I had learnt to do as a novice teacher.

As preservice teachers, Liz required us to have a teaching file for Creative Arts. The program did not mandate students to keep a teaching file but this practice was encouraged. The module coordinators also stressed the need for record-keeping and developing administrative skills as teachers. The current education program for PGCE and B.Ed. that I teach mandates students to keep files for teaching practice in which they need to file all teaching-related material such as lesson plans, worksheets, registers, school information, and other documents. However, in the Creative Arts modules I teach, a teaching file is not mandatory for students.

This memory made me realise the importance of the file Liz had encouraged us to keep. Lesson activities, assessments, lesson plans, academic readings, worksheets, and all the notes Liz gave us and those we developed ourselves during lessons and assessments had to be filed. Therefore, when I started teaching, I used the file to create notes for my lessons. I also used the lesson plans and revised the worksheets to use in my lessons. It became my starter pack for teaching Creative Arts as I could integrate the methods I had learned about in my modules. Based on this learning, I now realise that I should instruct my current and future students to develop a Creative Arts teaching portfolio yearly for each module. They may even develop the same portfolio throughout the three-year program. The main aim is to assist preservice teachers in developing the skill of record keeping by filing notes and other documented resources that may be useful when they begin teaching.

4.3 Conclusion

When I explored this memory, I remembered the impact of Liz's support on my preservice-teacher identity. I shared the most salient of my novice teacher experiences, including the anxiety I felt, the school context, my challenges as a beginner teacher, and the self-reflection I engaged in which resulted in practical changes in my classroom practice. I shared how the school context and my engagement with teenagers revealed the lack of patience I had for this age group and their behaviours. This challenge became another opportunity for unlearning and becoming. Through reflection, I identified the need to open myself to learning about teenagers through engagement with them, and in this manner I became a teacher whose practice was characterised by patience and tolerance for her learners.

This memory elicited an unclouded perspective on the difficulties I had faced as a novice Creative Arts teacher and allowed a glimpse into how failure could have prevailed had I not changed my teaching approach. It further affirmed the power of reflection and how it can lead to defining moments that may change the trajectory of a situation, as it did for me. In the chapter that follows, I begin the presentation and analysis of the data from the sessions I had with the preservice-teacher participants.

CHAPTER FIVE: UNRAVELLING PLAYFUL THREADS – PART ONE

5.1 Introduction

This chapter details the data generated during two of the eight sessions I had with the participants. I discuss the activities that were conducted in these two sessions and I present what we did, and how. These two sessions predominantly focused on the participants' memories of childhood and the kinds of games they played, with whom they played, and if and how their parents/guardians participated in their games. I discuss how we began connecting play and teaching by sharing some of the teaching practice stories the participants narrated. In conclusion, I detail the second session that ended with the participants developing an insightful standard for a playful Creative Arts teacher.

5.2 Session One

5.2.1 Introduction

I was optimistic about the first meeting with the recruited participants and I planned for a successful session. My idea of a successful session was that all the participants would attend, that there would be no complications with the food I had ordered, and having participants who would work with me without difficulty or resistance. I booked a venue that had a large available space on campus and printed out the necessary documents for the students to sign. I also organised snacks and drinks for the participants which I felt was necessary, as normally during the time of the session they would enjoy a meal or prepare their evening meals. So, this snack would at least be something they could eat to make it through the next two hours without feeling hungry. I eagerly arrived early to prepare the venue and ensure that there was food for them. I brought my laptop, video recorder, and cell phone to voice record and take pictures of the activities.

The participants arrived punctually and suddenly I felt an energy that exuded some anxiety in the space. I remained calm and greeted and welcomed everyone politely. The response was wary and a bit tense. I made this assumption due to the low voices of some and no response from others. Some were looking at me while others were looking down or away but not making full eye contact. So, I quickly offered everyone the opportunity to have something to eat and drink, but it still took a moment for the group to move. I therefore excused myself and left the

room for a while. I went to my office and laughed at this awkwardness and was thinking of ways to break the ice. I returned and the first thing I noticed was the empty trays – all the food was finished. Again, there was another moment of awkwardness. With a facial expression that expressed surprise, I looked at them over my spectacles and asked in IsiZulu and my dramatic voice: “*Where did all the food go?*” (*kushonephi ukudla?*). The participants and I laughed, which broke the ice and we began chatting about their love for food while they complimented me on the tasty selection of finger snacks, which they had not expected but accepted with gratitude. I allowed them some time to finish eating as we casually spoke miscellaneously in IsiZulu.

I realized that this group had only interacted with me in a formal classroom space where I was their teacher-educator. This was the first time we were together outside the classroom. Therefore, their initial interaction with me was anxious and tense as a result of the power relation in which I was the teacher-educator and they the students, and they did not know how to engage with me outside the classroom. This understanding led me to be overly cautious of the personality I displayed. I had to remind myself that they were not students in my class even though I taught them. Therefore, during this time, I should not exert the same position as in the classroom or behave in any way that might negatively affect rapport throughout the sessions we would spend together.

I once again welcomed and thanked them for availing themselves during this time for the project. I explained that I was registered for a PhD at the university and embarked on this initiative for the purposes of generating data for the study, that I wanted to develop my teaching practice, and that I would hopefully enrich their learning experience as well. I then issued the consent forms which I explained and allowed opportunity for questions (there were none). I gave them time to sign and return the forms to me.

At this time in the session, I was feeling confident again. I noticed some of the participants shared a smile with me every now and again as I was talking and when they signed the consent forms. I began to feel a sense of familiarity among us which I appreciated. To explore the core business of the session, I began by explaining my work as a teacher-educator. I noted that some of the obvious work I did was teaching them and other students, but that I also engaged in other work such as research and supervision. I spoke about the article I had written about an indigenous game, *ukudlala izindlu* (playing house). I explained why I was interested in writing

about indigenous games and the purpose of that particular study and its findings. They seemed quite surprised that I had written about this game and that it was even possible to write about playing house, and some commented midst giggles that it was an obscure research topic. That was another moment for us to share laughter and an opportunity for me to explain my understanding of research and what could be researched, and I emphasised why it was important for me to research games such as ‘playing house’. At this point, I could sense they were warming to me and were engaged as they listened attentively. At this point, they appeared comfortable and smiled and giggled. There were also gasps of awe and zestful interjections as I spoke. I was confident that they were drawn into what I was saying.

5.2.2 Asidlale: Let us play

The conversation about playing house led me to officially introduce childhood games as a topic for discussion. I opened this discussion by first asking if anyone had a child of their own or lived with a young child at home. Four indicated they were parents, five lived with children at home, and the rest had no contact with children at that time. I then asked them what games they played with the children in their lives. They mentioned games such as singing, *ushumpu* (female ball), *umagalobha*, *ingqathu* (skipping rope), *izimoto zocingo* (making cars), and *amathophi* (spinning tops). The reason I asked this question was to discover if they still played and to understand whether having or being around children impacted their experience of play in any way. It was interesting to hear that some of them still played when they got home during term breaks. One participant, Namhla, mentioned that she did not have children of her own and there were none in her family as she was the last born; however, she did play when she got home. Her favourite game even in her young adult life was *ushumpu*, which she played with young girls in the street where she lived.

Namhla said: “*Ngiyakhathala kodwa ukujima futhi izingane ziyashiyana we! Mengibabonile bedlala, ngiyashintsha ngisho ukushintsha mengizimisele (kuhleleke), ngidlale, ngifike ekhaya ngidle ngigeze ngishise ubuthongo.*”

(I get tired though and playing with kids, they are fast! When I see them playing, I even go and change my clothes. I prepare myself [the participants laughed] and I play, play, play; then I get home, eat, bath, and just sleep.)

As they were giving their answers and sharing some of their stories, I began to get a sense of the group dynamics and could see that some personalities were more dominant than others – nothing in a negative sense, however. Namhla and Siyandisa had been the two most engaging participants thus far. When no one wanted to start, it would be either Namhla or Siyandisa who would respond. I enjoyed seeing them engage with me and each other with jokes and increasing laughter. Quieting down the group, I then asked everyone to remain silent and engage in a short memory activity. I asked them to close their eyes and to think back to their childhood; to think about where they grew up, their childhood friendships, and the games they had played. I asked them to think about their favourite game they used to play, and where and with whom. I then kept quiet for a moment and joined in the activity as well. There was silence for a while, which was interrupted by chuckles and some audible breathing. After a while, I asked them to open their eyes and share the memory that had come to them. No one wanted to start so I offered to share my memory.

I narrated an incident in my childhood when I played with friends when I was maybe 6 or 7 years old. It was at the time when my parents were still living together. All the children who lived on the street were friends and we used to play until the sun set. My favourite game was ‘Donkey’. I explained how we played the game (see Memory 1), and why it was my favourite game as a child.

Siyandisa followed and shared his favourite childhood game which involved a song and some physical movements. He attempted to sing and do the movements as he did not remember the name of the game. His singing was soon received with laughter and some who quickly got the song sang with him, but none attempted to dance with him. Namhla shared that she had enjoyed playing *umacashelana* (hide and seek) because she was tiny and managed to hide in places many could not.

There was silence again as the talking quieted down. In that moment of silence, I shared that I had also played these games while growing up. I then used this time to introduce playful pedagogy. I explained it simply as a teaching method that encourages and incorporates playfulness in teaching and learning. I then connected the discussion I had had earlier with them about indigenous games and used some of the examples of the games they had mentioned as games that could be used in the classroom for learning. Before I had finished, Siyandisa mentioned a game he thought was useful for teaching mathematics. It is called *amagende*

(playing with stones). This prompted me to ask them to mention their favourite childhood games that we would play that day and I wrote the names down. Talking animatedly, they began to mention childhood games such as *shuba du*, *korobela*, *jim bafana*, *ayabhampa amagwinya*, *i'insimbi namaketango*, *iOmo*, and *ibhasi lamanesi*. What was interesting was that some of these games incorporated nursery rhymes that were often played by children in the Foundation Phase or in kindergarten.

5.2.2.1 Playing ‘*ibhasi lamanesi*’



Figure 9: The participants playing *ibhasi lamanesi* in a circle

The words of the song sung when playing the game go as follows:

<i>Ibhasi lamanesi</i>	<i>The nurse's bus</i>
<i>Lawela emgodini</i>	<i>Fell into a hole</i>
<i>Sal'phush' 2x</i>	<i>We pushed and pushed</i>
<i>Bas'ncish' obanana</i>	<i>They didn't give us bananas</i>
<i>Asasadododo</i>	(onomatopoeic sounds)
<i>Asasarerere</i>	(onomatopoeic sounds) (repeat onomatopoeic sounds 2x/ freeze)
A B C...X Y Z	

To play the game, we moved the chairs to one side of the venue, creating more room to move. In preparation to play the first game called *ibhasi lamanesi*, some participants took off their shoes and we stood in a circle. During playing this game, I could not identify anybody who felt uncomfortable. As I video recorded the activity and took pictures, I saw that many smiled and laughed. Many voices were audible and all the participants were engaged physically in the game.

To play this game, the group of willing participants got together in a circle holding hands, swinging their hands inwards and outwards while singing the song and remaining standing. Led by the song, when they got to onomatopoeic sounds, they rotated in a circle to one side, repeating the onomatopoeic sounds twice. All the players froze when they got to the end of the song in whatever position they were and remained frozen. One random individual then either counted or said the alphabet while everyone was frozen. If anyone moved or laughed during this time, he/she was out of the game.



Figure 10: Participants playing *ibhasi lamanesi* while reciting the ABC

After playing *ibhasi lamanesi*, the participants were engaged in conversation. I was eager to understand their experience and emotions when they played the game. I asked them to share their feelings and one male mentioned that he did not feel comfortable playing the game because of the way he was dressed.

Siyandisa: “*Indlela engigqoke ngayo made me feel uncomfortable.*” (*The way I am dressed made me feel uncomfortable.*)

Other than his inappropriate clothing, he had no other reservations. Another male mentioned that, for him, it was not about comfort but about minding what his daughter would say if she saw him playing such a game, because his daughter had never seen him play like this. It was a matter of emotional discomfort.

Nhlakanipho: *I did not feel uncomfortable that much but sometimes you think to yourself, ukuthi ingathini ingane yami uma ingase ingifice ngidlala lokhu.*

(What would my child say if she found me playing this?)

These responses revealed that, although these young adults had engaged in the game and enjoyed it, some had experienced discomfort even though it was not obvious. A different perspective was presented by another participant who said:

“Kanti anidlali yini nezingane zenu?” (Don’t you play with your kids?). Quickly rebutting, Nhlakanipho answered: *“Siyadlala kodwa sidlala sodwa lana, azikho izingane.” (We do, but we are playing alone here, there aren’t any children.)*

This quick exchange between the participants revealed that the probability of discomfort could also be attributed to the fact that the game was a children’s game played by adults in the absence of any child. That could suggest that they did not have issues with play, but with whom they played. In response to this conversation, I spoke about the discomfort that children experienced from my perspective as a former Creative Arts teacher. I shared my insight that children could also struggle and feel uncomfortable playing with others or even initially with a teacher. This could simply be that rapport or friendship has not yet been established. Sharing this perception was to highlight that this feeling might not only be experienced by them as teachers, but also by learners. I also encouraged them that, should they notice this feeling among the learners they would teach one day, they should know that they would not be the only ones feeling like this in the room.

Most participants did not admit to having any problems. They agreed that they had enjoyed playing the game when I asked them. When I asked them if they would play this game with their learners in the classroom, they agreed that it would depend on the age of the children and the grades they would be teaching. They felt they might be challenged because adolescents might not agree to participate. A female participant mentioned that she wore a wig in class, so

it would be challenging for her to play like this as she feared the wig (also referred to as a ‘weave’) might come off. This had almost happened before during teaching practice, so that experienced had taught her not to move around a lot in class. Namhla narrated her story as follows:

“Mina bengingena nkinga nokudlala kodwa inkinga ebengijwayele ukuba nayo i-weave. Uma siba nama practicals eklasini, i-weave ibihlupha ilokhu iqhela uma kumele ngigxhume. Abafundi bangibone ukuthi i-weave iqhela, bathi “ikhiphe Miss”, ngibazibe. (Kuhlekwe) Ngagcina sengiwayeka ama practicals. Mekufanele ngiyifundisi bengibatshela ukuthi benzene mina ngingabe ngisenza.”

(I did not have a problem with playing, but my only problem was that I usually put on a weave. When we had practicals in class, the weave would move a bit back from my head, wanting to come off when I jumped. The learners would also see this and say to me, “Remove it, Miss.” I would ignore them [laughter from others]. I ended up leaving practicals. When it was time for me to teach them, I would dictate and just tell them what to do and not do it myself.)

Namhla spoke jovially and without any shame. The participants and I giggled as she told her story. This led me to share my experiences of the challenges I had experienced teaching adolescents, and the notable good moments in teaching such an age group. We also discussed the changes adolescents experience that may contribute to their difficult personalities, such as talking back, having difficulty taking instructions and working with other learners in class, etc. Moving on to the next game, the participants chose to play a game called *korobela*.

5.2.2.2 Playing ‘korobela’

Korobela – the song:

Shm korobela (an onomatopoeic vehicle sound, sung in rhythmic melody). This is sung repeatedly.

Korobela was played enthusiastically by the participants as a group. As illustrated in the photograph, two participants stood opposite each other in pairs with their hands up, holding hands and fingers locked, forming an arch. They began to sing the *korobela* song and each pair walked under the arch from one end to the next and joined the last pair, forming a continuous structure.



Figure 11a: Participants playing *korobela*



Figure 11b: The participants playing *korobela* with two of them moving forward towards the end of the handmade arch

As we had done when playing the *ibhasi lamanesi* game, after playing *korobela* we took some time to reflect. I asked them to share their experience of playing this game. There were nods and some mumbled voices, and the majority agreed they were okay with playing the game. However, one participant, Hlumani, felt that not having had a partner in the game had made him feel a little left out, even though he had been part of the game.

Hlumani: “*Mina ukuthi bengingedwa ngenkathi sidlala.*” (*It’s just that I was alone when we were playing.*)

This comment compelled me to share my dilemma of why I was not participating in the games. I explained that I had thought I would participate in all the games, but I had not planned how the games would be video recorded. Due to the need for video recordings, I could not participate and apologised to them and to Hlumani, who would have had a partner had I joined the game. As a self-study researcher, this was a missed opportunity for me as I also deprived myself of the experience of participating.

I used this moment to factor in the conversation about children who were left out of games when other children played. I asked if anyone remembered such an experience about themselves or the learners they had taught. Only Zakhele remembered a similar experience during his teaching practice. In his class, he had a learner no one wanted to work with in a group or in practical tasks. When he started teaching, he always urged this learner to be part of a group as he felt empathy and saw it as discriminatory when the child was left out. However, later on he began to understand the frustrations of the other learners and why they refused to work with this learner. His reasons were also affirmed by other learners in class, namely that the learner was uncooperative, did not attend rehearsals during break time, and did not submit his designated tasks for group activities, which meant other members had to do his work. Hlumani resorted to giving the learner individual tasks as he felt he did not have enough time to address the learner or be on a quest to unearth the source of his behaviour due to the limited time he would be in the school. He also reported his observations about the learner to his mentor teacher, who acknowledged the behaviour but did not pursue it in any way while Hlumani was still at the school.

Mhlengi voiced his opinion on the matter and said he believed that although the learner had been troublesome, the teacher should have found ways to assist the learner and not ignore him. He added that fellow learners had some responsibility to assist such learners if they struggled.

Mhlengi said: “*I think our education system has become more of a competition than just teaching and learning. The grading system promotes competition which promotes individualism – working for yourself and not working together – and this kills uBuntu.*”

At this moment, I realised that the participants had thought about and through this discussion, as they were thinking about their teacher-selves and their learners and the value of working together. I appreciated this as it gave me hope that our collaboration had fruitful prospects.

5.2.2.3 Playing ‘i-Omo’

Hamba uyothenga iOmo

Go and buy Omo

Ini?

What?

iOmo.

Omo.



Figure 12: Participants playing *iOmo*

This game was also played in a circle. The term *hamba uyothenga iOmo* (*go and buy Omo*) is said as an instruction by a player to the others beside him/her. The player receiving the

instruction responds: “*Ini?*” (*What?*) and the giver of the instruction replies” “*i-Omo!*”. After successfully getting the instruction, the receiver becomes the instructor, and the participant next to him/her becomes the receiver asking the same question while including the former instructor. If anybody breaks the sequence by responding incorrectly, stutters, or fails to respond, they are out of the game. If the sequence is not broken, each participant is included, and the game is prolonged and gets more challenging for participants to remember which correct response to give.

Due to time constraints, I facilitated the remaining game to be played at once and left time for discussion at the end.

5.2.2.4 Playing ‘ayabhampa amagwinya ehhotele’

Ayabhampa amagwinya ehhotele, isamqe!

Siyolala sidleni ehhotela, isamqe!



Figure 13: Participants playing *ayabhampa amagwinya ehhotele*

There is no logical, direct translation for *ayabhampa amagwinya ehhotele*. This game was also played in a circle but this time the participants did not hold hands. Instead, they clapped in rhythm with their singing. A number of players said the first part of the song (“*Ayabhampa*

amagwinya ehhotele”), and the other players responded by saying: “*Isamqe*”. They sang that while moving in rhythm to the melody of the song, and each member got to move from their spot to the middle of the circle, then from the middle to the person of their choice to stand in that spot, giving the person they had chosen the opportunity to come into the circle and choose their target too. This movement from one spot to the other in the circle occurred in one take of the song while the players moved in rhythm to the song.

5.3.3 Reflections on Session One

In our conversation after playing the games, it was clear that there was rapport among the participants and between them and me. This was evidenced by their willing participation and collective agreement when I asked if they had enjoyed the experience and engagements. Nearing the end of the session, I asked the participants if they had detected any educational value in the games or even in ones that we had just mentioned. I also asked them if they thought it was possible to shift playing these games into a classroom from the streets where they were usually played. Without delay, Siyandisa alluded to *ibhasi lama nesi*. He believed that the game could be used with children in the Foundation Phase to teach movement and stillness, counting, and learning the alphabet. He further encouraged that the game could teach children to concentrate, which is a necessary soft skill. I was glad to see him make this connection and to see the value of the game beyond play by finding educational value in it. However, from his teaching practice experience, Nhlakanipho shared a contrasting narrative that had demoralised him and might prevent from integrating any games in his teaching.

Nhlakanipho: *“I once tried using games in the classroom in an improvisation lesson. So, I noticed that learners didn’t have the ability to think fast, on their feet. And then I had another problem. When the CA teacher found out that I used games for teaching in the classroom, she shouted at me in front of the whole class that I wasted a lesson by letting learners play games. And she went to tell the Principal. She almost called the university as she was angry that I had wasted a lesson on games in the classroom.”*

Admitting that this was a common experience among preservice teachers during teaching practice, other participants also shared their stories. I did not interject, but it was disheartening to hear that preservice teachers generally experienced such demotivating occurrences. It transpired that some Creative Arts teachers were not qualified to teach. Consequently, some of

these preservice teachers had not done or learnt anything during their teaching practice experience; instead, they were exploited. Overall, this affected their experience of teaching and also negatively affected the learners being taught by unqualified teachers. Listening as Siyandisa and Nhlakanipho shared their views on games and their experiences. They could also identify the educational value of play but were challenged by teachers who did not see any value in the integration of such a methodology. Many in the room related to these stories. As it was clear that they yearned to continue discussing this topic, I promised them a session where they could all share their experiences and from there, we could pave the way forward to mitigate their challenges. Time was up and I had to close the session to allow the participants to catch the student shuttle home. We ended the session and promised to see one another the following week. Those who were not rushing for the shuttle, politely helped me to clean up and lock the venue.

As I reflected on the recruitment process, I remembered how disappointed I had been initially as I struggled to recruit participants. However, what I had witnessed in this session and what we had managed to achieve pleased me as considerable progress had been made and I had overcome my negative thoughts of the recruitment process. I was pleased with the success of the session. The level of engagement by the participants indicated success as they had selected the games to play, shared some childhood memories, and responded to the open-ended questions in animated discussion. For me these were indicators of success. The highlight of this session was the rapport that had been built among us. Initially, there was concern about our teacher-educator-preservice-teacher relationship and how it might affect the session. However, although there were indications of the prevalence of this relationship as they still called me 'Ma'am', I felt it did not hinder the process at all. I realised that isiZulu had been spoken a lot in this session and that I had also responded in isiZulu and sometimes even led the conversation in isiZulu, but even though we had not decided which language to use in our sessions, isiZulu was already dominant in the discussions and I accepted it as it was evident that all were comfortable using their home language.

However, my limited participation was a missed opportunity. My lack of preparation on how to video record and photograph the games was indicative of inexperience on my part. My focus on recording and not on how to work around being a participant and researcher during this session led to the discomfort some participants felt who had to play the games without a partner. It could have been prevented; however, it became a learning point about the importance of

minor things a researcher should be mindful of, as such slips could potentially affect the data generation process if left unattended. Listening to the audio recordings of this session, I realized that I had spoken a lot and thus dominated the conversations. I had been unaware of my fear of silence, which I had impulsively filled with my voice.

5.3 Session Two

After a promising first session, we met again the following Wednesday and all the participants were punctual. On this day, the participants arrived together in a group which led me to wonder if there were friendships among the group as a whole or in smaller groups, which might have been a contributing factor in their decision to participate in this project. I thought this could be attributed to peer/friendship influence. I was unsure, but I still had to spend some time with them so I hoped I would find out as we progressed.

As they entered the venue, there was animated chattering which indicated comfort and familiarity, and which contrasted with their entrance the previous week when there had been tangible anxiety and tension as they had had no idea what to expect. As a desired practice I wished to instil, I waited for everyone to sit in a circle and greeted them individually, asking them about their day. This was a practice that had been introduced to me by one of my Drama directors during my undergraduate studies. He used to greet each student in the class, asking them how they were doing and taking his time to engage sincerely with each student. I had liked that as it had made me smile. I remembered this activity and introduced it in this session. Surprisingly, most students responded well by sharing that they were having a good day. I found their positive response surprising as I remembered my lived experience of being an undergraduate student. There was no way that my classmates and I would have respond so positively. However, this group shared that they had written a test and had received good results which contributed to the good mood. Some responded only to what was asked, which was also okay. After we had greeted one another, I offered them food and allowed them some time to talk informally, which was mostly about the challenging test. I did not ask whether each student had passed, as some did not talk about their results.

5.3.1 Participants' reflections on session one

To start the session, we were seated and finished eating. I began revisiting in summary what we had done the previous week and opened an opportunity for them to share their thoughts about the session. The participants expressed their gratitude for being part of the project and

being exposed to play in the way we had done the previous session, sharing how they were unaware that their childhood games could be integrated into academic research. I present some participants' responses below.

Ndumiso: *“Well, the session was very productive, and I discovered something from it. It reminds me of one of the theories we learned last semester: learners always have prior knowledge. In this case, indigenous games have taught us concentration strategies. Still, we never get to use them at school as the curriculum does not consider oral traditional games. As Blacks, we learn through observation and imitation. Looking at our African ways, learning is one thing that must be done, and we have to learn, unlearn, relearn, and explore. For me, the session was successful and very helpful and, as a teacher, I can even use indigenous games to teach, and I clearly understand why it has to be included in teaching, especially in Art. I have learnt a lot. Sengicabange (I have thought) a lot. Next week kuzoba (it will be) on another level.”*

Yandisa: *“The session was great, and I found it very interesting because I learnt that games could be used for academic purposes rather than playing for fun, and the school should become an environment where learners feel at home and enjoy learning, so that won't happen if learners are prohibited from enjoying schooling through use of games in a classroom. Our discussions made me think about classroom climates.”*

Thandisa: *“Our session went well. The interesting thing that I liked about the session was the games that we played and also the discussions that we had. I think this program is productive and helpful because now, as a teacher, we can teach learners some of the games esasizenza sisakhula, okuyinto ebesingakaze siycabange leyo njengothisha (teach learners some of the games we played growing up, which was something we had not thought of as teachers).”*

Them bani: *“First and foremost, sibonga ithuba, M'am, osinike lona. We thank you for the opportunity you have given us last week, M'am, it was a great experience to be part of this and very interesting, I really enjoyed it. I personally learnt a lot from this session and it will gradually change the way I think and also develop me as a teacher. Therefore, I think ukuthi singothisha kumele sense, that as teachers we need to make teaching and learning more enjoyable and interesting to learners by bringing in these*

games in class in an educational way. Kuhamba kahle kakhulu. Ngyabonga. (All is well, thank you)."

5.3.2 Participants' childhood memories of play

Continuing the session, I referred back to the activity we had done in the previous session about childhood memories of play. I revisited that section because I wanted to understand their feelings towards play to discover if there were any relationships between fear and play or any prohibitions that had affected their play in the past. My interest in the 'negative feelings' resulted from my observations during teaching practice assessments in which demonstration had not been used as a method to teach by the preservice teachers. In the feedback discussions I had had with the preservice teachers, they had cited feelings of shame, silliness, and being shy as the reasons they could not engage with their learners using play methodology. My interest in these feelings was also influenced by my reflections on my time as an undergraduate student. As I had not been trained as a teacher then, I had been shy and reserved. I had also felt silly doing some of the class activities we had been given, as narrated in my memory of being an undergraduate student. Although my context had been different then, the participants' responses to such negative feelings led me back to my experiences as an undergraduate student and how I had felt then. However, the nature of the program I had been registered for, as challenging as it had been, had helped me break through the shell I had been in, as there had been a lot of playing in various ways with different people in my class. I shall revisit this subject matter later in the discourse.

To begin the session, I asked them, as I had done in the previous session, to close their eyes and think back to their time as a child and to find memories of themselves playing. It did not matter if they played at school or at home or anywhere else. I asked them to remain in that memory a bit to feel what it was like, to identify the manner of play, their clothes, friends, and the area where they played. After at least two minutes, the participants opened their eyes, and looked at one another. I then asked if any of them would share a memory that had emerged as they reminisced. Zakhele was the first to share his memory. I had observed that he was one of the more engaged participants and that he was not reserved. He appeared happy to share his input.

Zakhele said: *"Kimina nje, besidlala ngoba besibaningi ekhaya."* (To me, we were playing because there were many children at home and we enjoyed playing. In a way

we didn't see any danger in the games we played. But now, when I reflect I can say that it was a violent game to play. For example, wrestling. We played it a lot. We related to it a lot because we watched the TV show. I remember my brother who always said he was the one who would buy a car first and ngempela (really), he was the one to buy a car ekhaya ebafaneni (at home, among the boys). I think he was influenced a lot by uEddie, because every time we played, he always wanted to be Eddie."

Zakhele spoke about playing dangerously as they had watched and imitated wrestling with his brothers and childhood friends. He realised that the game was violent and might have influenced them to become violent people. He also noted that he and his brother were not violent but he could not confirm if it was the case for his childhood friends. Using his brother as an example, he mentioned that his brother, who was a bit older than him, had been motivated by one of the stars of the wrestling show and the car he drove. He had loved this celebrity's confidence and his car, which Zakhele believed was a motivating factor for his brother to buy his first car before any other boychild in the family had done so.

Hlumani also alluded to dangerous play. This play was dangerous because they played in unsafe spaces, often against their parents' instructions and knowledge. He recounted this as follows:

"Ukudlala (playing) was dangerous kakhulu but sasingakunaki (a lot but we were not mindful of that). We weren't allowed to go and play but every chance we got, we went outside and played. I remember nje izingane eziwu two ezashona, zibulawa ama trucks omoba (two children were knocked down by sugarcane trucks while playing on the street). We would go sifike sidonse umoba kuma truck kanti izingane zizowa zishayiswe i-truck zashona (and pull sugarcane from a moving sugarcane truck and the children fell. The truck ran over the children and they died. So, uma kade sihambile besikhuzwa, sishaywe (when we went to the road to play, we would be cautioned and spanked), but the next week we would go back."

The direction of the conversation surprisingly gave attention to parents' involvement in children's play. This was unexpected as I had not anticipated reference to parents and their role in children's play.

Mhlengi shared that his play was restricted. He had to play close to home because he needed to hear and return when called by his parents. Namhla, like Mhlengi, also had chores to do,

which she was reminded of when she wanted to play. She also shared how her mother did not like having children in her yard and, as a result, her friends avoided visiting her because her mother would chase them away.

Mhlengi shared the following: *“Ukudlala ngiyakuthanda, namanje but lento leyokuthi kade udlala mase uyabizwa, ey kuvele kuthi khala. (I love playing even now, but this thing of going to play then be called back, I just wanted to cry) Mina ekhaya (at home) they were strict, my dad was strict. He would call me to come eat lunch, maybe around 1pm noma ngizokwenza umsebenzi wasendlini (or come do some house chores). I would come back home but when I went back to play akusekho muntu and ngiphatheke kabi (there was no one and I would feel unhappy). Nngizibuze ukuthi kanti kwenzakalani (I would ask myself what was going on), bese (and) I went back home disappointed. But when I reflect now, I see ukuthi ekhaya (at home) they were teaching me ukuthi yonke into ine-timing (everything has its time). Sikhona iskhathi sokudlala, sikhona futhi isikhathi sokuthi kungabe kusadlalwa (there is time to play and also time not to play).”*

Namhla shared this narrative of parental restrictions:

“Mina uMa uyazixosha izingane uma zifikile ekhaya. Ngisho nama kuthiwa zingaki. Uma nje zifika zidlala zodwa. Uyathetha. Uthethela ukuthi ulishanela yedwa igceke – ngilishanela ngedwa leligceke, nisuke nikuphi? Nibhuquzisa amawindi aniwawashi. Bese eyazibiza azibuze ngeyodwa – ‘bathi ekhaya kini ukuphi? Ukwenzile ukuthi? Anigodukeni’. Uyazixosha nje to the point la abantu abasezi khona ekhaya, abasasivakasheli nje. Umuntu mhlampe uyafika ahlale for like 15 min, bese uMa uyaqala uyabuza, ‘Kanti uhamba nini umngani wakho? Kubo bathi ukuphi – akaboni ukuthi ubusy wena uyapheka, yen akubo akapheki?’ (to the child) ‘uhamba nini wengane yam?’”

(My mother chased children when they came to our home. It did not matter how many they were. If they came to our home with the intention to play, they ended up playing alone, without me because she shouted. She did so because she was the one who swept the yard alone [Namhla mimicked her mother]: “I sweep this yard alone, where are you then? You are going to leave dust on my windows”. She then called them one by one and asked [mimicking again]: “Where does your mother think you are? Did you do this? Go home!” She chased them away to the point where people did not want to

come to my home. They didn't visit anymore. A person would come for like 15 minutes, then my mother would begin asking questions, "When is your friend leaving? Do they know where she is at home – doesn't she see that you are busy cooking? Doesn't she cook at home?" [To the child] "When are you leaving, my child?")

Namhla's play seemed to be infused with fear of her mother's interaction with her friends, resulting in her friends not staying or visiting her. Her play was also scheduled in a way, as she could only play when she had completed her chores to her mother's satisfaction, and it was limited to outside the yard as her mother did not allow her to play in the yard or house.

Milani and Thembile shared how their play had been restricted and how their parents had restricted their interaction with other children and the places they could play.

Milani said: "Mina ekhaya ngikhule umama e strict ethetha. Ungakwazi ngisho ukuthi uphume uyodlala. Uma uphumile kancane nje, uzobhaxwa. Manje mangikhula, kunalokho, ngiyesaba nokuphuma ngiyodlala ngisho noma engekho ngiyesaba. And ngiyabona ukuthi lokho kungilimazile ngoba namanje ngiyabona ukuthi khona into eshodayo. Ngisakuthanda ukudlala kodwa uma ngidlala kuba khona lokho, uvalo. Okunye futhi manje, uthole ukuthi abantu ngihleli nabo, uthole ukuthi ngihleli nabo isikhathi eside kodwa naikwazi ukuba jwayela ngoba ngikhule ngihlala ekhaya, ngihlala ngedwa and kwakuyimina ngedwa ingane encane. Babekhona abadala osisi bami kodwa imina omncane."

(At home, I grew up when my mom was strict and scolded us. You could not even go out and play. If you went out to play, you would be spanked. So, when I grew up, that's what I knew. I was even scared to go out and play even when she was not around. And I can see how that experience hurt me because right now, I can see that something is missing. I loved to play, but I was overcome with fear when I played. Another thing I find is that when I am among people I have known for some time I still can't get to know them because I grew up alone at home for a long time as a small child. I had older sisters, but I was the youngest.)

Thembile shared the following:

"Ekhaya bekuyimina engimdala ebese kuba khona nomfana ngila mayo – we have a 10-year gap. Uma ehamba uMa ekseni uyasho ukuthi asihambi asiphumi, awuvakashi.

Because she had this belief that ingane ehambayo ibuya nezindaba. I remember ngelinye ilanga kwenzeka ngahamba. Uma ngihamba, ngasekhaya kwakukhona umuzi owuwumqasho so kwafika amaphoyisa. Angikhubuli ukuthi kwakwenzakalani kodwa ngiyakhumbula ukuthi afika amaphoyisa afika athatha omunye ubhuti. Angithi mina uMa uma ehamba nagihambi ngihlala endlini. So uma ebuya uMa sengikhohliwe ukuthi bengihambile kungafanele, sengiyamuxoxela uMa uma esebuya. Ngithi “weMa kade kufike amaphoyisa lapha” bese ethi uMa, anginge endlini khona ngizoxoxela eduze ngoba akangizwa ngoba ngimi enyango. Athi “bekwenzekalani” ngimxoxele ngiqede. Athi kimina ubone kanjani ula endlini. Wangibhaxa, engibhaxela ukuthi ngibone kanjani ukuthi bekukhona amaphoyisa mina ngila endlini. Ngisho nobhuti wami ongilamayo – akuhanjwa ekhaya, uhlala nje ekhaya. Mina sengize ngajwayela.”

(At home, I was the eldest, then I had a younger brother. We have a 10-year gap. When my mother left in the morning, she told us not to go anywhere and not to visit anyone. She had this belief that a child that visited others returned with gossip. I remember one day, I left the house. When I left, close to our home, there was a rented house, and the police came. I don't remember what happened there, but the police arrived and took a guy from that house. I remember my mother said I shouldn't leave the house. So, when she returned, I had forgotten that I had left without her permission, and I started sharing with her what I had seen. I said, “Mom, the police came over today to that house”. Then she said I should get inside the house to tell her everything closely because she couldn't hear as I stood outside. She asked again, “What happened?” I told her the full story. She then asked how I had seen all this because I should have been inside the house. She spanked me because I couldn't explain how I had seen all this when I was supposed to be indoors. Even my younger brother now, he knows. We don't leave the yard when at home. I am used to it now.)

Themobile's story also made me aware of how much influence and control parents have on children's play. The stories that were shared, particularly by Themobile, Milani and Namhla, revealed that their childhood play was infused with fear. Listening to them share their stories and realizing how much parents were indirectly a part of their childhood play made me reflect on my mother's influence on my play experiences. I then shared a story I remembered:

Nosipho (me): *“Konke lokho enikushoyo kungicabangisa uMa ngoba icishe ifane naye yazi uMa wami. Mina ekhaya ngingumagcina. UMa wayengena ama-shift. Uma sibuya*

eskoleni engekho, ezinye izingane zazikwazi ukuza egcekeni ngoba igceke lasekhaya la likhulu. Bafike bazodlala egcekeni nje kushunqe uthuli. Uma nje wake wambona umakaSipho eqhamuka estobhini wonke umuntu uyabaleka hhayi lapho akekho owayetshela omunye, ngoba uMa uyathetha. Naye uthethela igceka – anisabi naso ngisho isikhathi sokuqoqa. Wena osele egcekeni uyazibona.”

(All of the stories you shared have made me think of my mother. At home, I was the last born. My mother worked different shifts. When we returned from school and she wasn't there, other children would come to play in our yard because it was big. They would arrive, and we would play in our yard and there would be dust everywhere. If anyone at any point saw Sipho's mother coming from the bus stop, every child would run away. No one told anyone to run because my mother scolded the children a lot. The scolding was mainly about the dusty yard because we didn't have time to clean it afterwards. I was the one who stayed behind and who had to clean the dusty yard.)

Namhla said:

“I grew up in a squatter camp¹⁶ and sidlala sonke nezingane zakamakhelwane (and we played all together as neighbouring children). What I remember is that ekhaya a rule ukuthi ungashayi u 6pm ungabuyile (at home, there was a curfew of 6pm). Masesidlala, wawushaya u6, uze udlule kuze kushaye u7pm – sasikala ngezindaba. Sifike sishawe kodwa ngakusasa, we would still do the same. Uyakaza ishethi, urobhe amasokisi, uphindele uyodlala futhi – ngoba vele sasiba ningi, sidlala ndawonye, sihambisana ngama-grades.”

(We would play past 6pm until late. We would watch out for the news that played on the television. We would come home and be spanked, but we would still do the same tomorrow. We would wash our shirts and socks and go play. Because there were so many of us, we played together and were in the same grades.)

Namhla also shared that she had been involved in community play as a child. She was free to play and not restricted to where and with whom she could play. The only limit was time. Her story was accompanied by less timidity and revealed that she was quite carefree.

¹⁶ Squatter camp are settlements with shacks dwellings constructed of wood, cardboard, tin, and other scrap material. Entire families may live in a single shack.

The discussions revealed similarities in how we played, particularly in terms of the types of games we played as children and how our parents disciplined us and reacted/protected us from ourselves when we played. These similarities were affirmed when one participant narrated his/her story and others responded with short phrases such as “*nami*” (*me too*), “*ngempela*” (*really*), “*nathi ekhaya*” (*we too, at home*). Throughout the conversations there were clear connections among the stories and it was obvious that, for these participants and myself, all our childhood play had occurred outside in the yard or streets or somewhere around the neighbourhood. Play was a collaborative activity. It was uncommon for children such as Milani to play alone, but evidently some children were completely forbidden to play with others as was the case with Milani. I recalled that I had also been restricted from play when I lived in my grandmother’s house, but I could still find opportunities to play at school. The geographical areas where the participants played were relatively similar as they either grew up in a township or in a rural or informal settlement.

5.3.3 Making meaning of the participants’ childhood memories

Based on the experiences that had been shared, we began to explore aspects of those experiences that might hinder us from teaching or being playful as developing adults and educators. Zakhele and Hlumani had engaged in dangerous play during their childhood. Hlumani’s danger was the lack of safety on the dangerous roads where they played and where children had even died as a result. Zakhele’s danger was in the violence they were exposed to as children through television, which easily influenced growing children.

Milani experienced restricted play as her mother isolated her and she was not allowed to play outside the yard and with other children. She also played under confined circumstances, leading to her playing timidly as she feared punishment from her mother if she was found playing with other children or outside the yard. As a result, she grew up playing alone at her home. This resulted in timid play. I use the term ‘timid play’ to refer to the context of Milani’s play which was surrounded by anxiety and fear, which she said had contributed to her limited social skills as an adult, even though I had not noticed this timidity in our previous session. In the extract below, she continues to reveal how this childhood experience influenced her as an adult.

Milani: “*Ngisakuthanda ukudlala kodwa uma ngidlala kuba khona lokho, uvalo. Okunye futhi manje, uthole ukuthi abantu ngihleli nabo, uthole ukuthi ngihleli nabo*”

isikhathi eside kodwa angikwazi ukuba jwayela ngoba ngikhule ngihlala ekhaya, ngihlala ngedwa and kwakuyimina ngedwa ingane encane.”

(I still like to play, but I have that fear when I play. Another thing, even now, you find that people I have been with for a long time, but I cannot get well acquainted with them because I grew up at home, being alone, being the youngest child.)

I probed her memory about playing alone, and she elaborated that she had played alone and had not been allowed to make friends with other children even in school. She said:

“Angivumelekile ukujwayela abantu nje. Ngisho noma sengisesikoleni kunalokho kusaba ukuhlala nabantu.” (I was not allowed to befriend other people. So, even at school, there was that fear of being around people.)

Thembile and Mhlengi also shared experiences of limited play. Mhlengi was only allowed to play at scheduled times after all his chores had been done. He also needed to play close to home so he could hear when his father was calling him. Although being limited in this way as a child had been challenging, he later grew to understand the importance of timing. He shared how this continual experiences had taught him to understand that everything has a time and place.

Mhlengi: *“But when I reflect now, I see ukuthi ekhaya (at home) they were teaching me ukuthi yonke into ine-timing (that everything has timing). Sikhona iskhathi sokudlala, sikhona futhi isikhathi sokuthi kungabe kusadlalwa. (There is time to play and there is time to do other things and not play).”*

Thembile was also limited in her play, as she could not leave the yard. However, unlike Milani, Thembile was allowed to be visited and for her childhood friends to play with her, but only in the yard. As a result, she also played in fear of freely engaging with the children she was playing with. Thembile said:

“Akuhanjwa ekhaya, uhlala nje ekhaya. Mina sengize ngajwayela, ujike khona la. Udlala la ekhaya, awuphumi ngaphandle. Bangangena bona nidlale kodwa wena awuyi ndawo. Kuthiwa uzobuya nezindaba.”

(We didn't leave home; you had to stay at home. I got used to it; you stayed within the yard. You played at home, and you did not go outside. The other children could enter

and play with you, but you were not allowed to leave. They said you would return with gossip.)

Hlumani transitioned the conversation by reflecting on the danger they had placed themselves in when going out to play on a road that was also used by trucks transporting sugarcane. He then envisioned the kind of environment he would want his children to play in, where they would have the freedom to play without the danger they had experienced as children.

Hlumani: *“Engingakwenza for my kids instead ukuthi azingaphumi kwakona egcekeni because ngisaba ukuthi bazothola abantu aba right. Ngingazama to control ukuthi ziyaphi. Maybe ngingabavakashisa ezindaweni ezifana nepaki uma ikhona endaweni. Ngizame futhi ukuthi ngizihlalise nezinye izingane ezi-right. Ngingavuma ukuthi ziye emizini one-fence. Ngoba thina ngendlela ebesingavulwa ngayo ukudlala besize sizenzele thina amathuba okudlala.”*

(What can I do for my kids instead of limiting them to the yard in fear of the people they may meet outside the yard? I would try to control where they go. Maybe have them visit places like parks so they can play safely. I would also try and get other kids for them to meet, other good kids. I would allow them to visit other families who have fenced residences because the way we weren't allowed to play, we would make our opportunities to play and end up making irresponsible decisions.)

Although she agreed, Mhlengi also believed that children should be allowed to experience some ‘danger’ to learn by experience what it is like and to learn to safeguard themselves.

Mhlengi: *“Khona imfundo yase sikoleni nemfundiso yasekhaya mase kubakhona imfundiso ongeke uyithole eskoleni nasekhaya. Okundinga ukuthi to experience it.”*

(There are things that a child can learn at home. There are also other things that you can't learn at home or school; you just have to experience them.)

Zakhele, on the other hand, believed that sport in the township was very important and could help children get off the streets and build unity among children from the same township, as they did in his township when growing up.

Zakhele: *“I think sometimes sports are good for kids. Fanele abe khona endaweni. Thina ngikhumbula ngisakhula ukuthi bengidlalela iteam endaweni, sazana nabanye*

abafana bendawo ngoba sidlala ndawonye. Abazali bebenokuxhumana nocaoch. So uma sihamba siyaziwa ukuthi sise groundini. Uma ungekho egroundini shuthi wena usekhaya. Umzali wakho akumele akuthola kwenye indawo.”

(There must be sports offered in the neighbourhood. I remember growing up; I played in a soccer team. I knew the other boys in the neighbourhood because we played together. Our parents were in contact with our coach. So, they knew we were on the sports ground when we were not at home. If you were not on the ground, you should be home; your parent shouldn't find you anywhere else.)

Ndumiso, who had been quiet throughout the session listening to the others, spoke up and shared his childhood memory of play which was quite different from those of the others. He grew up playing various games. However, his parents never told him not to play with certain kids or go to certain homes. He was free to play anywhere and with anyone. He did not have a curfew but knew he needed to return home when it was dark. From what he shared, I could see that he enjoyed making cars out of wire.

Ndumiso: *“Mina angazi noma yingoba ngikhulelele emakhaya kodwa angikaze ngitshelwe ukuthi khona imizi okungafanele ngiye kuyona nabantu okungafanele ngidlale nabo. Besihamba yonke indawo. Miningi midlalo esiyidlalile. Ukube nje umuntu wakhulela ezindaweni ezingcono ezinamathuba ngabe umuntu ukude ngoba lemidlalo esasiyidlala like ukwakha izimoto zocingo, ukwakha zinto ezahlukenengobumba, ukudweba besikwenza so umuntu ubengaqhubeka nakho uma bekufundiswa nasesikoleni. Kodwa we were not exposed to it in school so we did it as hobby for fun and it ended there.”*

(I don't know if it's because I grew up in a rural area, but I was never told not to go to certain areas or certain houses or not to play with certain children. We played everywhere. There were a lot of games we played. If we had grown up in a better place, we would have been exposed to better opportunities, gone far in life, and pursued our dreams. Like the games we played, making cars, building houses using soil, drawing; we could've continued with those even at school if they were taught as subjects and maybe [we could have] become professionals.)

Namhla raised an important point that transitioned the conversation again. She alluded to Zakhele's point about playing team sports. She spoke about being the child that no one wanted

to play with. She recalled a child they had in their neighbourhood, but they never wanted to play with her. From this memory, she emphasised the significance of such experiences in one's upbringing.

Namhla: *“Wenzenjani uma hlezi wena ungakhethwa ndawo? Mhlampe kuthiwa kudlalwa umasigcozi, kuthiwa “umkakho uZama” avele athi omunye “angidlali mina, angisadli”. Ngisho noma kuthiwa ungaphuma kuqala ngebreak esikoleni, udle nabo amasandwich akho kodwa after school mase kudlalwa abantu sebekhethwe abazodlala nabo, let's say ushumpus for example, kusale uZama, kubuzwe ukuthi uZama akadlali yini yena, kuvelel kuthiwe “uma kudlala uZama ngingavele ngingadlali ke mina” lapho maybe lo osho lokho uyena who is the best in the game. And leyonto yenzeka njalo, sasingayikhethi in any game we played kodwa yayifika njalo izofuna ukudlala nathi. Kwakufika ngisho isikhathi la uthi uyakhuluma ukuthi ayidlale ingane bavele bavukele wena, bafune ukukhipha wena. Noma bathi dlalani nobabili kuphela. Nawe bese uyathula ngoba ukhethiwe.”*

(What do you do when no one befriends you? Let's say we are playing house, and your play wife is Zama, and the other children then just say, “I'm not playing. I'm not playing anymore.” Even if you share your sandwiches with them during break at school, after school, when we are playing, and people are choosing who will be in their teams, like 'ushumpu', for example, Zama will be the only one without a team. And someone will ask, 'Isn't Zama playing as well? But others will say, 'If Zama is playing, I'd rather not play', and probably the one who is saying that is the one who is the best in the game and everyone wants them to play. This is what used to happen to this girl we played with. She wanted to play with us, but no one wanted to play with her. Even if one person tried to speak for her so she could play, the rest of the kids would just rise up against you and want to throw you out of the game, or they would just say, 'The two of you should play together!' Then you also just kept quiet.)”

Taking his cue from Namhla, Mhlengi also mentioned that, although he had grown up and gone to the same school with peers from his neighbourhood, they had not received the same opportunities as he had. As a result, many of his peers were unemployed, had no skills or worked in low-income jobs. One was his high school friend with whom he still associated. Namhla then added that childhood friends could grow apart. She shared a memory of her childhood friend who even went to the same university as she did, but she was in a different

program. She shared that, after growing up, they had grown apart at university, and that she was hurt by their separation.

Hlumani chose to keep a small group of friends and stay away from many friends due to his experiences in primary school. He narrated that a classmate of his, who had been a friend, had committed suicide and had written a note that had no details other than that his friends would know why. They got into a lot of trouble for that even if nobody knew why the boy would have said that. Later in the investigation, it was discovered that the deceased had been abused physically at home and that he had confided in his friends, but they had not helped him in any way. Based on that experience, he felt that having friends brought more trouble than good and he had been cautious ever since about who he brought into his circle.

5.3.4 The participant's perceptions of their ability to teach

Having talked about our childhood memories of play which opened the conversation about the role our parents had played and the kind of friends we had played with while growing up, I then asked the participants to think about teaching and to reflect on the teaching practice experiences they had had in the past two terms.

Nosipho: “Looking at your current teaching experience and training, what are your feelings about your ability to teach? Do you feel capable and ready to get into a classroom and start teaching professionally? What are your feelings about that? You are becoming a professional, so no one will follow you to check whether you are doing things right. You must now govern yourself and decide what kind of teacher you want to become. So, what are your feelings – I don't know if you have thought about that since you have a few months left before we say goodbye to you. What are your thoughts on that?”

Zizwe, another participant who had been silent during our conversations, shared her feelings about going into professional teaching.

Zizwe: “Sometimes I feel ready, but I have that fear yokuthi ngizokhona yini? (will I be able to?). As you said, no one will be there to guide you – you are on your own in the classroom. Probably there will be no mentor to tell you what to do and how to do it; no person to ask as we can do as student teachers. So, I fear that I will not be able to do everything that is expected of me as a professional teacher. And sometimes, I am lazy,

and I know I am lazy. Like even when I have been given an assignment, I wait until the last minute before I do it. So now, when it is me who is in charge and I have to do planning, I ask myself if I will be able to.”

Namhla also shared her feelings about teaching and her experiences of teaching practice, which had been challenging. A recent memory was that her male teacher mentor had told other teachers that Namhla was infatuated with him. This had made interacting with other teachers in the staffroom uncomfortable for her. Namhla believed he had done this because she had found favour and built rapport with the learners, and he had not liked that. She thought that it was he who had been infatuated with her. The Principal had rescued her as he knew that the teacher mentor had done this before with another preservice teacher. But by the time this dilemma had gotten to the Principal’s office, everyone in the staffroom had known about it, and other teachers had made her uncomfortable in various ways. She was grateful that the Principal had addressed this with the mentor teacher and had called him out, which had led him to stop his behaviour. The Principal had also warned her not to get too familiar or friendly with the learners and other teachers as that might have been misinterpreted as flirtatious behaviour. She admitted that she did not know how to work on that part of her personality, but she knew it was important as she didn’t want a similar experience when she started teaching professionally.

Ndumiso also shared his feelings about teaching as follows:

“I am not a fan of the senior phase. I fell out of love with it during TP while observing teachers. Firstly, the learners in the senior phase are uncontrollable; they don’t know what they want. Particularly in Creative Arts. I think even the school has a bad attitude towards it, including the Principal and other teachers. They treat it as a subject that has no significance. They have no respect for it. In my second TP, I used to have clashes between Drama and Creative Arts, and I would just not teach Creative Arts and rather teach Drama instead because I didn’t enjoy teaching Creative Arts because of the bad behaviour of the learners. There was only one class that I enjoyed teaching Creative Arts; it was 8B because they listened to me and did my work, but I didn’t like teaching the others because they did not want to listen to me and didn’t do my work.”

Taking a cue from Ndumiso, Mhlengi shared his observations about teaching Creative Arts:

“What I have realized about Creative Arts is that it is not easy to continue teaching once you shouted at the learners. You lose them. Kanti (but) it is important ukuthi (that) there is rapport in a Creative Arts classroom between teacher and learners. Fanele nitholane (you must get to know each other).”

Nhlakanipho shared how confident he felt about his teaching abilities:

“As a teacher, I feel like I have the potential to do it; I just need a little push – like I still need to develop a few skills.”

He continued to share his experiences of teaching practice. This is his story: During the first teaching practice stint, he was placed at an Indian-dominated school and was treated as a teacher such as signing the register like the professional teachers. He was given a voice and was welcome and appreciated. However, during his second TP stint, he was discriminated against because he was young and black. He felt unwelcome and unwanted by the teachers in that school as his voice was not heard at all. The other Music teachers did not want to give him any Music classes or instruments to teach, and he felt that it was because they did not trust that he could teach Music and the piano. The other black teachers in that school only taught isiZulu while the white teaching staff taught all the other subjects. He did not like how he was treated and, based on that experience, he decided not to apply to schools promoting such behaviour.

Ndumiso shared his confidence in teaching as follows:

“I would say I am ready to teach because I enjoyed my first and second TPs. My only problem is that I look young, so the kids get too familiar and friendly with me, and they think we are friends. They think it’s also because I am open to people. Another thing is that it will take time for me to get it into my head that I am a teacher. Especially because of how I dress; I don’t have any formal clothes. I also don’t go to church – even for my matric dance, I didn’t wear formal. That is my problem.”

Thembile, on the other hand, shared that she was unsure if she wanted to continue studying teaching based on her experience during teaching practice:

“I have also been asking myself if I am ready or not. Because in the last TP stint, the grade 8 learners in the school were a total of 151 in one class. All grade 8s were taught together in one class. So, when I taught, they made noise in all corners. The older ones

sat in the corner. So, when I was trying to teach, some were talking. If you tried and asked them to stop, another group would start singing in the other corner. Some were laughing, and there was just a whole lot of different noises. Uma ngikhuza oyedwa (If I disciplined one), they became serious a bit. But there was this group that used to pass on a message to one of the learners who was also my neighbour that I must be told that ngisazobanda ngoba bazongithela ngamanzi abandayo (they would pour buckets of cold water on me). Uma ngibanika isikhathi (If I gave them time) for a practical activity or discussion or anything, they overdid it, and didn't want to stop. One day, I got irritated and told them that I was the teacher and I was teaching and whoever didn't want to learn had to leave the classroom. I said that even if I knew that the Principal of the school did not want any learner to be chased outside while teaching. Kodwa ngasho khona ukuthi ngizonikhiphela phandle (But I told them that I would send them outside). I was angry. Their Creative Arts teacher was one of the most disrespected teachers in the school. When they saw her, they showed no respect for her. It got better when the Principal came to class – there was some order. The grade 11s were better – they were rude but better behaved. So that is why I had to be strict with the grade 8s all the time because they overdid it. Even when we did the tonic solfa, they over-acted. But teaching 151 learners in one big class is not easy for them as well. I don't know if I can do that again.”

During these reminiscences, I listened attentively to their narratives and discussions. I could deduce that the participants had had various experiences during teaching practice that had evoked various feelings: some were confused as a result of challenging experiences while others were more hopeful. Therefore, I asked that we should bank this conversation for now as I was going to arrange a session where each person who wanted to could share their experiences and receive feedback from the others to assist them with ideas to handle teaching challenges effectively.

5.3.5 Setting the standards for a Creative Arts teacher

To end the session, I did a short activity in which we shared the best perceived characteristics of a playful person and a good Creative Arts teacher. Generally, there was a positive response for this idea among the participants who gave multiple verbal and physical nods of agreement. The purpose of this activity was to determine what the participants' perspectives of a playful person were and to understand their views of the traits of a good Creative Arts teacher. I uttered

aloud two incomplete sentences which they had to complete impromptu on slips of paper. The sentences were: “A good CA teacher is a teacher who...” and “A playful person is a person who...” The participants’ responses were as follows:

Thembile: “...who can be interactive with learners.”

Siyandisa: “...who is creative and can come up with new fun things in class.”

Nhlakanipho: “...who has the ability to lead and follow.”

Zakhele: “...who can act.”

Hlumani: “...who can recognise the different characteristics of the learners and try to accommodate them.”

Ndumiso: “...who can turn theory into practical knowledge.”

Zizwe: “... who can accommodate and recognise talent in the classroom.”

Namhla: “... who can teach practical and theory in all artforms.”

A playful person is a person who:

Namhla: “...can adapt.”

Mhlengi: “...likes laughter.”

Ndumiso: “...can connect with people easily.”

Hlumani: “...is active.”

Zakhele: “...is slow to anger.”

Nhlakanipho: “...can make people feel comfortable.”

Siyandisa: “...uses their time to laugh and have fun.”

Zakhele: “...can encourage and lift other people’s spirits up.”

Zizwe: “... who can bring hope to other people.”

Nhlakanipho: “...can tolerate others but also have authority.”

5.3.6 Reflections on session two

I enjoyed this session and noted that the participants were starting to warm to the nature of their involvement. I observed that they participated eagerly and engaged with me and others in discussions in an open and frank manner when we shared our childhood experiences about play. However, not all the participants shared eagerly, and I did not force those who were quiet to speak. They shared some good and not-so-good childhood memories. Some of the memories were not limited to play only, but most spoke freely about their childhood experiences of interaction with other kids or a lack thereof, and how that affected them as they grew up. We also spoke about childhood friendships – how they survived or died.

These discussions provided moments when I could identify useful information for my research. I could relate to the stories they shared about the kinds of play they engage in and I could categorise these as restricted, free, community, limited, and dangerous play. Another interesting observation was the nature of parental involvement and attitude towards play. The data that emerged in this regard presented the highlight of this session. When they were sharing their stories, I could identify with their experiences as I also remembered some of the games that I had engaged in during my childhood as well as my mother's and relatives' attitude towards play.

During this session, there were moments when I became concerned with the time as I tended to belabour one topic and delayed moving forward. One of these times was when the participants shared their childhood memories of play. Although we were running out of time, I pushed to include the two one-liners (see above) that they had to complete. I was also happy with the progress we made that day and the richness of the conversations. Our childhood play had multiple similarities, like our parents' involvement and the kinds of games we played. As in the previous session, I realised that linking questions about teaching and their teaching practice elicited narratives about their experiences that needed to be released and heard by others, which became a compelling reason to offer the participants a session to share these experiences in a specially designated session. I believe that paying attention to the types of games we played and the depth of the conversations about our experiences created deep and rich data about the value of play and how it might link to attitudes and behaviours in the teaching environment. The in-depth data on the influence of parental views on play also added value to the study, while the impact of restricted play on participants such as Mihlali added a

new dimension to the data that would address research question one. Moreover, I acknowledge the value of paying attention to participants' emotional narratives by sometimes allowing the conversation to take form without restricting the session to only planned activities.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented and discussed the events of sessions one and two. I detailed what had occurred during these sessions and elaborated on the discussions and the participants' depth of engagement. In session one, we shared narratives about the games we had played as children and chose games to actively play in the session. We further discussed our experiences as adults of playing each game. What emerged was deeper insight into the connection between childhood games and their applicability for teaching and learning. In session two, we elaborated on some childhood memories of play and recalled how, where, and with whom we had played. We shared stories of parental involvement in our play and marvelled how their involvement had limited access to play in many instances. We also shared some thoughts on the characteristics of a good Creative Arts teacher and what a playful person may be like. In reflecting on these sessions, I lamented some missed opportunities and discovered my tendency for over speaking. I also began to identify the more active participants and possible friendships within the group. In the next chapter, I continue to share the data I elicited based on the activities that occurred in sessions three and four.

CHAPTER SIX: UNRAVELLING PLAYFUL THREADS – PART TWO

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the data and discuss the events that occurred in sessions three and four. In session three, the participants and I began discussing the kind of teacher they had described at the end of the last session. We also participated in an activity that cross-checked our presumed abilities against the teaching standards that we had set at the end of the previous session. In the fourth session, we participated in the hotseating activity. This activity gave the preservice teachers an opportunity to share their teaching practice experiences without interruption, as the activity was solely focused on that aspect of their experiences.

6.2 Session Three

6.2.1 Can we achieve the standards we set?

In this session, as in the previous sessions, the participants and I first engaged in casual conversation about our day as they enjoyed some refreshments. Attempting to capitalize on the time we had, I recapped by reminding them about the previous week's session and our experiences of childhood play. I then introduced our activity for this session. I took out the green sheets of paper on which I had written down the answers they had given at the end of the previous session. I posted them on the portable board for all to see. I then asked if they recognised what was written on the sheets.

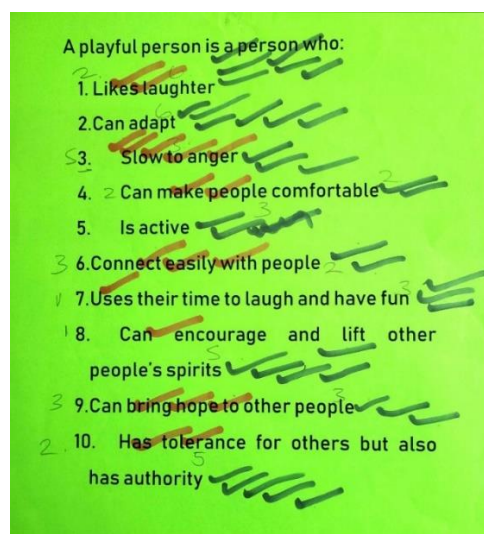


Figure 14: List of the participants' views on a playful person

Some participants moved up towards the board and read the words on the list. They soon recognised that the words belonged to them. We were sitting in a semi-circle and the board enclosed this semi-circle. Namhla, who has a jovial personality, stepped towards the board and identified the words she had given. She exclaimed, “*Eyami le, Miss, nansi eyam la*” (*This is my word, Miss*). I read out the answers they had given to stir their memories and to share their answers. Two processes were important: they *saw* their answers on the board and I also helped them to *listen* to their answers. I gave them some time to think about the responses and then to think about the characteristics they thought they had and those they did not have. I asked them to be honest and reiterated that if they did not have some of these characteristics, it was okay because it gave them an opportunity to work on themselves as they began their teaching career.

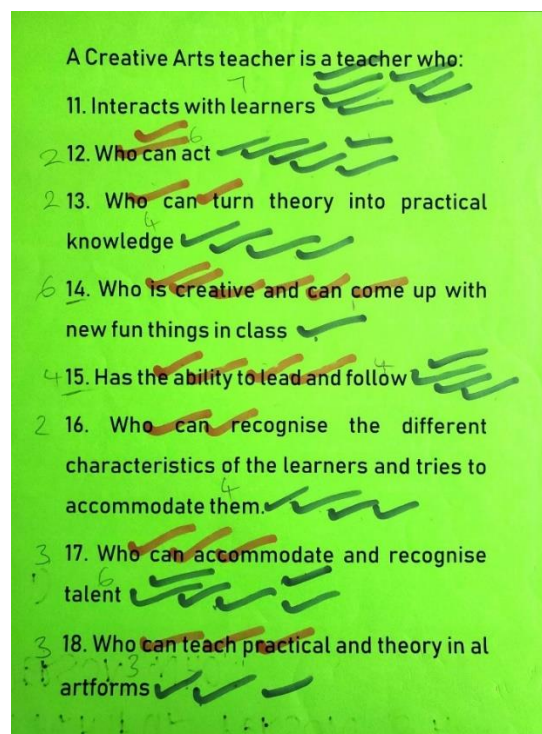


Figure 15: The list of participants’ views on a good Creative Arts teacher

The purpose of this activity was to assist the participants to begin thinking about their journey of unlearning and becoming. They had shared what a playful person and a Creative Arts teacher should be like, and this activity was an opportunity for them to align what they had said with who they were and how they perceived themselves. I then issued a piece of paper to each to write their answers down. I had written I AM... on one side of the piece of paper and I AM NOT... on the other side. As the responses posted on the board were numbered from 1-18, to encourage honesty I asked them to make their answers anonymous and just to write the

numbers only according to their assessment of themselves. They then dropped the completed piece of paper in a container.

Some time passed while the students still engaged silently and thoughtfully with the answers posted on the board. Some, however, walked to the board and completed the activity from there. A few others walked about a bit in the class while completing the activity. There were some distant stares through the windows as some walked around with pens and the paper in their hands. There were also moments of sporadic staring at each other as the participants moved in a scattered manner across the room. I also participated in the activity as I had not participated before and I did not want another missed opportunity as, previously I had only participated in the conversations. I felt my participation would be achievable as I had no administrative work to do. I walked around the space observing the participants and carried a pen and the paper in my hand and engaged in my thoughts, completing the I AM... and the I AM NOT... activity.

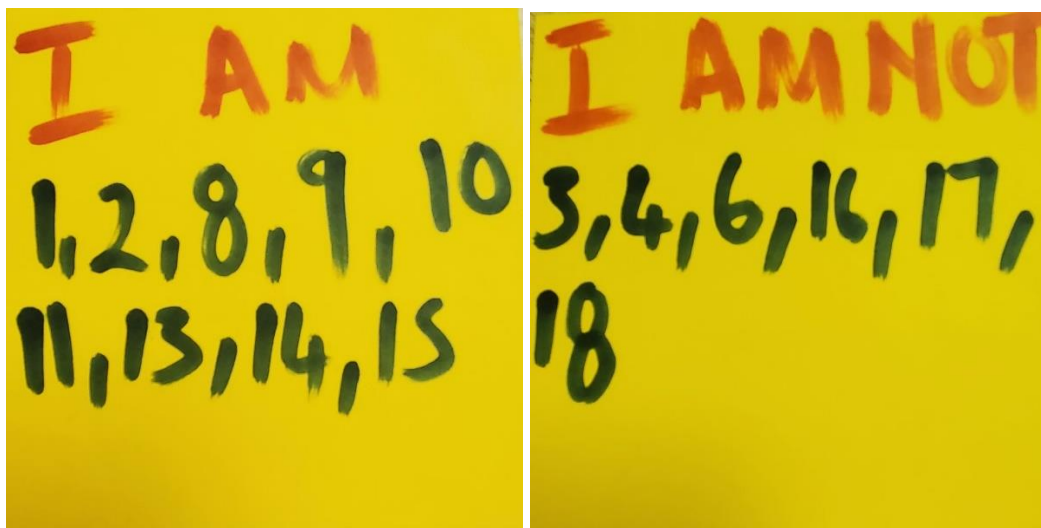


Figure 16: My answers based on activity 3

Thinking about my answers as presented in Figure 16 and reflecting on my novice teaching experiences, I felt engaged. I stared out into the open space, remembering some classroom experiences I had had with learners in high school and students at university. Shifting my look from the board to my piece of paper, I felt that some of the answers posted were characteristics I was still working to hone. I felt I had achieved some others, but I was not sure if I was capable of achieving some as they had not crossed my mind before.

Once they had all finished and dropped their paper into the container, I explained I would read their answers aloud. I chose to do this so that everyone could listen to these anonymous responses. I felt this activity would have some level of transparency and honesty, but without compromising the anonymity of the participants.

6.2.2 Where do I fit in?

In keeping with the principles of transparency and honesty, I alerted the participants that I would read everyone's responses out aloud. I unconsciously started with the positive I AM... answers. I am unsure why I made that choice, as it was spontaneous. However, I presume that it was good to share our teaching capabilities. I read the numbers they had written down, linking them with the answers on the poster. I also used a pen to tick each number as I read the answer. I did this for all the I AM... and I AM NOT... answers.

This activity elicited a lot of laughter from the participants as they started guessing who had given which answer as I read them aloud. Some laughed in disbelief at answers such as: "I AM 3" (slow to anger) as it was hard to believe that there was an individual among us who was slow to anger. This was a moment of comfort because it showed that the participants were getting more at ease with one another during the sessions as they were able to laugh with and not at one another. The participants were talking animatedly, agreeing and disagreeing with the answers I was reading out. I felt that this contributed significantly to creating rapport and a feeling of togetherness among the members of the group while forging friendships. In the earlier sessions I had noticed the beginning of some friendships among the participants, and their reaction to this activity confirmed this.

After I had read all their answers and ticked them next to each answer on the board, I counted the I AM... and I AM NOT... ticks. Thereafter, I gave the participants a chance to review their answers based the ticks made and to note the abilities and areas of improvement they had identified. I also discussed some examples of what we could do and what we needed to work on. For example, according to the ticks, five participants believed they were tolerant of others, and two believed they were not. Three felt they were 'slow to anger' while five felt they were not. We discussed what this meant as patience is an imperative characteristic of a Creative Arts teacher. It was therefore necessary for those who believed they were not patient to work on their tolerance for others. Although patience is a crucial characteristic of teachers in general, we felt it was even more vital for Creative Arts teachers because of the nature of the work and

the classroom where practical and physical activities are frequently conducted. We reached consensus on this as we agreed that the age group 13 to 15 years in the senior phase (grades 7-9) was challenging to teach because of their adolescent idiosyncrasies.

6.2.3 Patience is indeed a virtue

Having agreed on the issue of patience as an imperative trait for Creative Arts teachers, the conversation then transitioned to experiences of teaching the adolescent age group. Some participants shared that teaching learners in grades 8 and 9 was challenging as the children were very active and tended to be mischievous in class.

Namhla: *“Kwesinye isiskhathi uyazama ukukhuluma nabo kahle, kodwa nje lezizingane ziyahlanyisa yazi.”* (Sometimes you try to talk to them, but these kids can drive you crazy.)

I then used this opportunity to share my experiences of this age group as a novice teacher (as was detailed under memory four). They needed to understand that it was a time when I had to learn to ‘unlearn’ so that I could manage my teaching better and engage in self-reflection to do so. I explained that I had convinced myself that one of my traits was patience, but that teaching teenagers had revealed that my patience was reserved for my peers and elders. I described my time of reflection to curb my shouting at learners to get their attention and cooperation, which had not been the best strategy to manage those learners. I admitted honestly that, although it had been uncomfortable, I had to acknowledge that I could not solely blame the learners as I had been at fault myself. I highlighted that it had only been through honesty with myself and self-reflection that I could eventually achieve the equilibrium that allowed me to ensure mutual trust, cooperation, and respect in my classroom.

6.2.4 Being a life-long learner

After sharing this memory and my learnings briefly, the participants did not respond to my story verbally, but it was clear that they had listened intently. I did not ask them to respond as my sharing was not a prompt to a new topic but a contribution to show I also had experienced similar challenges in my teaching practice. Transitioning back to the main discussion, I asked if any participant was willing to share with us at least one answer he or she had chosen for this activity.

Siyandisa remarked that only one person had chosen answer 14: “I AM a teacher...who is creative and can come up with fun new things in class.” He raised this as a concern because he felt that, as Creative Arts teachers and artists, none felt confident in their creativity or was motivated to try out new things.

Siyandisa: Njengoba sibangaka lana eklasini, singothisa, kuyamangaza ukuthi uyedwa kuphela okhethe u14 kodwa sonke sinawo ngisho ama-degree eArt aka-undergrad. Kuyacaca ukuthi i-degree ayanele, kusekuningi ekufanele sikufunde singama-artist nothisha be-Art.”

(As we are this group in class, it's surprising that only one person chose 14, but we have Art undergraduate degrees. It's obvious that a degree is not enough; we still have a lot to learn as upcoming artists and teachers.)

Based on this comment, I need to state that, currently, as part of my introductory lesson in the PGCE programme, I include the required roles of being a competent Creative Arts teacher in my lessons using Odendaal and De Jager's (2016) *Creative arts education* book as a guide. This book, among other lessons, emphasises that Creative Arts teachers need to be lifelong learners, which is a necessity that I generally emphasise in my introductory lessons. Therefore, taking my cue from Siyandisa's observation, I reminded the participants about the lesson we had had in the first semester and the importance of being a lifelong learner as a teacher. I reminded them of this lesson to emphasise lifelong learning.

To demonstrate my point, I shared some information about my journey as a Master's student while being a teacher. I discussed my reasons for enrolling in postgraduate studies and the challenges and rewards of working and studying simultaneously. I also emphasised the need to continuously engage with current events, which should be integrated into one's teaching.

Nosipho: “Mina (I) registered for my Master's after a year of being in the classroom. Being a teacher raised more questions in me than answers, and I felt ukuthi (that) I asked myself a lot of 'why' questions that I could not answer. You know, like why were learners behaving the way they did, why was I making some of the choices I was making in class, why is the school doing things like this and not like that? I became engrossed in my thoughts about things I saw in school and just wanted answers. Fortunately, I enrolled for coursework Masters and took classes, read books, and engaged in conversations with fellow students that exposed me to management and leadership

within schools, being a critical thinker as a teacher and understanding others. That opportunity helped me understand school management better and some of the choices that were made, whether good or bad. It also helped me to understand some of the learners I had in my class. I was challenged and stretched a lot. Ngangingalali iskhathi esiningi, ngifunda, ngimaka, ngifundisa, ngiphrepha (I hardly slept, studying, marking, teaching and prepping). Kodwa ekugcineni ngabona ukuthi konke lokhu engangikwenza kwangikhulisa kakhulu, ngolwazi, nge-capacity, ngabona ukuthi sengingcono kakhulu. (However, in the end I realised that all I was doing was stretching myself and increasing my knowledge and capacity. I realised that I had become a better teacher and person).”

Linda felt that it was important that we cultivated the ability to identify artistic talent such as acting, drawing, and dancing. However, according to the ticks on the paper, only six of the participants felt they had that ability.

Linda: “I think that, because the Creative Arts discipline has four art forms, ukunzima for mine (it’s difficult for me). Angikho (good) kuwowonke ama-artforms (I am not good at all the artforms), but with the artforms I am good at, I am confident that I can identify a talented learner and give them an opportunity to perform in school concerts or even in assembly.”

I then emphasised the point of paying attention as a teacher and noticing talent.

Nosipho: “Kubalulekile ukunaka (It’s important to notice). You can start with your children at home, those of you who already have kids, or your younger siblings or nieces and nephews. Even in class, you can do the same: pay attention to your learners, make an effort to learn their names, build rapport, have ice-breakers and do some of the activities with them. Start small.”

We had run out of time and had to end our session, and I thanked the participants for coming again that day. I also reminded them of the time as some had a bus to catch. Soon after the announcement a few participants were on their feet, rushing for the door with murmurs of goodbye as they exited. Others were kind enough to assist me in carrying the cutlery and side plates back to my office as I carried my laptop and a small box with papers we had used that day. That was the end of our third session.

6.2.5 Reflecting on Session Three

This session elicited new thoughts about being a Creative Arts teacher at primary and high school level and about being a teacher-educator. The standards we set using that short activity really gave me something to consider. The participants' responses were impromptu and unvetted. However, most of them were valid. The activity we engaged in that day was a call to work more concertedly on developing ourselves for our profession. This activity also validated my study in a way because it highlighted the importance of reflexivity and the improvement of professional practice. I appreciated that. During my tenure as a novice high school teacher, I did not work from a position of intent nor did I intentionally work towards a particular standard. Moreover, although I respect and have tried to harness my craft and pedagogy as a teacher-educator as is evidenced by this PhD project, being intentional was not prominent in my mind. Therefore, this session released new ideas about exploring standards and the characteristics that are necessary for a Creative Arts teacher/teacher-educator. I admit that this activity is something I would like to integrate into my Creative Arts lessons for the senior students, and I am hoping for similar conversations and developments.

One highlight that stood out about this session was my integration of a formal lesson on lifelong learning I had taught earlier into this session. This emphasised the teacher-educator-preservice-teacher relationship which, earlier, I had thought would taint this venture, but it had obviously not. I felt that my emphasis on being a life-long learner was necessary as it drew on a topic that had already been presented to them before and that could enforce the concept of the vitality of learning that is not limited to university studies but that it should permeate the workplace as well.

6.3 Session Four

In this section I introduce and detail the events that took place in the fourth session. In this session, we participated in the hotseating activity. The participants had time to share the burning issues from their teaching practice and advised each other on handling certain matters should they arise again. I participated in this activity. The participants asked me questions about my highschool teaching experiences, and some had specific questions relating to their experience. Overall, it was a fruitful session that gave attention to the participants and allowed them to illuminate what was important to them without interruption or interference.

6.3.1 Preliminaries

As usual, we began the session by greeting and sharing refreshments. The participants did not have a class before our session, meaning they had to wait an hour or more on campus before the sessions commenced. I started by asking how the day had been thus far, to which many answered vaguely. Namhla she had been sitting under a tree on campus, waiting in the heat. I was surprised, asking jokingly if she had bunked class, but she explained that they finished classes early on Wednesdays, at lunchtime, so she had to pass the time in the garden with her friends. This patience indicated a commitment to our sessions, as the participants did not have much to do on campus every Wednesday. They could easily have left after class, but had decided to stay for our session.

6.3.2 Taking turns in the hotseat

I explained we would participate in the ‘hotseat’ activity and asked if they were familiar with the game. Some raised their hands, a few nodded, and others did not answer. Those who did not respond gave me the impression that they did not understand the game. I then explained that hotseating was a game commonly used in Drama lessons and by actors during rehearsals as they prepared their lines and character development. I explained the activity to them as I had described it earlier. I also mentioned that our hotseating theme would be related to teaching and playing as preservice teachers in a Creative Arts classroom and that the questions should be focused on these activities.

I explained my purpose, stating that engaging in this activity would assist us in learning about one another’s Creative Arts teaching experiences during teaching practice. I also felt that, as preservice teachers, they needed to talk in depth about these experiences and that I also needed to listen deeply to understand the dynamics during these experiences, as this understanding would assist me as a PhD scholar and a teacher-educator to gain more insight into the realities of Creative Arts pre-service teachers. I envisaged that I would be able to uncover any missed opportunities regarding the curriculum and that I would be able to explore approaches that would contribute to an enriched teaching and learning experience for my current and future students.

To start the activity, a high chair was placed in front of the group. Before we began the activity, I asked if there were people who stuttered. I asked this as the game required quick responses from the person in the hotseat, and I wanted to be sensitive and accommodating. Zakhele

mentioned that he often stuttered when put on the spot and Milani mentioned that she could not speak fast in English. Mhlengi admitted that he could not talk quickly in any language as he often stammered.

I ensured them that they could respond in any language (isiZulu or English), in whichever they were more comfortable. I also assured them that they could speak at their own pace. The rest of us would try to answer quickly as best we could, without overthinking our answers as the game required. Another participant jokingly mentioned that he could not think on his feet and was worried he might give the wrong answers. He said:

“Kuyangihlula mina ukuphendula ngokushesha ngoba maningi amathuba okuthi ngibhede”. (I am terrible at responding quickly because there is much chance that I will say the wrong thing).

Swiftly, Siyandisa retorted: *“Aw mjita, phela akusiyona itest le, umuntu uphendula into ayaziyo noma ayenzile, angithi sis Nosipho?”* (Oh, dude, but this is not a test; a person will answer what they know or what they have done. Isn't it so, Nosipho?)

I nodded and reiterated that there were no right or wrong answers as each person would share their thoughts. Though the participants had said they were familiar with the game, they appeared reluctant to participate. No one volunteered to start, and few moved to the seat closest to the hotseat. Namhla asked me to take the hotseat first. She said, *“Kungcono kuqale wena Miss, sibone ngawe okuthi lento izohamba kanjani.”* (It is better that you start, Miss, so we can see how this goes.)

There was unanimous agreement. I chuckled, shook my head in defeat, and took the hotseat. I did not have a problem starting this activity. However, I had not considered being the first to participate as my mind had not entirely shifted into being a participant. A part of me still understood research as researching *others*, and I needed to work on that perception. What also became clear was the very concept I believed was lacking during the teaching practice assessment I had partook in some years before which had prompted the pursuit of this doctoral study. This was the concept of demonstration as a teacher-educator. Months later, while listening to the raw data again, I realised that what Namhla had asked me to do was to *demonstrate* even though we were not in the classroom context, I now realised that an initiator in research of this nature needs to be an active participant and be ready to lead the activity if required.

6.3.3 My turn in the hotseat

In consideration of the time, I asked each participant to think of at least one question to ask so that each person would have an opportunity to ask and for the hotseater to answer. I also allowed those with burning second questions the chance to ask, but to be mindful of other participants in the class. As I was walking to the hotseat, Siyandisa posed a question even before I had sat down. I was surprised at the eagerness and asked him if this was an official question. I asked, surprised: “*Sesiqalile njalo?*” (*Have we started already?*). He answered in the affirmative and we all shared a moment of laughter. I sat down, and the questioning from various participants followed. His eagerness and Namhla’s request for me to start indicated that the participants had questions to ask of me or, perhaps, needed me to start and set the tone of the activity.

I was asked about classroom management issues, my management of romantic relationships between colleagues in the workplace, learner favouritism, and my ideas about low student pass rate for the subject. These questions were not at all related to our theme of teaching and play. However, I realised they were the critical issues they wanted to ask about. Therefore, I allowed this questioning without prescribing how and what they should be asking, and I answered to the best of my knowledge.

Linda asked me an important question which resonated with many in the group. She asked how a teacher could address the feelings of incompetence and failure when the students did not excel in the subject. Using myself as an example, I acknowledged that it was hurtful when your students did not excel or when the majority failed an assessment or module. I explained how I felt responsible as a teacher for my students’ grades and also experienced moments of self-blame as I might not have played my part sufficiently. As a high school teacher, I honestly believed the learners’ results reflected on me. However, I explained that now, as a teacher-educator, I was trying to shift away from that mindset because I knew that I put much effort into my work; that teaching and learning was a collaborative activity between the student and the teacher. I shared with them how shifting my mindset had helped me remove much of the responsibility on myself as I understood that teaching and learning was a shared responsibility between the teacher and the student. I shared how this mindset had encouraged me to plan and teach in the best way I could, as that was all I could do from my side. My teaching should encourage my students to play their role in learning the knowledge and acquiring the skills shared with them.

Another question that I found challenging to answer was posed by Mhlengi. He asked how a teacher could/should deal with teaching in a school in the neighbourhood where the teacher resides. He argued that the learners and other support staff might know the teacher and be familiar with the family issues. He explained that he had once been in a situation as a preservice teacher where a learner, who was his neighbour, had wanted to inform other learners in the school that they were neighbours, and he had feared that the learner might divulge personal information about him or his family.

I was taken aback. I did not have an answer or time to think of an answer. There was also nothing from my experience related to this question, so I honestly said I did not know. I explained that I had never encountered a similar experience before. I then presumed that if it were to happen, I would determine how ‘nasty’ it would be for me if my personal life was exposed in the school community. I suggested to get ahead of it and disclose the situation to the principal before it got out hand. Moreover, if anything could be used against me or compromise my integrity, I would call the learner and discuss the matter so as to get things out in the open in the presence of a third party, preferably a senior educator in the school. Again, I emphasised that it would depend on the matter and also mentioned that it was not always possible to teach anonymously as teachers are generally known, given the many learners they teach.

Siyandisa asked if it was possible for teachers not to have favourite learners in class. Using my experience as a high school teacher and teacher-educator, I stated that I also had what one may call favourite students in my classes. This was not intentional, though. I emphasized that I was aware of this possibility and tried not to let it show when I admired some learners more than others. I asked them quickly if they thought someone was a favourite of mine in that group. That was not how the game was played, as the one in the hotseat was not supposed to ask questions. However, I asked it to discover if there was any aura of alleged favouritism among us. There was initial silence, a few shook their heads, and few nodded. I pointed at Siyandisa, who had nodded, and asked him to share. He admitted that he felt that there was no favouritism in this space. He said:

“Mina M’am, ngingathi (there are no favourites) la kuthina. Usithanda sonke, usiphatha ngendlela efanayo sonke. Futhi la ave upholile kunaseklasini.”

(M'am, I would say there are no favourites among us. You like all of us; you treat all of us the same way. Also, here it's more chilled than in class.)

Before he had finished that last line, there were giggles and echoes of “Yes!”, supporting what he had said. I was satisfied with the assessment the participants had made concerning favourites as I had none. However, I had begun to notice the participants who were more engaged in our sessions. I believed that the others who were still somewhat withdrawn might still need time to adjust; however, there were few of them. I related their attitude in our sessions to their attitude in class – maybe they were quiet and reserved naturally. I did not have a definite answer. I hoped time would tell.

Lindani asked my views on the best way to manage a class. Without much thought, I answered: “*Engaging the students was, in my opinion, a great way to manage the class.*” I could not determine whether they agreed or understood what I was saying; however, I did not probe because I was on the hotseat.

Namhla was the last one to ask a question. She asked how I would deal with being romantically pursued by another staff member or dating a person in the same school. This was another challenging one for me. I stammered, struggling to think of a quick response. I disclaimed that I could not give a definitive answer but that, as a preservice-teacher, I would not engage in romantic relationships during my teaching practice. I wanted to elaborate on my answer, but I reminded myself that this was not how the game was played, and I needed to allow the participants a turn to take the hotseat. I got up and allowed the next participant to sit in the hotseat.

6.3.4 Student Participants in the hotseat

When I asked for the next participant to take the seat, there was obvious hesitation and Zizwe suggested to ‘keep right’ – meaning that participants the right side of the circle should go first. Those on the right mildly protested and Nhlakanipho courageously took the hotseat. Some of the questions he was asked related to disrespect for preservice teachers at school and being fancied by learners as a male teacher. In his answer to the latter question, Nhlakanipho shared that he had experienced such behaviour during his teaching practice. He briefly shared that he had ignored the learners who manifested such behaviour towards him.

In answering the question about being disrespected as a preservice teacher, Nhlakanipho shared his account of discrimination towards him at a school where he taught Music. He narrated that he had been accepted into the school as a preservice teacher and was allocated to observe teaching Music in grades 10 and 11. However, he never received the opportunity to teach in the six weeks he had been at the school. Music was taught by qualified Music teachers who were also his mentors, but never by him. Even when he was supposed to be assessed by a university mentor, they did not allow him to teach a Music and he was assessed in Drama and not Music. He felt that he had been discriminating against by the Music teachers.

Nhlakanipho's account created a sombre mood. After getting off the hotseat, Namhla got up without any prompting. She sat down and said, "*Ready, set, go!*" Her humorous demeanour eased the sombre mood and I saw some smiles. Before being asked any questions, Namhla asked to share a story about being falsely accused at school. In that split moment, I was caught between declining her request and asking her to continue by following the rules of the game, but I believed she really wanted to share her story which prompted her to volunteer. Without much thought, I nodded in agreement. Namhla began to share an account of being romantically pursued by one of the teachers in the school where she did her practical. I quickly realised this was the same story she had shared before in one of the previous sessions. Her account included details of how a male teacher had romantically pursued her, while publicly hiding his feelings and spreading rumours that Namhla had been pursuing him. The ordeal had caused Namhla to go to the Principal's office where she had been verbally warned not to pursue her alleged actions. In her defence and honour, she had managed to tell her side of the story. Although multiple teachers had taken the male teacher's side, the Principal protected Namhla by addressing the matter openly in a staff meeting and showing that he had believed her instead. As the other participants listened, she narrated how the false accusations had led to self-doubt, as those who supported the male teacher were critical of her bubbly personality. Concluding her story, Namhla narrated that she had felt judged by the teachers because she was friendly and outgoing. But she was now second-guessing whether she should continue with the same approach of being friendly around new people, especially in schools, because she did not want to be misunderstood.

I sat listening attentively, unsure what to do, wondering if I should be doing anything. I saw the activity evolve into some debriefing from the teaching practice experience for the participants. She said, "*Hhay sengiqedile mina*" (*I am done*) and got up from the hotseat. Again,

another moment of silence. I became anxious as I felt I was losing control and that the activity was moving into a life of its own. I sat quietly, with a calm face and racing thoughts in my mind, trying to decide how to proceed after Namhla had left the hotseat.

Having listened to Nhlakanipho's account of being discriminated against and Namhla's account of being falsely accused, it was obvious we were not following the rules of the hotseating activity. It was clear that some participants really needed this space to share their experiences. My silence was a state of indecisiveness. I did not know whether to ask the participants to respond to each person or to ask a question, as it was part of the game. Based on both Nhlakanipho and Namhla's stories, I hoped that more participants would tell theirs. I also wanted to comment on both their stories, but I did not as I had become aware of my tendency to over-speak. I was also unsure if Nhlakanipho and Namhla wanted people to respond to their narratives or if listening was enough. At this point, as no one else commented, I did not either. I felt I did not need to be a facilitator here; I needed to be a participant and trust the other participants to continue with the hotseating activity. Being a participant also meant being aware of my overspeaking and not taking the opportunity to speak whenever there was silence. I wanted the questioning and responses to happen naturally and did not want to be the participant who steered the activity by asking too many questions. So, I decided to participate but to remain quiet this time.

Zizwe walked towards the hotseat. This was unexpected as she was one of the participants who had not engaged as much as the other participants. Zizwe was still reserved. I had not determined whether her reservations were part of her personality or if she still needed time to be more acquainted with what we were doing. Nonetheless, she sat on the seat and said, "*Angizwijwibe*" (*let me throw myself in*). The questions she received were about classroom discipline and management, developing lessons, and teaching various creative art forms.

Unlike the previous participants who had sat in the hotseat, Zizwe answered briefly aligned with the game's rules. For example, when she was asked how she completed all the lesson plans during her teaching practice according to stipulations given by the teaching practice office, she boldly answered:

"Mina bafethu ngenza engikwazi ukukwenza, angilokhe ngizixaka ngoba ngizohlanya. Ngiyazikhandla yebo, kodwa ngenza lokhu engikwazi ukukwenza nje." (*With me, guys,*

I do what I can do, I don't work like a crazy person. Yes, I work hard but I do what I can do.)

Zizwe was also asked if she believed in corporal punishment. She answered, “*Yes and no*”. To elaborate, she explained that she did not see anything wrong with such punishment as it was how she had been raised and punished when in the wrong. She also acknowledged that times had changed, and because of the current South African law, she knew it would be wrong to punish a learner in such a manner. However, personally, she did not see anything wrong with this disciplinary form.

There was silence again which was Zizwe's cue to excuse herself from the hotseat which was empty yet again. She said, “*Sengicela ukuhlala phansi?*” (*Can I please sit down now?*). At this moment, I spoke up and asked if anyone else would like to take the hotseat. I still could not determine the mood; were they were engaged and willing, or reluctant and participated because I had asked them to? Thembile, another somewhat quiet participant, then stood up and sluggishly walked towards the hotseat. As Thembile took the hotseat, Namhla asked her to share a story about her teaching practice that she knew. Namhla asked, “*Uwusixoxele ngabafana abacishe bakuhlasela kulesiyasikole.*” (*Tell us about the boys who almost attacked you at that school*). There were some murmurs among the other participants, which I interpreted as surprised. Curiously, we looked at Thembile, intrigued by what she was about to say.

The narrative Thembile shared was an account of teaching Creative Arts to a large class of 150 grade 9 learners in a school hall. She was alone with no mentor, no sound system, and no assistance from the school. We had heard part of this story in one of the sessions; nevertheless, we listened. She narrated the frustration of her multiple attempts to get the learners to sit, listen, and engage in their learning. She said that she had been confronted with the challenge of teaching this large group of learners. Thembile, a preservice teacher, had then been threatened by learners who were also regarded as bullies by others. Blatantly and continuously refusing to take instructions from her, they threatened to wait for her outside the gate after school if she continued to bother them. Thembile shared how fear had overwhelmed her in the lesson periods she taught that group of grade 9 learners.

“Yazi ngangibikelwa uma kukhala insimbi ngizofundisa leliyaklasi. Izingane ezingalaleli zihluphile isikole sonke. Uthisha omkhulu kuphela ezazimsaba, manje

ngeke ulokhe ubiza uthisha omkhulu njalo mufundisa, uzofundisa unovalo unjalo... fanele uvele ubayeke ungaphazamisi lapha ekhoneni labo...

(You know, I used to dread the time when the bell rang, and I had to go teach that class. Those learners were troublesome for the whole school. It's only the Principal they feared, but you can't keep calling the Principal every time you teach them, so you just teach with your fear...you just have to leave them alone in their corner...)

Mhlengi interjected, saying, “*Yingakho ke lezi zingane zisayidinga induku. Thina nje wawungeke nje uhlale ekhoneni lakho uzenzele umathanda kufundiswa, ipayipi nje ubuzolithola kushise izinqa.*”

(That's why these learners still need the rod. In our time, you wouldn't just sit in your corner in class and do your things while the teacher was teaching. The pipe is something you would get and your bottoms would get fired up from it.)

There were nods and exclamations in agreement, with Zakhele audibly saying, “*Vele!*” (*It is so!*)

A part of me felt that this would be an opportunity to interject with a different opinion. However, I held my thoughts in the interest of time and wanted other participants to take the hotseat. I also did not want my opposing views to create the impression that I was imposing my views onto them, invalidating the experiences shared today. I did not want to block opportunities for taking the hotseat by opening up an opportunity to analyse or interrogate their experiences. I was also continuously contemplating whether my interjection might interfere with what was already going on, so my contemplation became a shackle that I allowed to render me a listening participant rather than a facilitator of the activity.

Siyandisa, who was the first to ask me a question when I took the hotseat, took his turn on the hotseat. Silently watching us over his glasses, I did the same, and we shared a smile. This time, I posed a question to him about any regrets about choosing the teaching profession after having experienced teaching practice and practically witnessed what might be ahead of him professionally.

Taking a moment to answer Siyandisa responded as follows:

“Hhay cha Mam, angizisoli. Yabo nje thina njengoba sabantu beArt kubalulekile ukuthi sibe nezindlela eziningi zokuziphilisa. Mina nje ngifuna ukuthi sibe khona lesistifiketi futhi ngibe ngizama ama-gig kwi-industry. Kungachuma okukodwa, kungachuma kokubili futhi, kodwa ukuba mfushane nje, cha lutho ukuzisola.”

(Well no, M’am, I don’t have regrets. You see us, as we are artists, it’s important that we have other ways to make an income. I want this certificate and also try my luck in the industry. Maybe one may be successful, maybe both may be successful, but just to be short, no, not at all; no regrets.)

Siyandisa was also asked about the artform he was most confident to teach, which was Dramatic arts. He was also asked which subject he really liked teaching, Drama or Creative Arts, and he first apologised to me and then chose Drama. To me, that made sense as he had mentioned that Dramatic Arts is the art form he was most confident to teach. I did not take offence at all.

Casually, Zakhele asked: *“Manje ndoda uma uthola umsebenzi ke-teaching, uthi usaqhubeka nalowo umsebenzi uvesane uthole-gig ngala kwenze-Arts, uzokwenze njani? Uzoshiya ukufundisa ulandele i-passion?”*

(So, man, if you get a job in teaching, then while you are in it you get a gig in the Arts, what would you do? Would you leave teaching and follow your passion?)

I observed that all eyes focused on Siyandisa. I believed this question resonated with many in the room, myself included. This was because all the participants were from the same university, held the same undergraduate degree, and identified as artists with professional aspirations to become significant in the arts and entertainment industry. This was also a prospect for me when I had completed my undergraduate degree.

Siyandisa replied:

“Mina nje bafethu kungakuhle ukwenza ama-gig asile, ngiphinde ngifundise futhi. Phela lokho kusho imali engcono. Kodwa uma kufika isikhathi sokuthi ngikhethe, obvious ngingakhetha i-Arts mfethu, my first love. Ngiyazithandela nje uku-performa.”

(For me, guys, it would be good to have gigs and be able to teach at the same time. That means better money. However, if a time comes for me to choose, obviously I would choose the Arts, guys – my first love. I really love to perform.)

Having run out of time, it was almost time for the participants to catch their bus home. I was conflicted about whether I should push to have one more participant take the hotseat or call it a day. I was also unsure if anybody was yearning to take the hotseat; I did not want them to even run the risk of missing their bus. So, I made the call to end the hotseating activity. Standing up, I thanked Siyandisa for his time on the hotseat and extended my thanks to all the participants who had participated. I reminded them of the time and apologised for cutting anyone out who still wanted to take the hotseat.

Namhla interjected: “*Sithululile, M’am*” (*We poured it out, M’am*). Nhlakanipho concurred by saying, “*Sibhodlile kakhulu!*” (*We burped [spoke/reveled] a lot*) [metaphorically]. Siyandisa solidified their responses by extending their thanks on behalf of the participants.

Siyandisa: “M’am, sibonge ngempela lelithuba. Yazi kwesinye isikhathi udlula ezintweni, uphoqelege ukuthi uvele ugwinye ungalitholi ithuba lokugonyuluka. Yinhle into eyenzekile namhlanje. Siyabonga.”

(M’am, we thank you for this opportunity. You know, sometimes you go through things and are forced to swallow them without any opportunity to pour out that experience. What occurred today was a good thing. Thank you.)

We ended the session with the participants getting up, packing and returning chairs to their places, and others walking towards the door.

6.3.5 Reflecting on Session Four

Overall, I enjoyed this session as well. I was happy that some participants had managed to, like Namhla had said, ‘pour it out’. Hearing Namhla and Nhlakanipho using phrases like, “We poured it!” and “We burped!” indicated that what had occurred was enough for them. During Namhla and Nhlakanipho’s hotseat moments, there were no engagements. Instead, they shared their experiences of teaching practice which none of us interrogated or commented on. I worried about the silence that followed because I felt it indicated a lack of interest or involvement in their stories. However, I realised that sharing their stories was enough for them.

It was releasing and they could open themselves cathartically. I felt that the participants really trusted me after this session. Their courage to ask me to take the hotseat first, asking me difficult questions, and sharing their stories were indications of trust.

Upon reflection at the end of the session, I realised that it did not matter that hotseating rules were not followed. The purpose was not to teach the game but to share our experiences – to get to know one another better through the game. There was no need for me to fixate on adhering to the hotseating rules.

Reflecting on their teaching practice was usually something I allowed briefly on the first day my students returned after teaching practice. The students usually shared their thoughts and any highlights and lowlights they remembered. However, we only chatted about their experience for a short while and there was no intention behind the discussion as I never used their shared experiences for any improvement of my teaching practice or to assist them in mitigating some of their challenges. However, I realise that this activity opened my eyes and made me realise the importance of giving preservice teachers official time to share their experiences and to advise and support with one another. Listening to their experiences will also assist me in identifying any aspects that need to be addressed, integrated, or discussed in more depth.

6.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the events that had occurred in sessions three and four. In session three, we continued with an activity from the previous session. At the end of session two, the participants shared their perception of a good Creative Arts teacher and of a playful person. We considered those characteristics and compared them with ourselves to find out what it was that we had to improve about ourselves. We also shared some experiences of teaching practices which highlighted the virtue of patience that is vital in teaching. In session four, we dedicated the session to sharing preservice practical teaching experiences and to ask in-depth questions about these experiences. Using the hot seat activity, some participants and I spoke about pertinent teaching experiences based on the questions asked. This session evolved into the release of ‘burning’ narratives that some participants wanted to release. It was also a session where I was cognisant of my over-speaking tendency and I thus used it as an opportunity to guard myself against this habit. Though challenging, I found that stepping back allowed the session to taking form in an unanticipated manner. I found this fruitful as it gave the participants

what they needed, which was a space to talk and release hurtful emotions associated with practical teaching. In the next chapter, I present the activities that were conducted during sessions five and six.

CHAPTER SEVEN: UNRAVELLING PLAYFUL THREADS – PART THREE

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I give a detailed account of sessions five and six. I share the activities that were conducted and highlight the discussions that followed. In session five, the participants and I engaged in a playful activity related to teaching and play. We shared our misconceptions about play and teaching and discussed how we had been enabled to shift those misconceptions. This was another activity in which we explored unlearning and becoming. In session six, the participants engaged in the creation of tableaux and a letter-writing activity which I facilitated. They wrote a letter to their future learners about the kind of teachers they aimed to become. They also created a few images which depicted playful teaching, which I found challenging to facilitate, as will be discussed.

Often before our previous sessions, the participants and I would meet on our way to the venue or some would come early to my office to carry the food, boxes, or anything else I needed for the session. On this Wednesday, the participants found me in the venue where I was already waiting for them. When the participants walked through the door, they were surprised to find me inside. Namhla was among the first to enter and she said jovially, “*Aw kwafika wena, kuqala M’am,*” (*Oh, you are the first one, M’am.*) I jokingly responded, “*Ugqozi we-Namhla*” (*It’s the eagerness, Namhla*). Sandiso added as he sat down: “*Nathi usibona singena kuqale nje, M’am, ugqozi impela*” (*As you see us being the first ones to arrive, it’s eagerness*).

Those who had arrived laughed at this casual conversation as they settled down. I felt that this easy, casual conversation was further affirmation that rapport and trust existed among us. I appreciated that they could chat with me freely and I felt a part of the group, which was not because I taught them or because they were volunteers in my study. The welcoming and embracing energy they projected toward me and our sessions led me to believe there was synergy among us, which affirmed my participation and the continuation of the sessions.

Shortly after our chat, I asked some participants to go downstairs to my office and wait for the food that would arrive shortly. While we were waiting for the other participants to arrive, those already in the room chatted casually about the day, the hot weather, and an assessment task I had given them for the module I taught. During our conversation, other participants began

arriving, and we casually greeted one another while continuing chatting. Finally, the participants I had asked to collect the food arrived, and that was my cue to begin our conversation about the imminent sessions. They helped themselves to the snacks and I began the day's activities.

7.2 Session Five

7.2.1 Introducing the concept of unlearning

Beginning the session, I introduced the concept of unlearning. I explained that, at times, to grow we need to let go or unlearn certain entrenched behaviours or concepts. I told them briefly about my experience with the yellow book at university and how the book had assisted me in unlearning certain beliefs and behaviours due to the new zone of actualisation I had stepped into. *No acting please* (Morris & Hotchkis, 1979) is a yellow book that was a prescribed reading in my second year at Drama School. It taught me the importance of unlearning as an actress, but I managed to apply those lessons to my life as well. This was detailed in memory two (Chapter three). I described how the concept of unlearning had assisted me in my teaching career as a high school teacher, teacher-educator, and personally as a young woman. I gave an example of how certain perspectives I had held about teaching, such as ruling my class with an iron fist and being strict to master the learners' unruly behaviour, had been changed through reflection. I explained that, since I had embraced this concept and had allowed myself to unlearn, I had become adept at discovering better and more effective ways of classroom management.

I then explained the unlearning activity for the day, likening it to the I AM... and I AM NOT... activity. I also mentioned that we would participate anonymously. My decision to make this activity anonymous was to reduce any judgement implications. The unlearning activity required all the participants to take one or more post-it papers and write their misconceptions about teaching and/or about play. This could be some learning they believed to be false or something they had been told which, through their experiences of educational programs, they had found no longer held true for them, or which had been debunked through their experiences.

I wrote two prompts on the board and we all wrote them on the post-it note papers: "I thought teaching/play was..."; and "Teaching/play is not...". The participants had to complete the sentences. There were no limits to the points they could make. I chose this activity as it was related to my unlearning. It was also associated with my observations in previous years when

I assessed preservice teachers during their teaching practice. As mentioned in Chapter one, the preservice teachers I assessed during teaching practice did not use demonstrations as a teaching method, citing that they felt shy and silly as some of the reasons. Having begun generating the data, I still found this activity helpful as I believed it would help me understand some of the misconceptions the preservice teachers had when they enrolled for the PGCE program. Furthermore, I also thought it would be beneficial to the participants as preservice teachers to be aware of the misconceptions they held or that were in existence in their field. I had witnessed the impact of unlearning on my life personally and professionally, therefore, I hoped this activity would guide them to understand the importance of unlearning as a teacher and the need to continuously be open to unlearning when necessary.

The participants took the post-it sheets and began writing their answers. This activity took some minutes, no longer. When I saw that some participants had stopped writing, I asked them to bring their papers to the front and place them in the container, which all did after they had finished. Using the portable chalkboard, I took their post-it sheets, read aloud what was written on each of them for all to hear, and pasted each piece of paper on the chalkboard.

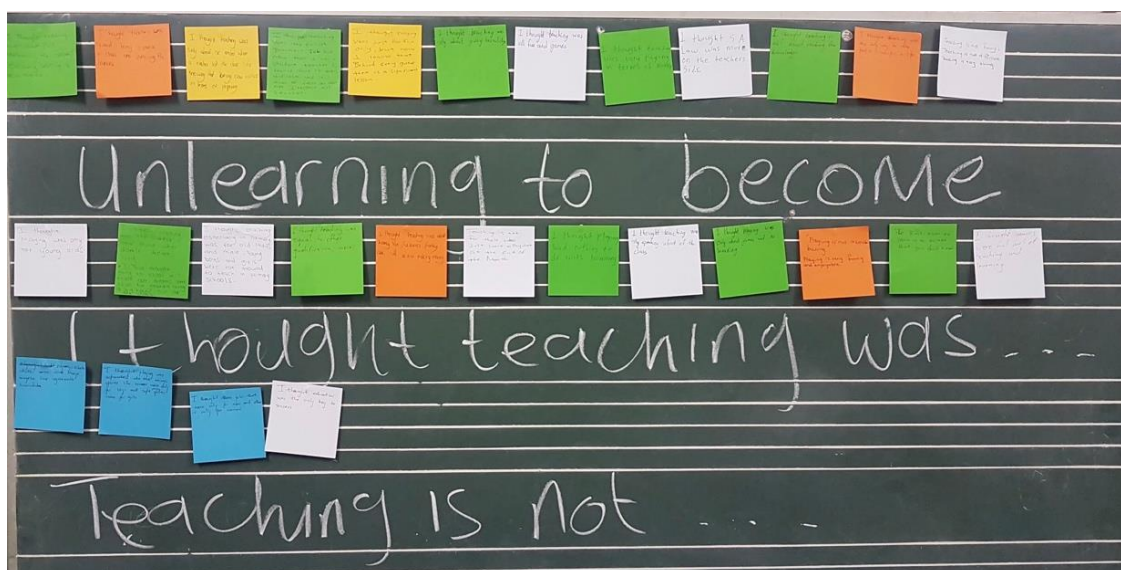


Figure 17: Misconceptions about teaching pinned on the chalkboard

7.2.2 Responses: What we used to be...

When I read the responses on the post-it notes, the participants were listening attentively. There were a lot of giggles and bursts of laughter as some responses were read. Sometimes, some

participants nodded their heads in agreement with a response. There were also moments of silence. One answer that was met with a burst of laughter was, “I thought teaching was the easiest government job.” Below is a list of some close-up post-it notes and all their answers.

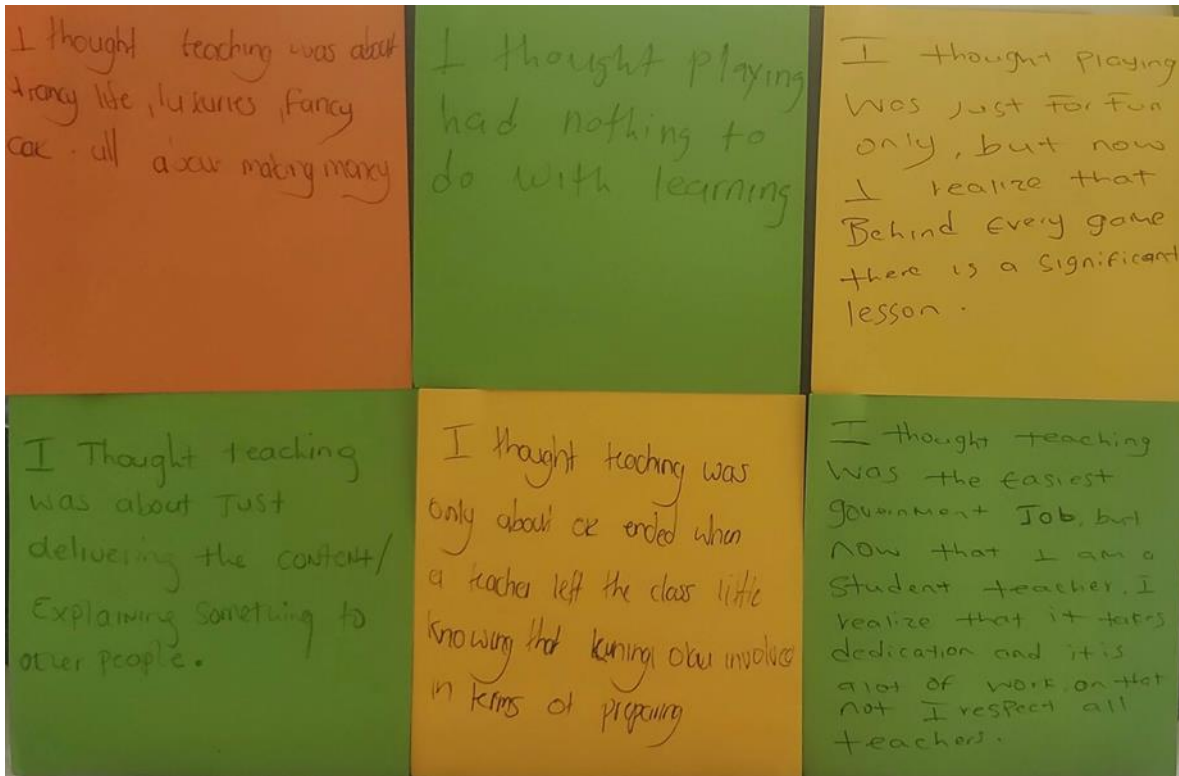


Figure 18: Participants' responses in close-up

I thought teaching was only about giving knowledge

I thought teaching was the career for those who do not dream big. I also thought going to school will make our dreams come true, for example, having a big house, a nice car, and shoes.

I thought playing was only for young kids.

I thought teaching was all about fun and games.

I thought teaching was equal to other qualifications.

Teaching is not for those who want a pay-check at the end of the month.

I thought teaching was only about speaking in front of the class.

I thought playing was only about games and no learning.

I thought play was separated into two, sports like soccer were for boys, and soft/easy sports were for girls.

I thought teaching, especially in primary school, was for old ladies and men; young boys and girls, us, were not allowed to teach in primary schools.

I thought games were not part of teaching and learning.

I thought teaching was about being superior in class and punishing the learners.

I thought South African law was more on the teacher's side.

I thought teaching was only about or ended when a teacher left the class, little knowing kuningi (there is a lot) in terms of preparing.

I thought teaching was just about delivering the content and explaining something to other people.

I thought teaching was equal to other qualifications and careers.

I thought teaching was about a fancy life, a fancy car and all about making money.

I thought teaching was the easiest government job but now that I am a preservice teacher I realise that it takes dedication and it a lot of work. And on that I respect all teachers.

Teaching is not about getting a pay cheque at the end of the month.

I thought playing was just for fun only, but now I realize that in every game there is a significant lesson.

I thought playing had nothing to do with learning.

I thought teaching was only about giving knowledge.

I thought teaching was very paying – in terms of money.

Ngangizitshela ukuthi ikhaya noma umuzi angeke ume ngaphandle kwendoda. (I thought a home or house would not stand without a man.)

Playing is not about bullying. Playing is very funny and enjoyable.

I thought teaching is not about ranking the knowledge.

I thought teaching was the only way to make people successful in life.

I thought teaching was not funny.

I thought teaching was not difficult.

I thought teaching was not very tiring.

Figure 19: Misconceptions about play and teaching

7.2.3 Participants' understandings of the responses

After reading the responses aloud and posting them on the board, I provided an opportunity for those who wanted to expand a bit on what they had written. I asked willing participants to identify their answers and share their reasoning with us. I would have loved it if all contributed, but as they had written anonymously, I did not want to put anyone on the spot or feel any pressure. There was a moment of silence, and then Zakhele accepted the call to share his thoughts. He pointed at one of the posts-it sheets that read, *"I thought teaching was about delivering knowledge."* He explained that he had discovered that a teacher also had something to learn from the learners.

Zakhele: *"Teaching and learning happen on both sides. Even when you are teaching, there is something to learn from the learners even if it is not related to what you are teaching, but you can still take something from the learners."*

Zizwe was next. She read her response, *"I thought teaching was about delivering the content."* She continued to explain how she now understood that teaching and learning were both about teaching *and* learning, as learning could not take place when the teacher spoke the whole period. She said, *"Izingane zizobhoreka"* (*the learners will get bored*). In her view, the teacher needs to give learners a chance to participate in class to learn by *doing*.

I was asked an important question by Siyandisa, which I believed resonated with many of the participants as it focused on teaching large classes. He asked me how a teacher should teach over 80 learners in a class, especially Creative Arts, because there was no space designated for art subjects in many schools and teachers were forced to teach large classes. He argued that it was particularly difficult to teach Creative Arts in under-resourced schools as space and large numbers were a challenge. Before I could answer, Thembile politely interjected, as she had experienced teaching 150 learners in Creative Arts during her teaching practice. She used the example of teaching Music.

Thembile: *"Okay, let's say maybe today we are doing a music activity, and I separate them by rows and the activity is done according to the rows. I also use group work to make the situation better in class for me. I also use the time to teach those who are not participating in the activity on that day. I teach them how to be a good audience so they do not make much noise. Sometimes it works, depending on the learners you have."*

I supported Thembile by adding that if space was a challenge in a school, the teacher could use the school hall if it was big enough or available, or take them to the playground depending on the activity. I also encouraged collaborating with other teachers if there were more than one Creative Arts teacher in the school. Practical assessment tasks could then be shared among the teachers, which would be beneficial for the teachers. I also acknowledged the challenge of large classes that teachers face. I shared that we also had a similar challenge at university. I explained that there was no easy solution to the problem as learners could not be chased out even when the numbers exceeded capacity. We agreed that teachers should ideally not be faced with this challenge. Steering away from any political and governmental issues that could have been raised, I urged the participants to begin thinking of creative ways to teach large classes, such as the example cited by Thembile.

Mhlengi said that he had once believed that playing had nothing to do with teaching, but now he could see, as a Creative Arts preservice teacher, that playing games was useful for teaching and helped build a good relationship with the learners. Moreover, if they were used to playing games in the class with others, he believed it also helped during practical assessments because learners would be familiar with the conditions. Siyandisa, in support of Mhlengi, also said that he had not been aware when he played as a child that he was learning. He now believed that one learnt in the presence of other people by trusting them and when they helped one another to build things together. He said:

*“We were also sharing ndawonye (together). Ukudlala kusifundisa i-unity futhi.”
(Playing teaches us unity.)*

Zakhele wrote, *“I thought games were not part of the teaching and learning [process]”*. He loved soccer and played for the school team as well as for a community team, which challenged his studies. A decision was made by his grandmother, school coach, and community football coach that if he wanted to continue playing soccer, he also had to be the same star he was in his studies as on the football field. The game of soccer and the goals he scored pushed him to perform equally well in his studies, which assisted him in passing even the difficult subjects because he did not want to lose his title as ‘the best’.

Namhla shared that she had once thought that being a teacher equated to a fancy life and making money. She recalled her perception as follows:

“I grew up with teachers living in my neighbourhood and I saw others in school dressed well and driving cars, living in better houses than ours. Ngangithi (I thought) teaching is the way to go. Ngangingazi ngendaba yamabonds nokukweleta ebank. (I did not know about debt and bonds.) Futhi ngangithi nje uthisha ogqoka kabi uyenzani imali, sihleka eskoleni kanti asazi. (I would ask myself about a teacher who dressed poorly what is that teacher doing with money? And we would laugh with my friends, little did we know we were wrong.”

That ended our conversation on the misconceptions about teaching and play. We all laughed with Namhla as she confessed she had once been very naïve. What made me laugh at Namhla’s point was how she had said it. She had a natural sense of humour and could infuse anything she said with humour. That’s why we generally laughed when she spoke. Secondly, I laughed because I was thinking about the naivety of her statement. As a school girl, I never thought teachers had money because our schools never had fancy cars in the car parking area which we passed every time we entered the school gate. Teachers used public transport just like us, or gave each other lifts in their ordinary cars. In my neighbourhoods in all the areas where I lived, there were few teachers I knew, and nothing was outstanding about them. Now, having been a high school teacher and being a teacher-educator, my views have not changed much as I believe teaching remains an average-income profession. However, it allows for a decent quality of life, not a fancy one, as Namhla confessed she had once believed.

Wrapping up, I drew on some of the answers posted on the board to reiterate the misconceptions they had shared. During the discussion, they had demonstrated their unique insight about being a teacher. I used Zakhele’s answer, *“I thought teaching was only about giving knowledge,”* and elaborated that he had demonstrated the concept of unlearning as he had let go of this misconception. I was trying to demonstrate to them that they also had the ability to identify, unlearn, and potentially become better teachers, and I commended them for the fact that they had demonstrated this through their ability to recognise what they had to let go of.

7.2.4 Advocating for unlearning and becoming

I transitioned the conversation to reflect on the activity we had just engaged in, and I thanked the participants for sharing their thoughts on the misconceptions they had once believed. I encouraged them to understand the truth that our development as teachers does not end in the ability to identify our misconceptions, but that it starts there. A view that I shared is that our

development as teachers requires us to identify certain aspects of our teaching practice that need to be refined, and that this facilitates the process of *becoming* teachers. To solidify my point on unlearning and becoming, I again alluded to the yellow book and its contribution to my development as a teacher-educator. I referred to some of my misconceptions about being a teacher-educator, admitting that these had mostly been due to my lack of knowledge. I opened up about the misconception of believing that being a teacher-educator was just about standing in front of a class and ‘teaching’, and that I had likened it very much to teaching as a high school teacher. I admitted that I had had no idea that it entailed such a substantial element of research. I explained that I had come to understand my resistance while I had been struggling to register for my doctoral studies due to self-doubt and feeling rejected at various points in my life, but particularly in my childhood.

What had I learnt that I could share with my students about unlearning and becoming? I knew that I had to let go of the belief of not being good enough for post-graduate research and that I had to apply myself diligently to learn as much as possible about and through scholarly investigation. Therefore, I shared some insights with the students that I had obtained through reflection and my critical friends, as they had completely changed my perspective and contributed to my doctoral registration and writing for publication. A part of me thought some might not necessarily understand everything I was explaining as they might not know much about academia. However, I hoped they would remember the significance of unlearning and becoming as emerging teachers.

In closing the session, I encouraged them to be intentional on their journey of *becoming* better teachers for themselves and their learners. I also shared that I was also doing the same and that my ability to identify my challenges along my journey to *become* had brought me to the exact moment we shared. I cut it short by saying: “*Story for another day*”, and reminded them that it was busy time. That ended our session for the day with some students carrying the food trays to my office and others rushing for the bus. I packed up and prepared to lock up the venue.

7.2.5 Reflecting on session five

At the end of this session, I believed we had accomplished a lot. Introducing the concept of unlearning and becoming was not easy as, while speaking, I struggled to find the right words. This was evident in the audio recording of this part of the session as there were a lot of “*uhms...errs*” in my speech. I was thinking about it a lot as I spoke. I am unsure whether it

was an indication of uncertainty about what I was saying (which I doubt), or being aware of over speaking. Being aware that I tended to speak too much was a good thing, but I worried that it might hinder me from speaking even when necessary. I also felt I that I had over spoken that day; however, I realised it was justified as I had addressed new concepts and believed that sharing them through using examples from my experience had been the right approach.

During our conversation, I observed that the participants did not necessarily pick their answers from the board and elaborated on them. The majority picked up cues from the person speaking, taking points from their submission and extending their thoughts. I could not identify the reasons why they shied away from their answers, but I was pleased to see them engaging with one another and asking me important questions, which I also found challenging to answer. It indicated their interest in teaching, their concern for the current state of South African education, and their excitement about their journey of unlearning and becoming, whether they realised it or not. I believed that, during this session, I had managed to sow a seed in the participants' minds about the importance of being intentional about unlearning and becoming. Knowing that it took me over five years to realise that Liz's seed of playful pedagogy had grown in my teaching practice, I was aware that that day's activity might or might not flourish in the lives of some participants. It might take five years or more, as in my case with playful pedagogy.

7.3 Session Six

In this section, I share the events that occurred in session six. I detail the letter-writing and tableaux activities that the participants engaged in and that I facilitated. I share our struggles of participating in these activities and the lessons learnt. Lastly, I reflect on the session and the possibilities for *becoming* that were identified through these activities.

7.3.1 The letter-writing activity

I planned that the participants and I would engage in letter-writing and tableaux activities on that Wednesday in session six. As usual, we began the session with a finger lunch and casually spoke about miscellaneous matters of the day. When they had almost finished, I introduced the day's activities – letter-writing and tableaux. Introducing the letter-writing activity, I shared how I had used letter-writing in my grade 8 lesson as an English high school teacher and how the learners had mailed each other the letters they had written.

The purpose of this activity was to encourage formal writing as many teenagers were prone to technology such as phones and used only short messaging. Writing a letter gave them the experience of conveying a message to someone through letter-writing. It also gave learners the experience of waiting for and receiving mail, which was a pleasant experience for many. Although I encouraged the learners to identify and write a letter to a pen-pal, I did not keep track of the outcome of the activity as I simply used it as an introduction and encouragement to engage in formal writing.

I shared a farewell letter with the participants that I had received when I resigned from the school. Jodie, a grade 9 learner in my Creative Arts and English classes, wrote a letter to me when she became aware of my resignation. In this letter, she expressed her sadness about my leaving and her gratitude for being taught by me, and she extended her good wishes for my future. I shared the impact of this letter on me as a young novice teacher and affirmed its importance by alluding to its inclusion in my doctoral study. I shared these stories to illustrate the importance of letter-writing and to give further insight into my teaching career. I did not read Jodie's letter in this session as I did not want it to influence them when writing their own letters.

All the participants were seated when the activity started. I handed them coloured sheets of paper and writing materials while reminding them of the day's activity.



Figure 20: Some participants writing their letters

I asked the participants to think about their future as teachers and the learners they would be teaching. I also encouraged them to take a moment and envisage their future teacher-selves. They should visualise what they hoped it would be like, in what kind of school they would be teaching, and the kind of learners they would like to encounter. I drew from a previous point Siyandisa had made about his love for teaching Dramatic Arts in a previous session. I shared that it was okay if the class they envisaged was not a Creative Arts class as I did not want them to be limited in any way. I encouraged them to take a moment to think, and when they were ready, they could write a letter to their future learners or their future teacher selves. There was silence in the room. Some participants stared at their writing material without writing. Some stared out of the windows or at the wall facing them, thinking. Others smiled, while others kept a straight face from which I could not deduce any emotion. No one walked around during this activity. Even I was seated. Though I was curious to see their writing whilst they wrote, walking around felt like a teaching lesson, and I did not want to mimic any teaching trait.

The silence was long. The activity itself took a while. I had anticipated that this activity would take a maximum of 30 minutes. I did not have a particular reason why I anticipated that, besides regulating the time to engage in the tableaux activity. However, the writing activity took up the majority of the session as they took close to an hour to write their letters. Apart from my observations during this activity, I was engaged in minor administrative work, thinking and writing about ways to compress the remaining activity in the time we had left. I would write my letter alone, not during the session, because I felt I would struggle with balancing the roles of being a participant engaged in letter-writing and facilitating the activities planned for the day as a researcher.

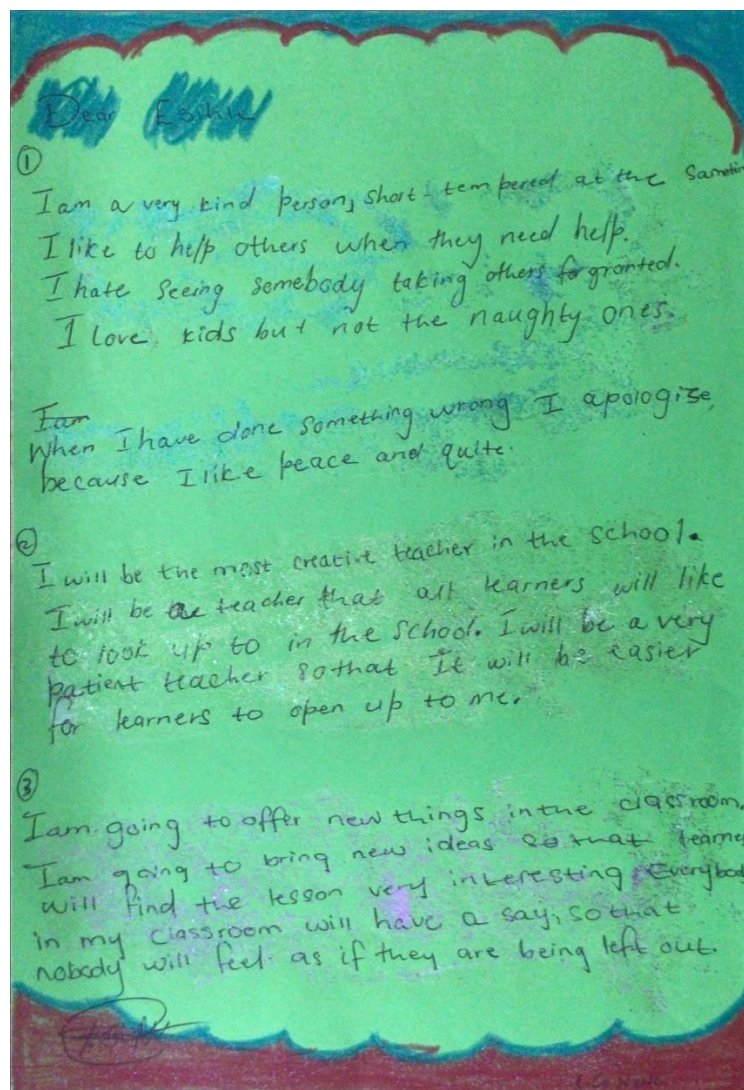


Figure 21: A letter written by one of the participants

When had all put down their pens, I asked for a volunteer to read his/her letter to us. No one volunteered. Siyandisa said his letter was too personal and that he could not read it aloud right then.

Siyandisa: “Mina, M’am, ngizothole sengicabanga izinto eziningi nje, ngisayingane ngifunda, ngicabanga uthisha engimthandayo. Beku-personal nje, M’am.”

(For me, M’am, I found myself thinking a lot of things about when I was a child in school, thinking about my favourite teacher. It was personal, M’am.)

Though it was not something I was thinking about then, his brief reflection led me to ask others what they had been thinking while writing the letter. I assured them that sharing some of their thoughts did not mean they had to share what they had written in the letter. They could do that only if they wanted to. Namhla said she had imagined herself already as a teacher and how she would be in class:

“Mina ngizobone nje sengiphambi kwabo abafundi, ngimuhle, ngiphithizela eklasini ngifundisa.”

(I saw myself standing in front of the learners, beautiful and pacing in the class while teaching.)

Mhlengi shared that writing this letter had made him think about the teacher he wanted to become.

“Mina, M’am, ngithathe isikhathi impela ngicabanga ukuthi ngizoba uthisha onjani. Ngiyafuna ukuzwana nabafundi, bangithande futhi kodwa futhi ngiyafuna ukuba uthisha onswempu kwi-spani sami.”

(For me, M’am, I took some time thinking about what kind of teacher I will become. I want to build rapport with the learners. I want them to like me, and I also want to be a brilliant teacher.)

As he shared these thoughts, I encouraged them to continue with this line of thinking, envisioning themselves as teachers, being intentional about what kind of teacher they wanted to become, and working towards that. I briefly shared that pursuing my doctoral study and engaging in this kind of research was part of improving myself as a teacher-educator. I also

shared that even experienced teacher-educators on campus were still working towards refining their teaching craft. I used this example of experienced teacher-educators to show that even seasoned teacher-educators refine their craft. I summed it up with a classic isiZulu idiom: “*imfundo ayikhulelwa*” (*one is never too old to learn*), which was a sentiment shared by others in the room. I observed this through their expressions of agreement like: “*impela kunjalo*” (*indeed, it is so*); “*Yebo, M’am*” (*Yes, M’am*); “*Ayikhulelwa ngempela*” (*Indeed, one is never too old*); and “*Washo ugogo*” (*Granny said so*).

Zizwe, who had said the last phrase (“*Washo ugogo*”), continued to share how this idiom was one of her grandmother’s favourite sayings as she loved reading the newspaper and always encouraged them to study as she had not had such an opportunity.

“Ugogo wayethanda kabi ukusho njalo weMam. Njalo wayihlezi esho ukuthi asibe yisifundiswa, angayinqeni imfundo ngoba imfundo ayikhulelwa. Yena wayezithandela iphephandaba kodwa wayengakwazi ukufunda kahle kodwa yekhuluma isiNgesi nesiBhunu, ngisho esethetha endlini.”

(My grandmother loved to say that, M’am. She used to say we should be educated and not be lazy to study because one can never be too old to learn. She always read the newspaper even though she could not read well, but she spoke English and Afrikaans to us even when she was scolding us at home.)

There was a moment of shared laughter as Zizwe narrated the story of her grandmother.

Having reflected and listened to the audio recordings, I realized that this moment allowed me to continue the conversation and probe further into their imagined teacher selves. I could have linked it to the previous sessions where we had worked on unlearning and becoming. Looking back at the session, I felt I could have steered this conversation in that direction with more intent. However, I was concerned about the time and completing the next activity, so I missed this opportunity. At the time, completing both activities felt more important as I wanted to complete all activities as I had planned. I allowed the structure I had made for myself to bind me and followed it rigidly, which I also believe does not necessarily work best in a creative space. To conclude the letter-writing activity, I asked to collect the letters and to read them alone in my own time. They agreed.

to my learners

I am a very nice person, with a good heart and tolerant, but I don't like it when people take advantage of my kindness. I take it if you step on my toe once but I won't take it if you step me on the same toe twice or more.

I am not a person who like to be at the centre of attention, but when I do something I do it with confidence.

I am the kind of teacher that adopt easily and not afraid of change. I do compromise if for the good course. I will be a teacher who encourage her learners to do better in life. I will also encourage unity in class as the Zulu proverb says "izandla ziyagezana", so I believe we will achieve more if we are united.

I will not only feed your minds with the knowledge on the book as the teacher is expected to, but I will motivate you to be always prepared of what future might brings to you. I will encourage you to use the past as a preparation of tomorrow as we know that life did not come with a manual, so we don't know what future holds for us.

Figure 22: A letter written by another participant

7.3.2 Creating tableaux

Moving on, we talked about creating tableaux. I asked if there were people in the room who knew what tableaux were. There were some nods, while some participants neither nodded nor agreed. I explained that tableaux are commonly referred to as 'freeze frames' used in Drama lessons. The moment I said freeze frames, I began to see more nods, which indicated that most participants knew the term freeze-frame instead of tableaux.

I explained that creating freeze frames was an activity that involved using one's body to depict a particular picture or idea. To elaborate, I alluded to a lesson that I had taught in a module the

participants were registered for. In this lesson, the students had used tableaux to create stories. Some participants admitted that they had attended that lesson. I explained that they were required to create a physical picture using their bodies that would depicted a playful teacher creating whatever image they liked. The participants separated themselves into two groups of five and began to create their frozen images using their bodies.



Figure 23: Some freeze frames



Figure 24: More freeze frames

7.3.3 Reflecting on session six

The participants were too playful. They derturred and began doing funny freeze frames that made them laugh. While I enjoyed their playfulness, I needed them to get back on track and do

what I had asked. When I made that request, I began to feel more like a teacher making demands on students. Considering the little time left for this session, I allowed the organic process and the participants to do as they pleased with the freeze frames. I could see the playfulness, but I felt like there was no instruction because there was no purpose to the playfulness. After the session, I spoke to my supervisors about my reflection of being more open-minded during my doctoral research to learn about myself and playful pedagogy and to improve my teaching practice. Reflection once again assisted me in revisiting my purpose and I came to understand that it was not necessary that the tableaux had to be created in a way that I approved. In fact, it was more important for me to observe myself and the participants' response to playful activities. Thus shifting my mindset, I realised that the participants had indeed responded to playfulness and the concept of play during this activity and that they had enjoyed being playful. They were clearly comfortable with one another, with me, and with the requirement to participate in something that had obviously been a foreign idea for some at first. I therefore realised that I needed to pay attention to this experience in more depth to understand how I could integrate my learning positively into my classroom practice.

7.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the activities of session five and session six. In session five, we shared our misconceptions about play and teaching. I hope this experience sowed a memory that the participants would revisit in their professional teaching careers. In session six, we engaged in a letter-writing activity and then created tableaux, or freeze frames. These activities were an opportunity for me to experience how the participants processed the idea of a playful approach to teaching while exploring my behaviour and attitude to facilitating these activities. I discovered that although playful activities or artistic activities may be perceived as easy or fun, executing them might be challenging. This is because I was challenged to facilitate them and the participants were challenged in executing and completing them in the set time and as instructed while working together. Looking back, I think this session could have been separated in two to allow more time for each artistic method rather than combining them and pushing for completion in one session.

CHAPTER EIGHT: UNRAVELLING PLAYFUL THREADS – PART FOUR

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the activities in the final two sessions the participants and I shared. In session seven, I guided the participants to create the ideas (words and sentences) for a poem. This was a first experience for us: mine of facilitating writing a poem and theirs of collective poem writing. Due to time constraints, I separated the poem-writing activity in two. First, the participants generated the words of the poem and, after the session, I wrote the poem using their words. I then presented the final poem to them. The last session entailed reflective engagement in which the participants shared their experiences of being participants and reflected on what they would take away with them. We also shared our gratitude for the time we had spent together. I thanked them for committing to the process and they expressed their thanks for allowing them to participate. That ended the data generation phase of the study.

As before, the participants arrived intermittently at the venue, greeted one another, and casually chatted about the day and other miscellaneous matters. They participants also partook in the finger lunch and the beverages that I had provided.

8.2 Session Seven: Creating Poetry

On that Wednesday, I announced that we would participate in creating poetry together. The interjectory sounds of “*hmhm*” emanated from the group. I also saw smiles on some faces while some looked at me with wide eyes and others simply nodded. These expressions indicated approval of the proposed activity. I asked if any people in the room had either written or enjoyed poetry, and many hands were raised.

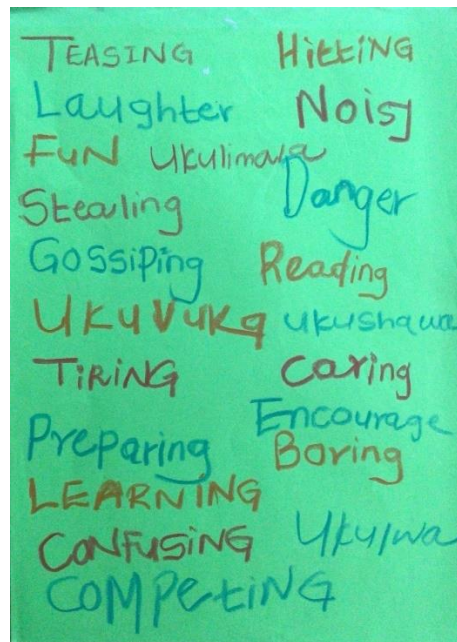


Figure 25: Some words recorded by the participants in the poetry session

In my mind I had envisioned us writing a poem together. The idea had germinated during the conceptualisation of my doctoral proposal. As it is an arts-based method I relate to the activity as an artist who writes poetry in my personal capacity. I was somewhat anxious about writing poetry collaboratively because I had not written a poem in conjunction with other people and was not certain if it would be a success. I calmed myself by asserting that this was a natural feeling associated with every activity as I never knew how it would be received or if it would be a success.

8.2.1 Developing as a student and a teacher: I am a student teacher!

So, to begin the process, I issued the participants with some A3-size sheets and explained that they were to be used to write down any words they thought related to *play* and *teaching*. Seated around the table, the participants spontaneously arranged themselves into pairs or small groups and began discussing and writing down words that came to mind. During this time, I walked to each group and spent some time listening to them and sharing words that came to my mind as well. This activity took some time as the participants began chatting in their groups about their experiences of play and teaching. From those short conversations, they began to write down some of the words they had used to describe their experiences of play and teaching.

to take a piece of coloured paper and use the words that they had written on the charts to create sentences, writing them down on this paper. This was an individual activity.



Figure 27: Participants formulating sentences for poetry writing



Figure 28: Participants writing sentences using words from the charts

Once the participants had finished writing their sentences, they handed their pages to me. At that stage I was not certain how the poem would be put together, and I thought of doing it alone after words and sentences had been generated. This option was motivated by time constraints. The other option was to compile a poem collaboratively during the session.

I noted that some participants commented on how different this process was and how they were not certain what they were doing and what the finished product would look like, even if they knew it would be a poem. I then read out the sentences they had written on the coloured pages. Impelled by time constraints, I told them that I would set aside time during the week to read everyone's work again thoroughly and use their words to create a poem. I made this decision because the process thus far had taken much of the time we had and if I had continued to do it collaboratively, we would have imposed on the next session that was reserved for reflection.

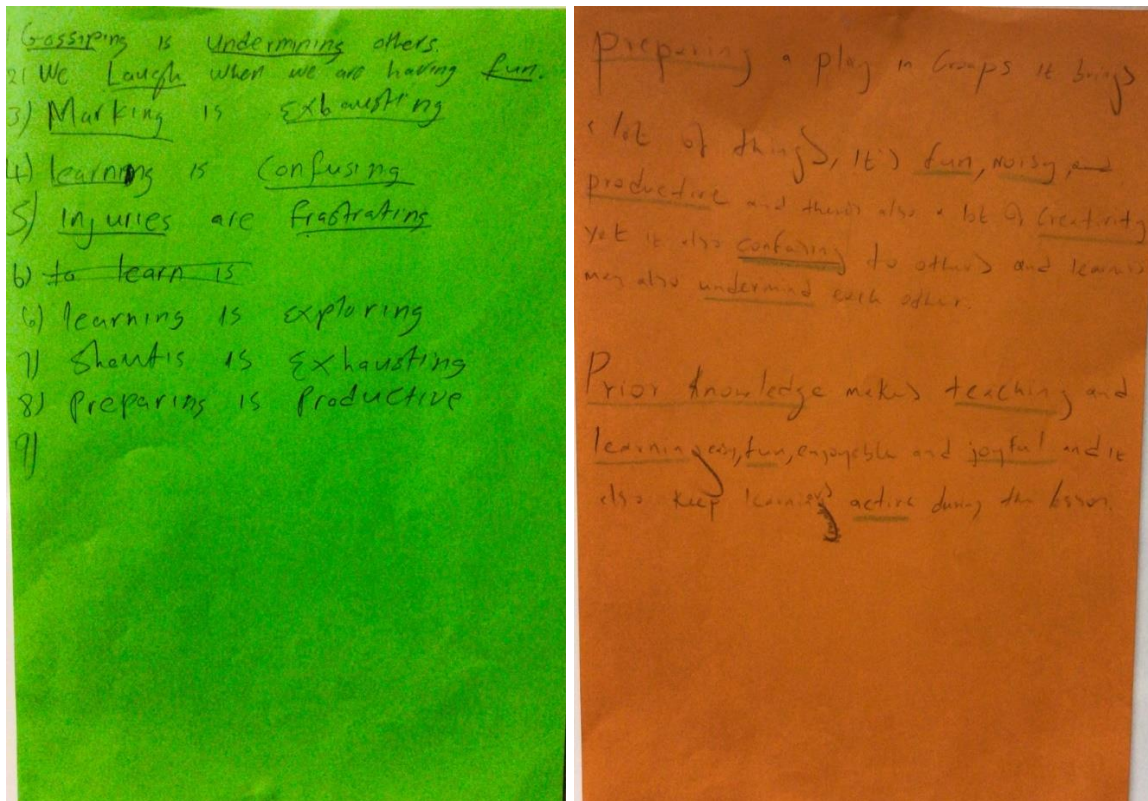


Figure 29: Some submissions the participants developed using words from the charts

8.2.2 Reflecting on the process of poetry writing

We wrapped up this session by briefly reflecting on the activity. Upon asking for their comments, silence lingered as had occurred in the other sessions. To fill it, I asked if anyone was hopeful if a similar activity would work in the classroom. Again, there were some smiles in the room.

Siyandisa answered first: *“Mina, Ma’m, angikaze ngiyibhale inkondlo kanjena, so angazi, ngempela. Kodwa ngithembe wena!”* (For me, M’am, I have never written poetry like this so I don’t know, honestly. But I trust you.)

I responded: *“Uthembe mina?”* (You trust me?).

Siyandisa: *“Ehhe, phela M’am, ngiyazi ngeke usenzise into engekho, nengasebenzi.”* (Yes, you won’t make us do something futile that won’t work.)

My response: *“Wamkhulu umthwalo wokufundisa! (The burden of teaching is great!) Uthi wena awukaze uyibhale inkondlo kanje, uyibhala kanjani?”* (You say you do not write poetry like this; how do you write poetry?)

Siyandisa: *“Ey, mina, M’am, ukubhale nje ngiyakuthanda, isikhathi eziningi ngibhala uma imizwa yami ithintekile kahle noma kabi. Mengingekho nje right ngiyabhala.”* (For me, M’am, I like writing; most times I write when my emotions are triggered in a good way or bad way. When I’m not okay, I just write.)

It was then that Namhla joined the conversation. Directing her comment at Siyandisa, she asked a humorous question.

Namhla: *“Nangenkondlo nje mfethu uyashela?”* (So, even with poetry you approach girls?)

Immediately we all burst out laughing. Unashamed, Siyandisa answered:

“Kunani pho, mfethu inkondlo iyakwazi ukusho izinto yabo, nje, ngokusebenzisa izosho nezaga, usho izinto ohlulekayo ukuzichaza ngamagama nje.” (So what, buddy! Poetry can say things, you know, just by using proverbs and idioms, you can actually say what you failed to say using mere words.)

Remembering the hands that had gone up when I asked about writing and reading poetry, I asked those who had raised their hands to share how they wrote poetry or what kind of poetry they read. In response, they referred to various South African poets like Lebo Mashile and Sbu the poet whose poetry is posted on social media. Milani shared that she used to write while growing up.

Milani: *“Mina, M’am, ngangibhala kakhulu ngikhula. Ngangine-song book nje, ngibhala amaculo engangiwathanda, izinkondlo, ngisho noma ngicasukile nje ngangibhala.”* (For me, M’am, I used to write a lot growing up; writing songs that I liked, poetry...even when I was angry I would write.)

Mentioning the songbook brought back memories for many of the females in the group. Writing songs and keeping a songbook were popular activities for many teenage girls, though I am not certain why it was popular among girls more than among teenage boys. Songbooks were usually made using a new exercise book or an old one if it still had a lot of clean unwritten pages. When I was a teenage girl, I kept a songbook to write our favourite songs in or to learn new popular songs. Singing the correct lyrics to a song was important to us. Many of the songs we wrote were popular music from the RnB and POP music genres. As Milani brought up the memory of songbooks, other female participants began to share how they had also created a songbook. Zizwe shared that her learning of English had come from writing out the songs she loved listening to.

Zizwe: *“Mina, isiNgisi nje sami sakhula kahle e-high school sengibhala amaculo, sicula eskoleni. Manje wawungeke phela ucule amagama angekho, so sasihlala nje silalele iculo ulayini nolayini sibhale phansi khona singeke sibhede mase sicula.”* (My English really improved in high school when I was writing songs a lot. Well, you dared not sing a song in school with the wrong lyrics, so we would sit and listen to the song line by line and write it down so we wouldn’t sing the wrong lyrics.)

Attempting to bring the conversation back to poetry, I asked if there was anyone who still wanted to share if and how they wrote poetry.

Nhlakanipho responded: *“Nami angisabhali manje, ngagcina nje ka-under-grad ngoba khona ama-assessments esasiwenza ngenzinkondlo kodwa ngangiwathanda ngoba ukubhala inkondlo nje kuyacabangisa, awuvesane nje ubhale noma yini. Futhi uma ungenawo amagama, uvele ungazi ukuthi uzoqala ngaphi.”* (I don’t write anymore. I

last wrote in undergrad because we had an assessment that needed us to do poetry. But I liked it then because writing poetry makes you think, you don't just write anything. Also, when you don't have the words, you just do not know where to begin.)

His response assisted me to shift the conversation back to our activity of writing words and using those words to create poetry. I responded:

Nosipho: *“Shuthi bekulula ukubhala lana njengoba kade nibhala ngoba phela amagama beseniwakhile ngenkathi nixoxa ndawonye?” (So, it was easy to write here as you all had the words that you had come up with during your brief conversations together?)*

Zakhele said: *“Ukubhala kwanamhlanje, M'am, bekubukeka kulula uma ukucabanga kodwa for me, sengikwenza nje, ey ngi-challengekile ngempela. Angiwuthembi nje umsebenzi wami eqinisweni.” (Today's activity of writing seemed easy when you think about it, but for me, when I was doing it, I was challenged indeed. I don't trust my work, honestly.)*

Hlumani commented: *“Ey nami. Ngingathi nje angenzanga kahle.” (For me too. I can say that I also didn't do well.)*

I responded: *“Phela besingabhali i-test. Futhi angithi anazi ukuthi omunye nomunye ubhaleni. Futhi anazi ukuthi lokhu okuncane wena, okungabazayo mase sekuhlangene nokomunye kuzophumani. Yekelani kumina, ngizofunda wonke umsebenzi, ngihlanganise, kuzohlangana futhi.” (Well, remember we weren't writing a test here. None of you know what the other person wrote. None of you what know contribution, even the little that you wrote that you aren't sure of, will become when combined with the next person's. Leave it to me. I shall read everyone's work and put it all together. It will come together.)*

Siyandisa: *“Wakhuluma uthisha. Ngishilo ukuthi sithembe wena Mam. Ikati ixhoshwe iyinja madoda.” (The teacher has spoken. I did say that we trust you, M'am. [Then he used an idiom that refers to running out of time].)*

As some participants were already getting to their feet upon hearing Siyandisa referring to time having run out, I wrapped up the session. I thanked them for attending and participating in the

activity. Before I was done, many were heading for the door and saying their goodbyes, and the session ended for that day.

8.3 Poetic development of the concept: Being a student AND a teacher

8.3.1 Presenting the poem

Having gathered all the participants' contributions, I spent the following days developing a free-style poem using their contributions. In this process, I collated the participants' word and sentence contributions into a word document on my laptop. I then repeatedly read them, familiarising myself with the words and attempting to make sense out of them. In familiarising myself with the words, I observed that the participants' sentences were short and contained simple verbs and adjectives. There were no poetic devices such as alliteration, personification, similes, etc. However, their words were empathetic, descriptive, and simple to understand. I understood their words as sharing their perspectives on being a teacher and some fragmented highlights on their play experiences. There were sentences that presented inclination to a back story such as: '*Ukulwa nokudlala*' (*fighting and playing was our middle name*) and '*Angikwazi ukulwa*' (*I do not know how to fight so I choose not to gossip.*) Such lines indicated that maybe the first participant had been part of children who played and fought while the other one could not fight so never engaged in gossip at school or at home.

Teaching	Playing
Boring	Fun
Exhausting	Happiness
Frustrating	Laughter
Confusing	Bullying
Paying	Teasing
Productive	Learning
Constructive	Injuries/ Bruises
Learning	Tiring
Joyful	Dusty/Dirty
Kubuhlungu (it hurts)	Ukuluwa (fighting)
Gossiping	Ukweya (belittling)
Shouting	Stealing
Undermining	Careless
Preparing	Competing
Masking	Ukuzula (gallivanting)
Ukuvuka (waking up)	Ukuhleba (gossiping)
Ukugquguzela (encouraging)	Ukushawa (being beaten)
Coping	Ukungcolisa (to make dirty)

Gossiping is undermining others.
 We laugh when we are hearing fun.
 Marking is exhausting.
 Learning is confusing.
 Injuries are frustrating.
 Learning is exploring.
 Shouting is exhausting.
 Preparing is productive.

Gossiping brings happiness.
 Shouting in a classroom.
 Frustrate me and exhausting.
 Ukulwa njalo kwenza ngishawe njalo ekhaya.
 Uma ngizula ngingcina sengintshontsha.
 Ukudlala kuyangingcolisa.

We are playing and laughing, we are making a joyful noise.
 Ukuvuka uyekofundisa is my passion and learning is part of it especially marking, sometime it is frustrating.
 Happiness is an eight letter word—teaching
 Gossiping is fun for me but angikwazi ukulwa so I choose not to gossip.

Competing leads to coping.
 Marking is exhausting.
 Preparing is boring.
 Ukuzula leads to stealing and ukushawa
 Reading is fun.
 Dating leads to failure in class.

Competing is fun.
 Doing constructive reading brings happiness.
 Learning can be exhausting until you find fun in it.
 Exploring is gained when reading.
 Ukulwa is very tiring and very dangerous.
 We have a lot of pressure when competing.
 Kubuhlungu ukushawa umakade uzulile.

Preparing and marking is exhausting.
 Singing is entertaining.
 Ukuzula, joyful and laughter.
 Competing while learning brings fun
 Encouraging reading is productive and constructive.

Figure 30: Some words combined in sentences for poetry writing

When I began the process of collation, I searched for words and sentences that related to one another and grouped them according to their similarity. Thereafter, I used the groups of words to develop stanzas. At this point, there was no structure, just the stanzas alone. I then began reading the stanzas, attempting to make meaning, and thereafter I began structuring the stanzas according to my perspective. When I was done, I shared the final poem with them via our WhatsApp group. Below is the completed poem followed by their WhatsApp responses.

Being a student AND a teacher: I am a student teacher!

Ukuvuka uye kofundisa (Waking up and going to learn) is my passion and learning is a part of it.

Kodwa kubuhlungu ukuvuswa ekseni (But it hurts to be woken up in the morning).

Learning can be exhausting until you find fun in it.

When it's time for learning and writing *sishaya ilala vuka* (we do not pay attention).

Learning is exploring.

Learning is confusing.

Learning is fun and constructive when there is *ubumbano* (unity).

Competing is fun.

Competing is good, only if it is for constructive purposes.

Competing while learning brings fun.

No, competing leads to copying.

We have a lot of pressure when competing.

Pressure can be very frustrating to other students.

But encouraging learners brings enthusiasm and be joyful.

We laugh when we are having fun.

Reading is fun.

Reading is tiring sometimes.

Encouraging reading is productive and constructive.

Doing constructive reading brings happiness because,

Exploring is gained when reading.

Joyful?

Gossiping is fun for me.

Angikwazi ukubwa (I do not know how to fight) so I choose not to gossip.

Gossiping is undermining others.

Gossiping brings happiness.

Happiness!

It is confusing how people find happiness in bullying others.

Bullying can be teasing, *ukweya omunye, ukweyisa and kubuhlungu*. (belittling someone), being mouthy, and it hurts.

Phela with teasing arises sadness.

My friends and I were very noisy in class as a result we became failures.

Ukulwa nokudlala (Fighting and playing) was our middle name.

But injuries are frustrating.

And shouting is exhausting.

Shouting in a classroom frustrates me and IS exhausting.

Shouting is very confusing to learners.

Nithini ngomjolo? (What do you say about dating?)

Dating leads to failure in class.

Dating is never good in school,

It causes students to fight and end up injuring or sometimes killing each other.

Teaching is our life.
 But preparing and marking is exhausting.
 Preparing is proactive.
 Preparing is boring.
 And marking is exhausting.
 Preparing is productive.
 Preparing for class is exhausting.
 Come on, preparing your content as a teacher increases the learning
 experience for students.

Preparing a play in groups brings a lot of things,
 It's fun, noisy and proactive.
 There's also a lot of creativity.
 Yet it is also confusing to other learners and students can also undermine
 each other.

Marking is sometimes frustrating.
 SOMETIMES!
 Marking is always frustrating.
 But teaching is our life.
 Then preparing is our life.
 So, marking is our life too.

Figure 31: Being a student *and* a teacher: I am a student teacher!

8.3.2 Reflecting on the poem

After sharing the poem with the student teachers, we briefly engaged in a discussion in which they expressed their opinions on the finished product. Below are some of the response from the participants after reading the poem.

Thandisa: “*Yinhle inkondlo Mam. Angikholwa ukuthi usuka emagameni esiwabhalile thina.*” (*The poem is good, M’am. I can’t believe it comes from the words we wrote!*)

Yandisa: “*Yazi nje nami angikholwa. Uyabona phela kancane ukuthi amanye amagama asuka kula-poster esasibhale kuwo kodwa isihlukile kakhulu.* (*You know I also don’t believe it. You can see a bit that some words are from the posters we wrote but it’s very different now.*) *Yazi futhi, Ma’m, ukubona lenkondlo kanje* (*Another thing, M’am, seeing this poem...*) *we can see how important it is as teachers to learn to do things in different ways. Like for example, we know how to write poetry in a certain way, kodwa* (*but*) *this one we don’t know. I think as a teacher it’s good to know many ways of doing the same thing. Iyasiza leyonto eklasini* (*It helps in the classroom.*)”

Siyandisa: “Zingini izindlela zokufunda ukuthi nje zidinga umuntu ozokwazi ukubona ukuthi isifundo lesi. Mina nje Mam, ngibonga ukungifaka la. Kuningi engikutholile ngisho noma singenzanga njengaseklasini.” (There are many ways to learn but it needs a person who can see that this is a lesson. For me, thank you for doing this. There is a lot I have learnt here even though it is different from the classroom.)

Mhlengi: “Sibonge, M’am. Kuyajabulisa ukuyibona lendlo isihlangene kanjena (thank you, M’am.) It feels good to see the poem complete like this. And knowing that these are your words even though singabonanga ibhalwa kodwa nje (we did not see it being written), it still feels good.”

I felt good about sharing this poem with the participants and hearing their thoughts. However, Mhlengi’s comment about not experiencing the poem being written was a fundamental flaw in my planning. Though it was unintended and was a mitigation strategy due to time constraints, it was still a shortcoming that robbed us of a *doing* opportunity to put the poem together from start to finish. That was something I had to accept although I was displeased with myself. It was also a learning moment to know that it is important to focus on process when involved in artistic work and to not fixate too much on completing activities as scheduled, as that may impede the process. This was what evidently happened in this activity.

8.4 Session Eight: Reflection and Conclusion

In this section, I highlight the reflective discussions I engaged in with the participants. I also share my understandings and learnings from the sessions.

8.4.1 Commencing the reflection session

I was sad that this was our last session. Our lectures had also ended which meant that there would be no other platform to meet this group of participants again. Reflecting briefly on our first session when they walked in that day, I remembered the silence and discomfort among them. Moving to the present day, I was delighted by their jovial attitude and the lively interactions and acknowledged the positive transition we had made together. I was sad that it was all coming to an end, but appreciated the significant work we had done as a collective. They had agreed to everything and had engaged with the activities enthusiastically, honestly, and respectfully with me. I had learnt to respect them as well. Their attendance and activities carried no marks or grading as they had participated voluntarily, yet they kept coming to our

sessions. I was grateful for the time they had been willing to spend with me and the valuable time that I had spent with them.

I was anxious about this present day because I was unsure whether I had generated enough and rich data for my doctoral study. As the participants walked in, I sat quietly on the edge of a desk, allowing all these thoughts and feelings within me.

Then Siyandisa said: “*Aw lafika madoda elingenakuvinjwa.*” (*The day that can never be stopped is here.*)

I smiled and responded: “*Impela kunjalo.*” (*Indeed, it is so.*)

I greeted the participants who were already in the room. In an attempt to ease my anxiety, I quickly asked them to help themselves to the food. While they ate, I opened my laptop in preparation for the session.

8.4.2 The highs and lows of our experiences

Conscious of the limited time we had, I began my opening remarks by acknowledging the day as our last session and briefly thanking the participants for being a part of the process of data generation for my doctoral study. I summarised the activities we had done and mentioned some of the discoveries we had made together, specifically mentioning the traits of a good Creative Arts teacher that we had developed together in one of the sessions. I then introduced what we were going to be doing that day. I explained that, as it was our last session together, it was important that we reflected and used the time we had to share our thoughts on the experiences we had shared. I asked that we used some time to share our thoughts about the highlights and lowlights and whatever else that each participant wanted to share with the group.

I asked: “*Ucabanga ukuthi our sessions ahambe kanjani. (How did you find our sessions?). Did you find anything interesting? Did our activities and discussions make you to think of anything? I am just looking for your opinions and if you have any ideas, please let me know. Yini oyithandile nongakuthandanga, nocabangaba ukuthi kungalungiswa khona, khuluma inhliziyu yakho nje.*” (*What did you like or did not like or think can be improved? Just speak your minds.*)

Ndumiso spoke about how he had enjoyed the sessions we had shared and that he had learnt a lot, even though he did not explicitly mention what he had learnt. He did refer to the integration of games into the teaching and learning space.

Ndumiso: *“First and foremost, thanks for the opportunity you gave us. For me, it was a great experience to be part of this and very interesting. I really enjoyed it. I personally learnt a lot from these sessions and kancane (gradually) it changed the way I think and also developed me as a teacher. Therefore, I think we as teachers kumele senze (we need to make) teaching and learning more enjoyable and interesting to learners by bringing in these games and activities in class in an educational way, like you did here. Kuhamba kahle kakhulu. Ngyabonga. (All is well, thank you).”*

Nosipho: *“Ngiyajabula uma kuhamba kahle, ngyabonga nami” (I am happy if all is well and thank you to you too.) Omunye uthini?” (What are the others saying?)*

Zakhele focused on the indigenous games we had played and shared his opinions on the integration of the games into teaching and learning.

Zakhele: *“In my opinion, M’am, lapha kakhulu kuma-indigenous games (it is with the indigenous games a lot). Ukuba yinxenye yalento sizibonelile ukuthi (being a part of them we saw for ourselves they are so important in our schools because the children, they get to enjoy to be in school while they are learning. Some of the games can be used to incorporate the curriculum or the syllabus njengalawa ebesiwadlala nathi (like the ones we played). Why? Because in school we tend to be more formal kakhulu (a lot) while learners hate something which is formal so the games can be used to substitute the formal and bring enjoyment into the classroom.”*

Milani generally showed appreciation for being one of the participants and everything that we had shared.

Milani: *“Nami ngifuna ukubonga (I also want to thank you) for being here [and] ngokwenza konke esikwenzile (by doing all we did). I think our sessions went well, wonke nje, amagames, ukufunda, konke nje, besifunda kakhulu. (They went very well. I enjoyed the class, everything we did.) Ingenze ngabona ukuthi (it made me see that this class was important).”*

When I read and wrote up the data that emerged from the sessions, I realised that the participants still referred to our sessions as ‘classes’ and ‘sessions’ interchangeably. Maybe because we used the same venue for both sessions and classroom teaching, this contributed to this mindset that regarded our interactions as being between students and teacher-educator, even though I wanted to believe it did not. I questioned myself. If I had not experienced the sessions as student-teacher interactions, then what else had they been for me? The most basic answer was researcher-participant. However, I was not certain if this answer sufficed because of the student-teacher-educator engagement during the semester. It was plausible that the participants would see and refer to me as ‘a teacher’ rather than ‘a researcher’ as they had more experience of me as a teacher than a researcher.

Nhlakanipho insightfully alluded to the importance of integrating indigenous games in the classroom. He also made a connection between the activities during our sessions and what he had learnt in his other modules.

Nhlakanipho: “Mina, M’am, I think all our sessions were very productive and I discovered something from it. It reminded me of one of the theories we learnt about last semester that learners always have prior knowledge, and in this case indigenous games have taught us concentration strategies and so forth, but we never get to use them at school as the curriculum does not consider oral traditional interventions of teaching. And as Black people, we learn through observation and imitation. Looking at our African ways of learning is one thing that must be done and we had to learn, unlearn and relearn and explore. For me the sessions were successful and very helpful and showed that we can even use indigenous games to teach and have clear understanding of why it has to be included in teaching, especially in Art. I have learnt a lot. Sengicabange (I have thought) a lot about this kule zinsuku (during this time). Siyabonga kakhulu nje, M’am (thank you a lot, M’am).”

Even though I did not probe further about the theory Nhlakanipho referred to, I was glad that he was trying to connect what we had experienced to other parts of learning by linking our classroom with session experiences. I was also excited to hear him using important terms I would use in my doctoral study; words such as ‘learn’, ‘unlearn’, and ‘re-learn’. It underscored the concept of *becoming* and the potential learning that could have already begun in each or some of them. At that time, I wished I had more time to engage with them in the knowledge and perspectives I had on *becoming*, and how these had changed my life on so many different

levels. Knowing it was not possible, I trusted that the seed I had planted through this experience would be enough, and I had to trust that what they had experienced would be a part of their life-long journeys as educators. It was up to them to decide how to use their learnings from this experience, as it was now also up to me.

Mhlengi: *“M’am, yonke nje le (all this) experience was really good, yabona nje senze izinto eziningi (we did a lot of things). Okunye nje ngiyafisa ukuthi besikwenza naseklasini ngoba kubalulekile kakhulu (I also wish that some of things we did here, we do in class as well because they were very important). Yazi nje Mam, njengoba sebeshilo abanye from ukudlala lawama-games ekuqaleni, senza incwadi, sakhiqiza ama-characteristics about teaching creative arts, kuningi nje Mam. (You know, M’am, like others have said before from the time we played those games in the beginning, to writing letters, developing the characteristics about teaching Creative Arts, there was alot, M’am). Besifunda, ngisho nangelesiyasikhathi senza i-hotseating, ey M’am, umuntu wadla waphanga wathulula lapha. (We were learning even during the time we were doing hotseating, M’am, we really spoke our hearts and took in a lot as well that day). Mina (I), that session in my opinion that was the best ever because I really got to see the challenges we as preservice teachers face and the possible solutions we can apply to deal with those challenges. The hotseating technique is one of the best and my personal favourite.”*

Themobile: *“The sessions were very interesting, M’am, in a way that some of the indigenous games that we played in class I didn’t know that you can use them when you are teaching your learners. Thanks again for organizing this for us, M’am. Some of the challenges that I came across during my TP teaching like the Music art form and those difficult children and futhi ngikwazile ukukhuluma ngalokho lana ngaphinde ngalalela ozakwethu (also I got to speak about my experience and also listened to my peers).”*

Reflecting on these comments during the drafting of the write-up of this session, I agreed with Mhlengi and Themobile that hot seating was an important activity. Even though the rules of the game were not followed, it did not matter because the hot seating activity became more than just playing as it became a cathartic experience for the participants as a space where they could share their teaching practice challenges. I believe that it was therapeutic as it was a space where they had a voice. I was also grateful that day that the participants had managed to give one another some advice. I had done very little that day as the participants had been preservice

teachers rather than participants in a doctoral study. Therefore, the hot seating activity is one that I would like to integrate into my classes somehow.

Siyandisa, Hlumani and Zizwe all shared similar sentiments to those of the participants who had already voiced their opinions. They endorsed the importance of integrating games into teaching and learning, expressed their gratitude, and highlighted the importance of learning and continual development of a teacher.

Siyandisa: “I really enjoyed our sessions. It made me realize how important games are when you link them with education. According to us as Creative Art teachers, we believe that learners have their knowledge and we use that knowledge in the classroom so that learners will be able to participate and enjoy the lesson. What I found interesting was how we explained how games can fit into education. We played games which learners know and we turned those games into educational activities not only for entertainment. I also liked how we shared knowledge as a group; it felt good to work as group not for marks, but to help each other become better teachers and better human beings in our community. The writing of the letter, M’am, was also good. It made to think really about what [kind of] teacher do I want to become, how I want to teach, and how I want learners to see me. Being a teacher is a long journey because I don’t have answers to the questions but, all in all, I personally enjoyed all the sessions.”

Hlumani: “Miss Nosipho, thank you...I also agree that it went very well. In fact, it was beyond anything I expected. I think that using these sort of games in the classroom is a brilliant idea for many reasons that we raised today and also I will like to touch on identity. When we grow up as Black South Africans kids from rural areas and townships before school, we do so many things that are somewhat valuable in inspiring kids, but when we get to school new things are introduced in classrooms and we start to take our experiences for granted and think that they are not important in learning, which I feel is not very good at keeping our identity [culture, traditions] alive...It is good to learn new things but teaching something new to a learner consumes more time, of which that time could be saved by grooming something that they already have. So, these games are something that already exists from their background so I think they should be used in class.”

Zizwe: *“I think our sessions went very well. It was very reflective and engaging in a way the answered a lot of questions in my head. And the games we did in class were very nostalgic and they reminded me what teaching Creative Arts is all about and also the challenges we, the Creative Arts teachers, face every day. I really enjoyed the class and it helped a lot. Thank you.”*

Them bani: *“I think the sessions were very helpful. It also helped me in learning new ways of teaching. Even though I knew most of those games we played I did not realize that engasiza (they would help) in the context of teaching and learning. Namhlanje (today) I realized it’s not only about questioning, but there are other ways of teaching. I would also like to thank you for helping us because besingeke sizicabangele sisodwa lezinto (we would not have thought of all this by ourselves).”*

Yandisa: *“The classes were great and I found it very interesting because I learnt that the things we did like creative writing, games, hotseating can be used for academic purposes rather than playing for fun and as the school should become an environment where learners feel at home and enjoy learning so that won’t happen if learners are prohibited from enjoying schooling through use of games in a classroom. Our discussions made me think about classroom climate and how the teacher can contribute to positive climate in class.”*

Namhla: *“Our sessions went really well, like really, really well. Seriously, the interesting thing that I liked about the session was the letter writing that we did and also the discussion that we had kwi-hotseating. I think this program you started, M’am, is productive and helpful because now as a teacher we can teach learners some of the games as well esasizenza sisakhula, okuyinto ebesingakaze siycabange leyo njengothisha (we played growing up, which is something we would not think of as teachers).”*

Nosipho: *“Why was letter writing such a favourite among you?”*

Namhla: *“At first it was uneasy because I was writing about myself and what I can bring to the table as a teacher, but as I kept writing and I reached a point where I knew how I want to approach my learners when I go to teach. It led me to think about how I want to improve not just as a teacher, but as a person.”*

Zakhele: “Ey, nami M’am, we really enjoyed. Yabona nje le ye letter writing ngangithi ngizohluleka ngoba ngangingayiboni usachaza. Kodwa mase umuntu eselalela esenza ebhala kancane, into yahlangana. Laphaya masi bhala incwadi, ngakwazi ukubuka kahle emuva, ngabuka othisha bami indlela ababesifundisa ngayo sihlupha sinjalo. Hhey babehlupheka othisha kodwa babezikhandla besebenza befundisa kunjalo. Yabo lento yokufundisa ayidingi umuntu oyivila, ifuna usebenze ngempela. Yazi mina ngibhala leyancwadi ngase ngizibuza ngifundiswe kanjani, ngifuna ukufundisa abafundi bami kanjani. Lento i-personal nje Mam, idinga ujule kancane kodwa hhayi Mam kancane siyangakhona.”

(You know, M’am, I also really enjoyed it. You know the letter-writing activity, I thought I would fail because I could not see it when we’re explaining. But when I listened, and did it and wrote, bit by bit I saw the letter coming together. When we were writing the letter, I could reflect and thought of teachers who taught us, we were so naughty but they taught us nonetheless. They really struggled teaching learners like us but they persevered and were dedicated to teaching us regardless of our behaviour. You know, teaching does not need a lazy person, it needs a hard worker. You know with me, when I was writing that letter, I began asking myself questions like, how was I taught, how do I want to teach my learners? This activity is personal, M’am, it needs you to have depth but it’s fine, M’am, bit by bit we are getting there.)

8.4.3 Reflecting on session eight

Most of the participants could not explicitly detail what they had taken from these sessions. I wished to explore this information but did not probe further. I also did not ask them to be explicit in their answers, so my question was broad and general. I was concerned with time which, overall, had interfered with my facilitation of the sessions as time constraints had compelled me to want to fit in all that was intended for the sessions. As a reflection while writing, I felt that lack of time somewhat hindered the process. I realised that I had fixated on fitting everything in and not just allowing what could fit in to flow and what could emerge to emerge organically. Allowing the process to take form in its own right was a hard lesson I had to learn, as proposed by McNiff (1998).

What I also observed during the writing process was the repeated highlighting of the games for teaching and learning. The indigenous games had been the first activity eight Wednesdays

before the last session, but a significant number could still remember and touch on those games in their reflection. I thus wondered about the potential impact of the first two sessions. Perhaps it was because those games were something they related about their childhood, or they could also have really seen them in a different light and believed their integration into teaching and learning was possible due to the value of prior learning. Whatever the reason was for each individual, I felt a sense of success as I could see they had taken some value from the sessions. My sense of success was also enhanced as I was writing this section because I was reminded of the initial reason for engaging in this study, which was my experience of the preservice teachers I had assessed during teaching practice and their inability to use demonstration in their teaching. The participants' in-depth reflections gave me hope that they understood the importance of being teachers who would not only talk, but *do* and *demonstrate* actively.

8.5 Conclusion

First, this chapter presented the activity-related poetry writing section of session seven. I shared my approach to writing a poem and showcased the finished poem and the participants' comments about it as well. I then reflected on the participants' comments in the last session on the highlights of the sessions they recalled. I realised that the overall challenges in all the sessions had been timing and some inadequate planning. However, I also considered the importance of the process of learning taking its own form even though it may develop outside the confines of time limitations. As I move forward to incorporate these lessons into my future teaching, I shall understand the importance of working towards balancing time and allowing the organic process to flow without leaning too much on either. In the following chapter, I present my discoveries pertaining to the emerging themes by analysing the presented data and findings.

CHAPTER NINE: COLLATING THE PLAYFUL THREADS

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present my analysis of the data under the emerging themes. This means that I interrogate the data by means of inductive analysis to highlight common trends and patterns which I present as themes. The themes are: missed opportunities, moments of comfort and discomfort, the fear of silence, and bilingualism in the sessions. I present evidence from the data that indicates the importance of these emerging themes. This chapter confirms and solidifies the observations I made throughout the data generation sessions about myself and I highlight the key findings that emerged through continuous engagement with the presented data. I also elucidate the lessons I learnt as well as perspectives about myself and my becoming.

9.2 Key learnings

9.2.1 The overwhelming nature of silence

During the data generation activities, I did not embrace silence as part of being playful or a playful pedagogy simply because I did not consider that silence might be a key feature in the process of play and in reflecting on it. Therefore, when moments of silence surfaced while the participants were listening or thinking during an activity, I perceived it as negative and something that should not happen in playful pedagogy, particularly when the silence was extended. I did not know what to do with the silences and filled them with my voice as I unnecessarily explained, gave more examples, or merely repeated myself, as I illustrate in the extracts in this chapter.

When I listened to the audio recordings while transcribing the data, I was the one who talked most. When I addressed the participants, I would stop speaking at various moments, believing I had made my point. However, the room would then be filled with silence while the participants remained unresponsive. While listening to the recorded data, I noticed that their silence happened after I had shared guidelines on a particular activity or asked a question as part of our ongoing discussion at the time. I did not consider the thought process that they might have been ongoing in the participants' minds, and I would speak again, explaining what I had just said, or giving another example to support what I had said. Understanding this as an erroneous act when I listened to the recorded data, I began probing the possible reasons that

had fuelled my logic. I also began searching for the moments of silence that were evident in the transcripts that indicated where I had interjected in their silence. I analysed the written data to explore if there had been any other moments when I had interfered.

This extract below is one of the first moments I identified when I interrupted the silence by filling it with my voice. This during happened the discussion of childhood games.

“Namhla shared that she enjoyed playing *umacashelana* (hide and seek) because she was tiny and managed to hide in places many could not. There was some silence again as the talking quieted down. I also shared that I had played these games while growing up...” (session 1).

As much as I was also a participant in the session, my contribution here was not only as a participant, but also as a researcher (and even as a teacher-educator) who was trying to fill in the silence and keeping the conversation going.

The extract below is from session six when Zizwe had finished her contribution in the hotseat. She finished by advocating for corporal punishment and, as we remained silent after she had finished, she got off the hotseat and returned to her chair. Disturbed by the silence that followed, I interjected and wanted to continue with the activity immediately, asking for another volunteer.

“There was silence again which was Zizwe’s cue to excuse herself from the hotseat which was empty yet again. She said, “*Sengicela ukuhlala phansi?*” (*can I please sit down now?*).” At this moment, I spoke up and asked if anyone else would like to take the hotseat” (session 4).

I did not use Zizwe’s submission to pause as a possible learning moment. I also did not probe her for a deeper understanding of her advocacy of corporal punishment. I allowed the moment to pass. When I interjected, I did not consider that the participants were probably still processing Zizwe’s contribution. Maybe they were processing in agreement or disagreement with her statement, or maybe they were forming possible rebuttals to share their views. I should have kept quiet a little longer to see how the participants would respond. Would they have responded to Zizwe’s views, or would a following participant have voluntarily taken the hotseat? This was a missed opportunity based on my intolerance of silence.

The extract below was after I had read aloud the post-it answers written by the participants when they were writing about the misconceptions about teaching and play in the fifth session.

“Since it was written anonymously, I did not want to put anyone on the spot or have anyone feel pressured to talk. I did not get many volunteers for this part of the activity. There were moments of silence when I asked for people to extend their thoughts” (session 5).

Having discovered this extract in the written data, I went back to the audio data to discover how long I had spoken when asking the participants to share their thoughts. I discovered that, at the time when I was asking if the participants wanted to share their thoughts on what they had written, I was also encouraging them to write down if there was something else they wanted to include.

I asked: “*Anybody wants to elaborate on their thoughts?*” After several seconds of silence, I said: “*Alright, we can continue if there is no one*”. Immediately after, I said: “*Is there anything else that anyone remembers [that] they want to add? If a thought comes to mind, write it down. Anybody wants to elaborate on their thoughts?*”

Only after repeated requests did one participant respond, which moved the activity forward.

The above extract suggests that, at that moment, I did not give the participants time to process their thought about the activity we had just completed. I moved onto the next phase of the session, which was sharing their opinions without giving them time to process what had happened before. When the participants did not give a response promptly after I had finished speaking, I asked another question repeatedly, which indicated that I was urging them to answer, which they did not, and this was another missed opportunity.

The extract that follows was from a moment in session seven after the participants had made sentences with the descriptive words they had written about play and teaching.

“We wrapped up this session by briefly reflecting on the activity. Upon asking for their comments, silence lingered as had occurred in the other sessions. To fill it, I asked if anyone was hopeful if a similar activity would work in the classroom. Again, there were some smiles in the room” (session 7).

While listening to the audio-recorded data, I realised that filling the silences in the manner I had, had made me a dominant presence in the room. In my reflection during the writing process, the fact that I talked the most made me think about a person who wanted to remain the strongest/loudest/most knowledgeable in the room, which is indicative of the wish to retain power and control. On a personal level of learning, this could have been a reason why I was so afraid of silences because it could mean that I was potentially fearful of losing power and control during the session.

9.2.2 Reasoning about my fear of silence

Filling silences with my voice in sessions one and two was a conscious decision as it was self-justified. I wanted to break the ice and build rapport, and I even wanted to avoid awkward silences. Nonetheless, listening to the audio recordings of the sessions, I realised that I had not responded from a space of anxious concern, but that my general understanding of silences in a conversation was that it reflected poor conversation. I thought that, for a conversation to be successful, it needed constant dialogue. I now understand that continuous talking by one person in a conversation is actually poor dialogue. However, it can also be justified by the circumstances in which the conversation occurs. I believe that my earlier understanding was what I unintentionally brought into my engagement with the participants, which could have contributed to how I sometimes engaged with them from a position of power, and not as an equal participant.

On a professional learning level, I understand that, by filling the silences with my voice, I denied the participants time to receive and process what I had been saying as I had intended it. In fact, my speaking diluted my presentation and interfered with the participants' thought processes. I thought that giving more examples and explanations would simplify my instructions and intentions, whereas it actually diluted their understanding and led to confusion. By filling the silences, I denied the participants the time to process the information they had received, interfering with their processing of information, and interrupt their ability to respond to the information or formulating a response mentally. Filling the silences thus impeded rather than supported processing. I expected that when I stopped speaking, the participants would respond promptly or begin with the activity. I did not consider that, for the participants, this process of listening and thinking of a response needed silence and that it was acceptable for them to take that moment. Giving silence its due means giving the participants time to process, which was an understanding I did not have. I did not understand that silence was part of the

process, even if it meant discomfort to me. I did not understand that it was not my time when it was silent, but the participants' time. I did not understand that the participants' time was not only when they were engaged in physical or vocal activity, or that silence was part of the activity and that it did not indicate poor engagement or poor reception of information. The silences indicated that it was not about me anymore but about the participants, but I was ignorant of this reality at the time.

While reflecting on this theme, I realised that I also need silence when I think, read, and write. My process of preparation does not occur in the presence of someone who is speaking and instructing me. Instead, it may be accompanied by music in the background or simple, complete silence. Remembering this allowed me to put myself in the participants' shoes and to imagine how I would be able to process information and formulate an appropriate response if I were not given ample time to process. In general conversation or when familiar subject matter is addressed, it may be possible to process ideas during noise and 'clutter', but when information is new or unfamiliar, time to process and formulate an appropriate response is required, and silence is the bedrock of such reflection.

9.2.3 Learning to accept silence

When I searched for moments in the data when I accepted silence as necessary, I only discovered a moment in the fourth session when a participant had left the hotseat having shared a story that I had found startling.

“At this point, as no one else commented, I did not either. I felt I did not need to be a facilitator here; I needed to be a participant and trust the other participants to continue with the hotseating activity” (session four).

In my effort to become a participant, I realised that I had to accept the silence that permeated the activity at that time. Although I was anxious, I still waited for the participants to take the activity forward, which they did. In that moment of silence, another participant went to the hotseat and the activity continued. Making this decision during the activity indicated my acceptance of silence and its value as a tool for reflection and processing. However, as I was unaware of my understanding of silence and my intuitive reaction to it at that time, I did not apply my insight into the value of silence consistently to see what would happen if I refrained from intervening with moments of silence.

9.2.4 The fear of losing power

In seeking a deeper understanding of my reasoning about fearing silence, I further probed into the data in search of moments when I felt I was losing control, and I discovered the following excerpt:

“I sat listening attentively, unsure what to do, wondering if I should be doing anything. I saw the activity evolve into some debriefing from the teaching practice experience for the participants. She said, “*Hhay sengiqedile mina*” (*I am done*) and got up from the hotseat. Again, another moment of silence. I became anxious as I felt I was losing control and that the activity was moving into a life of its own. I sat quietly, with a calm face and racing thoughts in my mind, trying to decide how to proceed after Namhla had left the hotseat” (session four).

This extract was taken from session four, in the event when Namhla had finished sharing her unfortunate experience of being accused of having romantic interests in her mentor teacher at the school where she did her practice teaching. This pause was unlike that when Zizwe had finished sharing her opinion in favour of corporal punishment and I had quickly requested someone else to take the hotseat. In Namhla’s case, I remained silent after she had shared her story. Both submissions had revelations that somewhat shocked the group. However, after Zizwe’s story, I filled the silence but after Namhla’s, I kept quiet in a wavering environment of silence. I was taken aback by what Namhla had shared. I also connected it to the question I had received earlier about romantic relationships at school asked by one of the participants when I was in the hotseat. I recalled that, when I was a Creative Arts high school teacher, I had also been romantically pursued by various male teachers and had also been defended by my principal when things got out of hand when one became aggressive towards me. My experience resonated with Namhla’s story even though I did not share my story in response to or in support of Namhla.

The next extract was also taken from four session to indicate my uncertainty that came from listening to some of the participants’ stories.

“Having listened to Nhlakanipho’s account of being discriminated against and Namhla’s account of being falsely accused, it was obvious we were not following the rules of the hotseating activity. It was clear that some participants really needed this space to share their experiences. My silence was a state of indecisiveness. I did not

know whether to ask the participants to respond to each person or to ask a question, as it was part of the game” (session four).

Their stories left me with a sense of loss of control for two reasons. First, their stories were serious and I felt we needed more time to address their implications. I personally felt the responsibility to address their experiences by sharing more of mine and giving them advice that might assist them in moving forward as novice teachers. I did not respond in any way. I remained silent and so did the rest of the participants.

Another moment in the fourth session when I discovered an episode of loss of control was in the tableau activity, which I believed at the time had been unsuccessful. The following was my brief reflection after the session, explaining why I believed the activity had been unsuccessful.

“The participants were too playful. They deterred and began doing funny freeze frames that made them laugh. While I enjoyed their playfulness, I needed them to get back on track and do what I had asked. When I made that request, I began to feel more like a teacher making demands on students. Considering the little time left for this session, I allowed the organic process and the participants to do as they pleased with the freeze frames. I could see the playfulness, but I felt like there was no instruction because there was no purpose to the playfulness” (session four).

The extract of this reflection was written after the session. Reading it again during the analysis of the data and during a discussion with my supervisor, I realised how limiting my review of the tableau activity had been. I restricted myself to doing the tableau activity in the way I knew how. When I saw something different, I rejected it as wrong and unsuccessful. I could not open myself to a different perspective, which I thought validated the idea that I rejected it because it meant losing my way of doing things and losing control of the session.

The fear of losing of control in my sessions could be something that I projected but was not aware of. It could also be why the participants called me ‘M’am’ or ‘teacher’ throughout our sessions. In my unintentional striving to retain control of the sessions, I used my teacher-educator identity to ‘control’ the participants. After all, they were students I taught. This foregrounding of my teacher-educator identity may also have been because it was easier, more accessible and the only identity I knew in my relationship with the participants. ‘Unlearning’ this identity was a challenge I should have embraced.

9.2.5 The teacher-educator/preservice teacher/researcher/participant conundrum

In my reflections during the writing process, I realised I had not evolved or transformed from the teacher identity to the researcher identity. I obviously struggled with the researcher identity in the sessions, but I did not understand this during the data generation phase. In my defence, it had never been a researcher engaging with participants and I had never generated data using participants before. Moreover, I did not know how to adopt an identity that was not the teacher-educator one in the presence of preservice participants because our only relationship had been that of student and teacher. Because of this, we may have struggled to move from our familiar identities to new ones, which were researcher and participant. During the data generation process, when I noticed in some sessions that the participants referred to me as ‘teacher’, I did not interrogate this practice. I casually thought it was because they were not comfortable to refer to me as anything else, and I chose not to try and change that relationship. But I continued to ask myself: “What would I have preferred them calling me to indicate that they had moved from seeing me as their teacher-educator? Nosipho, or Sis Nosipho?” In my view, being called Nosipho, my first name, would have indicated familiarity and seeing me as an equal and not focusing on my identity as their teacher-educator. Being called sis Nosipho (*sis*, short term for sister or *sisi* in isiZulu) could have indicated that the participants did not necessarily see me as a teacher-educator but more as an older sister, showing a sense of familiarity yet maintaining the respect they had generously been offering me as their teacher-educator throughout the semester. From a more cultural perspective, being called sis Nosipho would also have indicated respect for an elder (in age or status), which would have been appropriate as the participants were all isiZulu speaking and adhered intrinsically to some deep-rooted cultural customs. Generally, in the isiZulu culture, we do not call those older than us in age by their first name; we prefix their name with either *sisi* (sister), *mama* (mother), *baba* (father), *malume* (uncle), or *anti* (aunt), depending on one’s age proximity to the person one is referring to. So, as I was not too far in age from the participants, if we had met randomly on the street they would have greeted me by saying, “*Sawubona sis Nosipho*” (*hello sister Nosipho*). Being called Nosipho or sis Nosipho would have elicited a sense of trust, indicating that the participants had moved from seeing me as their teacher-educator to recognising my position as a mutual although older participant, thus extending their relationship with me to another identity.

Reflecting on our first session, I did not remember asking them to call me by name. When I spoke to the participants on various occasions before we began the data generation sessions,

they always referred to me as ‘teacher’ or ‘M’am’. Our engagement in the data generation sessions was premised on our student-teacher-educator relationship so, naturally, they continued with that identity, as did I. I also did not remember thinking about my view of them or intentionally seeing them and engaging with them as participants rather than my students.

9.3 Experiencing Discomfort and Anxiety

During the data generation process, I was aware of moments of discomfort in various instances. In my analysis, I refer to anxiety and discomfort frequently. However, there is a slight distinction in the meaning of the terms as I use them. I refer to discomfort as an umbrella term encompassing any unpleasant state within the research process that interfered with my or the participants’ ability to participate in any given activity, whereas anxiety was an increased feeling of nervousness that induced stress which negatively affected my ability to concentrate as well as my reasoning capacity, and which compelled me to make decisions that propelled the data generation process at times where it probably should not have gone.

Analysing the data, I realised that the participant recruitment process was one of the first instances when I felt anxious. There were other times, such as in the first session, when significant moments were uncomfortable in different ways and for different reasons. In this section, the excerpts illustrate the moments when I identified discomfort in myself and, at times, in the participants. Below is an excerpt from the recruitment process and the first day I had to meet participants.

“S303 is a teaching venue that is usually filled with bodies, sounds of chattering voices, the hum of old aircon machinery, and the movement of furniture. But as my recruiting space, the room was empty. Only I and the humming sound of the aircon occupied the space. With the passing of minutes, my eyes kept shifting between the laptop and the door – I hoped for someone to walk in who had read my email and who was interested in my study. The emptiness and the absence of bodies were loud; my bubbly, confident emotions eroded with each passing moment as no one entered. I was anxious and discomforted and these anxious thoughts infused the room with unease. I constantly wondered whether any students had read my email and if any would show up. As the minutes passed, I continued to wonder whether they had forgotten or simply ignored the call because it had come from me” (Session one).

This paragraph captures my anxiety when I began the participant recruitment process. Going through the data and identifying the discomfort issue as a possible theme, I also identified discomfort as a feeling I experienced many times during the data generation process. From my writings of the participant recruitment process, it was evident that I experienced anxiety and found the process I was entering discomforting. In trying to explain and understand this feeling, it could be argued that I was anxious because I was entering into an unknown process that I had not experienced before. Stepping into the unknown in this context related significantly to my undergraduate years and the discomfort I felt in a new environment with different people and ways of living. My lack of research experience and my uncertainty about the way forward could have created discomfort as well. A deeper understanding of this feeling could be linked to my personality. I know that I become anxious when uncertain or sensing loss of control. Therefore, generating data was an uncomfortable experience for me, among other feelings, because uncertainty and having little control of the process increased my anxiety. Reflecting on the beginning of this process, I understood that anxiety would inevitably be present because, as mentioned in the extract, anxiety was an emotion I carried with me from the beginning of the data generation process. Even though I had a general understanding that I could feel anxious, I did not understand its implications for this process. Being aware of this trait from the beginning could have made me more aware of my anxiety and the discomfort I might experience, and I could probably have controlled it better.

Moreover, awareness of this trait could have assisted me in making different decisions or choosing different approaches in the sessions. Understanding anxiety now a bit better than before, I realise that I could have taught myself to prepare my mind and body for participant recruitment and sessions at least an hour before they started without focusing only on my administrative preparations. This could have been done through breathing and movement exercises in my office, which would have intentionally released any tension and anxiety. I could also have found quick, practical ways to release anxiety during the sessions and not ignored the emotions, as doing so affected my approach to facilitation and participation. Understanding the impact that anxiety had on the process, actively dealing with it would have assisted me in making better decisions and in deepening and enriching my participation in the data generation activities.

Below is an excerpt that illustrates my observations of the participants' discomfort during our first session:

“The participants arrived punctually and suddenly I felt an energy that exuded some anxiety in the space. I remained calm and greeted and welcomed everyone politely. The response was wary and a bit tense. I confirmed this through the low voices of some and no response from others. Some were looking at me and while others were looking down or away but not making full eye contact. So, I quickly offered everyone the opportunity to have something to eat and drink, but it still took a moment for the group to move” (session one).

There was another instance in session one when the anxiety levels in myself and in the participants were high. A possible explanation could be that this was our first session and they did not know what to expect. I did, as I had planned for it; however, I did not know how the session would progress. None of the participants indicated that they had been part of a research process before, and I also did not ask. The assumption was that we were all engaged in a study like this for the first time. Therefore, our engagement would be uncomfortable until all the parties had adjusted and adapted. I believe I was more cognizant of their discomfort than mine. I tried to put them at ease hoping for positive engagement, like offering them food when they walked in. This was an attempt to welcome them and make them feel at ease. While writing this section, I realised that I had attended to the participants to make them more comfortable, but I had never attended to myself. In failing to bring comfort to myself during the data generation process, I did not give the data generation process the attention it needed. Reflective data analysis made me realise the importance of giving attention to the human factor of the data generation process, not only in terms of the participants, but also in terms of the researcher. It was also not enough to plan for the sessions and execute the plans, but it was also important to be aware of how the sessions would manifest by understanding how they should progress.

Below are excerpts of the participants’ responses after the various indigenous games had been played. All are from the first session:

“*The way I am dressed made me feel uncomfortable*”. This is one of the responses by Siyandisa after playing the *ibhasi lamanesi* game.

“*I did not feel uncomfortable that much, but sometimes you think to yourself ukuthi ingathini ingane yami uma ingase ingifice ngidlala lokhu? (what would my child say if she found me playing this?)*.” This was how Nhlakanipho responded after he had played one of the games (*ibhasi lamanesi*). For him, it was a matter of emotional discomfort.

I reflected on my views of playing games as follows:

“...I spoke about the discomfort that children experienced from my perspective as a former Creative Arts teacher. I shared my insight that children could also struggle and feel uncomfortable playing with others or even initially with a teacher. This could simply be that rapport or friendship has not yet been established. Sharing this perception was to highlight that this feeling might not only be experienced by them as teachers, but also by learners. I also encouraged them that, should they notice this feeling among the learners they would teach one day, they should know that they would not be the only ones feeling like this in the room” (Session one).

The above extract was my response after the participants had spoken about their childhood play experiences, specifically after one participant had shared using demonstration as a method during her teaching practice as a preservice teacher. In speaking about the issue of discomfort in the classroom, I was trying to share how learners can also experience discomfort. Having heard a few participants sharing that playing these games brought either physical or emotional discomfort to them, I tried to connect that experience to the classroom. Learners in their classrooms could experience the same discomfort. Thus, in this session discomfort was a microcosm of what could happen in any classroom as learners/students may also feel uncomfortable for various reasons.

For me, this response indicates a deeper understanding of discomfort, as I recognise it not only as a negative feeling, but one that various participants, teachers, and students may feel. Acknowledging the presence of discomfort means not giving it space as an obstructive or destructive feeling that will affect a lesson negatively, as doing so will ease participants as discomfort is felt within us all. Not acknowledging it may thus give some participants in the classroom the erroneous perception that they are the only ones who feel uncomfortable. However, acknowledging it verbally may bring awareness that the feeling of discomfort is felt across the space by multiple individuals and acknowledging this may be the first step in building rapport among the participants in a lesson. Furthermore, acknowledging the presence of discomfort may create a space within the aura of the lesson for comfort to enter as a complementary feeling. Once the students understand that the discomfort they feel is not exclusive to any individual but is a general feeling among all participants in the lesson, the sense of ease that this understanding will engender has great potential for comfort to be felt as

a positive emotion. In this way, if discomfort is acknowledged and dissipated, its power may be ignored. Moreover, when teachers understand that discomfort should be appeased, they will assist in making their learners/students aware that they may feel discomfort and that sharing it is okay as part of a healing/growing process. This could happen if the teacher is actively involved in the learning process.

Upon my reflections above, I realised that, even though our sessions had not been formal lessons, I had missed crucial opportunities to get involved by playing with the participants. In session one I had not planned to have assistance to record this session. I felt it was important to share this information with the participants as they were preservice teachers and were likely to encounter a similar unplanned experience during their teaching practice. My active involvement in playing with the participants could have been used as a practical example to show how to mitigate discomfort. It could also have been an opportunity to lean into the feeling of discomfort as a necessary characteristic of playful pedagogy and Creative Arts teaching and learning. We could have discussed what my participation had brought to the games to better understand the impact of power relations and the need to shed the mantle of ‘being the leader’ at times.

Below is an excerpt of Milani’s narrative of how, as an introvert, the kind of childhood play she was allowed to engage in made her uncomfortable around people in general:

“At home, I grew up when my mom was strict and scolded us. You could not even go out and play. If you went out to play, you would be spanked. So, when I grew up, that’s what I knew. I was even scared to go out and play even when she was not around. And I can see how that experience hurt me because right now, I can see that something is missing. I loved to play, but I was overcome with fear when I played. Another thing I find is that when I am among people I have known for some time I still can’t get to know them because I grew up alone at home for a long time as a small child. I had older sisters, but I was the youngest” (Session two).

Milani’s discomfort was not prompted by what we were doing in the session, but by the feeling of fear that she carried with her when she was among people. It could also be that even being among us in the sessions made her feel uncomfortable as it was a feeling that had infused her childhood self. I surmised that being a Creative Arts teacher might continue to make her feel uncomfortable and that she would have to decide how to live with the feeling or let go of it to

tap into her optimal ability without discomfort. At that time, I could not discern the root cause of Milani's discomfort, but I empathised with her as much of her childhood engagements had been restricted by a parent. I also suffered restricted play in one of the foster homes where I lived, but this memory was not apparent to me during that session. It was evident Milani's childhood experiences differed from those of the others, even though that observation was not vocalised. The apparent difference was in the depth of control a parent had over her childhood play, which was highly restrictive and not guided like that of the other participants. Milani's and the other participants' memories of childhood play clearly illuminated parental involvement in play as either restrictive or supportive, with the former being more obvious than the latter.

The following extract refers to my reflection after Namhla had shared her feelings about losing her bond with a childhood friend:

“Namhla then added that childhood friends could grow apart. She shared a memory of her childhood friend who even went to the same university as she did, but she was in a different program. She shared that, after growing up, they had grown apart at university, and that she was hurt by their separation” (session two).

There were no obvious signs of discomfort in Namhla when she shared this narrative. She made regular eye contact, giggled when sharing the story, sat upright (she was not slouching with a closed body language indicating distress), and her voice did not change in tone as it was the same as when she shared other narratives. This indicated that she was not discomforted by her memories of her loss of a friend. However, she was sharing something that had once been hurtful as her friend had been a significant part of her childhood life, and having lost her had been painful. But it seemed that she had accepted the loss of the friendship and that she had shed the deep hurt and had moved on. Listening to Namhla, I could not remember a lost friendship when I was a child. Loss of friends occurred due to being relocated, but I was always able to make new friends. What resonated with Namhla's story was the loss or absence of friendship in general, which I experienced as a young adult at university and as a novice professional. However, listening to her did not evoke any feelings of discomfort about friendships that had ended, or of certain erstwhile friends who had disappeared from my life. Her story stirred no memories of deep loss and pain which meant that, just like Namhla, I had healed and moved on.

The following excerpt was taken from our last session. Here I expressed my feelings about our sessions coming to an end:

“I was anxious about this present day because I was unsure whether I had generated enough and rich data for my doctoral study. As the participants walked in, I sat quietly on the edge of a desk, allowing all these thoughts and feelings within me” (Session eight).

My discomfort this day was evoked by worrying about the sufficiency of the data I had generated. It also extended to self-evaluation and questioning myself whether I had facilitated the process effectively. As a novice researcher, I doubted myself and was unsure whether my actions had been enough. I did not yet possess the ability to gauge whether what had been generated would be sufficient for analysis to yield a meaningful thesis with supportive evidence of my reflexivity and improved learning.

9.4 Missed Opportunities for Learning

During the data analysis process, I discovered multiple moments in the data that I identified as missed opportunities. These moments were opportunities to probe or introduce something useful in our activity or discussion. They could also have been opportunities to acquire further deep learning, which could have been utilised to inform my teaching practice as a novice teacher-educator on a quest for growth and improvement. In this theme of missed opportunities, I highlight those missed moments and illustrate how they could have been utilised for the benefit of my participants, myself, and the research study.

To discover if I had missed opportunities during data generation, I asked myself: “What could I have done differently here?” This question allowed me to read my data dispassionately and to ignore any bias that might have clouded my earlier interpretations. Revisiting the first session, I identified the moment below as a missed opportunity. This was the first time I realised that the participants and I had no relationship other than those of teacher-educator and student-teacher.

“I realized that this group had only interacted with me in a formal classroom space where I was their teacher-educator. This was the first time we were together outside the classroom. Therefore, their initial interaction with me was anxious and tense as a result of the power relation in which I was the teacher-educator and they the students, and

they did not know how to engage with me outside the classroom. This epiphanic understanding led me to be overly cautious of the personality I displayed. I had to remind myself that they were not students in my class even though I taught them. Therefore, during this time, I should not exert the same position I did in the classroom or behave in any way that might negatively affect rapport throughout the sessions we would spend together” (Session one).

What I could have done differently in an attempt to make them feel comfortable in our sessions, was to intentionally ask them to call me by my first name. Even though I had made the intentional decision to be cautious not to behave as if we were in class, I should not have maintained my teacher-educator identity but extended some courtesy to them by positioning myself as an equal (albeit older) participant. A simple measure would have been if I had requested them to call me by my first name and not ‘M’am’, ‘Miss’, or ‘teacher’ as if we were in the classroom. If any student had then continued to refer to me by these formal titles, it would have been their choice that I would have respected. As these sessions took place outside lectures, I should have made a concerted effort to diffuse any untoward formal relationships. As it was, my lack of insight may have caused our sessions to feel like lectures for the students.

Modelling was another missed opportunity. In the first session, I did not participate in the childhood games because I was recording the activities. Although recording was important, it was vital for me to be a participant in these games as it was our first session. Participating may have also allowed modelling and demonstration. The lack of demonstration was an unintentional part of my rationale, as I inadvertently alluded to my experiences of assessment during teaching practice in a particular year. By not engaging as a participant, I missed the opportunity to model a moment of playful pedagogy. At that time, I should have engaged in a demonstration using the game we had just played, and my participation could have served as a learning moment to unpack what I intended, solidifying its importance through practice. As a self-study researcher, I needed to learn to maintain balance between being an active participant and researcher. Therefore, when one participant mentioned that the fact that he had not been allocated a partner in one of the games had affected his enjoyment of the game, I knew I should have participated. However, I could not think of a way to continue recording the games on the spur of the moment.

Another aspect I considered a missed opportunity was not playing all the games the participants had listed due to time constraints. I understood this as a missed opportunity after this data generation activity because the session ended due to time constraints and not because the activities had been completed. I also discovered that several opportunities, but not all, had been cut short in the sessions due to time constraints. In some instances, there could have been further meaningful engagements if I had allowed more time (or perhaps talked less). Missed opportunities due to time constraints (and admittedly my inability to appreciate the value of silence) occurred during the hot seating activity:

“Having run out of time, it was almost time for the participants to catch their bus home. I was conflicted about whether I should push to have one more participant take the hotseat or call it a day. I was also unsure if anybody was yearning to take the hotseat; I did not want them to even run the risk of missing their bus. So, I made the call to end the hot seating activity” (Session four).

In this session, I would have liked all the participants to get an opportunity to sit in the hotseat and it would have been out of choice if they did not. However, the issue of time meant that some would not sit in the hotseat, and they did not get a choice to decline or agree. I would also have preferred if we had time to consolidate the activity. We could have identified more significant issues and points made by those in the hotseat, just like Namhla’s story that was about being pursued by a male mentor teacher. I realised later that listening to this story and not speaking about my similar experience as a novice high school teacher was a missed opportunity. Moreover, many ‘rules’ of the hotseat game were not followed, but I allowed this as I believed this activity carried an organic life of its own and that the participants needed to continue with how they wanted to share their stories. Therefore, as the hot seating rules were broken multiple times, it would not have been alarming had I shared my story, even if I did not sit in the hotseat. I could have supported Namhla by sharing that her experience was not unique, which could have created awareness of this issue in everyone in the room. It would also have illustrated how I had handled the situation and what assistance I had received, which could have served as advice to preservice teachers who might find themselves in the same situation in the future. My story would also have openly condemned such perverse behaviour and any similar misogynistic attitude. Moreover, I could have spoken to Namhla privately but I did not think of it at the time, only later.

This missed opportunity could have demonstrated how playful pedagogy may open up spaces for sharing emotionally difficult experiences. Namhla's story was one, while Mhlali's story of restricted play and its effects on her adult life was another. Even Nkosinathi's story of a discriminative experience in a school during teaching practice was another. All these stories were shared by the participants after they had engaged in playful activities, indicating that the potential for playful pedagogy to evoke courage and trust so that an individual will speak up, even about a most difficult experience.

Another occurrence was in session seven when we worked on creating a poem together and failed to finish it due to time constraints. During this session, I ran out of time and did not manage to complete what I had intended for the poem development activity. However, the time used for explaining and the 'wordsmith' activity took longer than I had anticipated, which resulted in my cancellation of the rest of the activity, which was to co-develop the poem during the session. This meant that I completed the poem before our last session.

“Impelled by the time constraint of the session, I told them that I would set aside time during the week to reread everyone's work thoroughly and use their words to create a poem” (Session seven).

One participant lamented the fact that he had not been involved in completing the poem, and I believe that they would have benefitted from such an activity. I also think their contribution in structuring and developing the poem to finality would have made the process more valuable for all.

What I have learnt from the two moments identified about time constraints is that preparation and execution are processes that do not always have the same outcome. Though planning occurs in hope of a desired outcome, execution can be marred by unforeseen challenges. This is a common understanding. However, I forgot this reality in my execution of the activity and did not plan in anticipation that some of issues might arise. I accept this critique because I generally understand myself to be relatively good at planning and forward-thinking about issues that could arise that mar planning. However, this was not the case in my data generation planning. Deepening my thoughts on this as I was writing, I also understood that it would not have been possible to be forward-thinking in this process as I was doing it for the first time. As a novice, I did not know the potential challenges I would encounter and was thus unaware of how to mitigate them.

Another significant moment that was a missed opportunity was during the last session when the students were reflecting on the sessions altogether.

“Most of the participants could not explicitly detail what they had taken from these sessions. I wished to explore this information but did not probe further. I also did not ask them to be explicit in their answers, so my question was broad and general. I was concerned with time which, overall, had interfered with my facilitation of the sessions as time constraints had compelled me to want to fit in all that was intended for the sessions. As a reflection while writing, I felt that lack of time somewhat hindered the process. I realised that I had fixated on fitting everything in and not just allowing what could fit in to flow and what could emerge to emerge organically” (Session eight).

Due to time constraints, I did not allow much deliberation or probing during this session. I listened to and accepted what the participants said in their reflections, but it was limited in retrospect. Upon reflection, I thus questioned whether the allotted one hour and thirty minutes was enough for a session and its activities, realising that if I had extended the sessions to two hours as I had initially planned, there could have been more time to complete the activities. However, my decision to keep the session at one hour and thirty minutes was due to a transport challenge for the participants who had to take a bus to their residence at a time that conflicted with the session. It was also logical to reduce the time from two hours as lessons on campus are usually one hour and thirty minutes. Therefore, I thought I would manage the sessions in the shorter time. When I traced the time aspect from the beginning of the data generation process to the end, I realized that there were indications that I had structured my time allocation for the data generation process on my teaching perspective, which was a flaw in my planning.

My decision was subconsciously based on the relationship between myself and the students: they called me ‘M’am’ which I allowed, and this perpetuated the power relation between us of preservice teacher and teacher-educator. Although I was cognisant of the fact that I was engaged in research with them and was not in a formal classroom, I did not behave in a manner that would allow them to interact with me as equals at a different level – i.e., as participants even though I was the researcher. In retrospect, none of us could have foreseen this flaw, as we had stepped into these roles for the first time.

The venue where the sessions were conducted is a third example that could have influenced my view of the sessions as a lecturer because this venue was the same one where I lectured this

group of students. This indicates an inadvertent likeness of the sessions to lectures, and when I acknowledged this, I had to face that this and the other factors I had unearthed could have implicitly influenced the outcomes of the sessions. However, my learning had deepened as, prior to my post-data generation reflections, I would not have had the capacity to arrive at this awareness.

When I discovered these missed opportunities at first, I felt incompetent and embarrassed. I felt as if I had not done my best as I could not identify those moments when they occurred, and I could not go back to the participants as the sessions had finished. All I had were the data and my resolve to explore the findings regardless of flaws. However, through various discussions at different times and continued self-reflection, my perspective changed, and I began to see the missed opportunities as learning opportunities. This shift in my attitude was underpinned by my understanding that I was a novice teacher-educator and an emerging scholar. Therefore, the data generation process allowed me to learn in depth about and through the practice of playful pedagogy. I also had to remember that the opportunity to integrate what I had missed or learned through this research study would be integrated into my teaching practice. Somehow, in the complex process of data generation, I had forgotten why I had begun this doctoral study and that I was engaged in a learning process. Therefore, whatever I discover as learning would be an opportunity for me to integrate it into my teaching practice.

9.5 Moments of Comfort

Regardless of the discomfort and anxiety that I felt during the data generation process, there were also moments of comfort that propelled me forward in the data generation process. Some were more significant than others, as my sense of discomfort was often eased by moments of comfort. I first managed to mitigate the discomfort I felt when I recruited participants. Sending out emails had been unsuccessful, and I then used a more personal strategy by visiting Creative Arts lectures and taking down the names and contact details of interested students. This resulted in some students attending the introductory meeting. Interacting with students face-to-face and explaining my purpose worked well. Their attendance of the meeting was a comforting experience and renewed my motivation to pursue the data generation process. I saw it as a successful moment as it significantly reduced my anxiety.

Other moments that brought comfort to me included our greetings and casual chats when each session began, the food we shared at the beginning of each session, the ability to speak both

English and IsiZulu in our sessions, observing positive non-verbal expressions which I interpreted as a form of approval, witnessing their learning during the sessions, and listening to their insightful reflections.

9.5.1 Adhering to unwritten rules of courtesy

Greeting one another was an everyday courtesy before the sessions started. As the students casually walked into the venue, I greeted them and friendly conversations would ensue. For me, this was comforting as the interactions were authentic and sincere and always a window of opportunity to get to know one another.

“After we had greeted one another, I offered them food and allowed them some time to talk informally, which was mostly about the challenging test. I did not ask whether each student had passed, as some did not talk about their results” (Session two).

Greeting the participants at a personal level was what a university professor had taught me in my first undergraduate year. It was something I had enjoyed and I therefore integrated it into the sessions. It reminded me of my time as a timid young adult student facing various identity challenges. His greetings had made me feel seen and acknowledged and were important as I felt overwhelmed in those first years at university. Extending my greetings brought back my memory of how I had felt acknowledged and how positively I had responded. Even though I was not certain if the participants would harbour the same sentiment, I nonetheless wanted to share what I had experienced in the hope that it would enrich theirs.

“I waited for everyone to sit in a circle and greeted them individually, asking them about their day. This was a practice that had been introduced to me by one of my Drama directors during my undergraduate studies. He used to greet each student in the class, asking them how they were doing and taking his time to engage sincerely with each student” (Session two).

Offering food at the beginning of each session was my way of showing respect and care for their time and presence. I was also aware that, on our campus, there were students who suffered from food insecurity, and therefore it was imperative for me to include food in our sessions so all students could eat. I also included it in our sessions as a means of comfort as I believed many people love food, and it is one of the ways that encourage people to relax. So, food was

there for two reasons: as a necessity as the sessions took place after their classes, and as a form of comfort and support.

“I also organised snacks and drinks for the participants which I felt was necessary, as normally during the time of the session they would enjoy a meal or prepare their evening meals. So, this snack would at least be something they could eat to make it through the next two hours without feeling hungry” (Session one).

I noticed that their freedom to enjoy finger snacks brought comfort and eased any tensions. They accepted this gesture and validated this by expressing their gratitude and some even helping to clean up afterwards. Food was also an entry point in the sessions. When the participants were awkward at first, I understood their need for some privacy as the power relationship was strong at the beginning of the first session as we were all feeling the same tension and discomfort.

“So, I excused myself a bit and left the room. I went to my office, laughed at this awkwardness and was thinking of ways to break the ice” (Session one).

Laughing in my office brought me comfort and assisted me in calming down and thinking rationally. Therefore, as much as discomfort may have a place in playful pedagogy, there is more need for comfort if sessions are to continue smoothly. I also found that humour was important:

“I looked at them over my spectacles and asked in IsiZulu and my dramatic voice: “*Where did all the food go?*” (*kushonephi ukudla?*). The participants and I laughed, which broke the ice humorously and we began chatting about their love for food while they complimented me on the tasty selection of finger snacks, which they had not expected but accepted with gratitude” (Session one).

I had left the room and returned after a while, and the food was gone. When asked jokingly about it, everybody laughed. This moment was critical because it the first meeting and we had not spoken much nor greeted one another appropriately. Leaving the room was an attempt to compose myself and think of ways to break the ice, but also to give the students time to relax. Returning and having this moment to break the ice was a significant, as sharing food was an ice-breaker activity that was successfully used throughout the sessions to mitigate discomfort.

I feel that this was an important lesson that I learnt and that it may be applied in similar situations in the future.

9.5.2 Bilingualism during data generation

The use of language (either English or IsiZulu) was not restricted in our discussions. When analysing the data, I realised that I had been the first to mix the two languages when I welcomed the participants. I think the participants were prompted to do the same as they emulated my approach. I did not intentionally speak either IsiZulu or English, as my use of either developed organically rather than intentionally. Throughout the sessions, there were instances when I would intentionally mention that the participants could use either language. It was important that they never felt restricted in their answers because of a language barrier.

“Beginning our session, I once again welcomed and thanked them for availing themselves during this time for the project. Switching between IsiZulu and English, I explained to them that I was registered for a PhD at the university and as part of my research...” (Session one).

“I ensured them that they could respond in any language (isiZulu or English), in whichever they were more comfortable” (Session four).

Allowing the participants and myself to speak freely in English and IsiZulu comforted us and eased the data collection process. It extended and enriched the conversations as there was no language barrier. The participants and I could change to any language if we felt stuck in one or could not remember a particular word or phrase in English. My understanding of this approach is that it generated a sense of ease and allowed deep expression and rich data to emerge. Even now if, for whatever reason, I may feel stuck or feel I can no longer express myself in one language, I quickly switch to another language to extend the expression. I believe this may also be the experience of other bilingual or multi-lingual speakers.

The approach that I allowed affirmed that bilingualism (switching between the home and additional language) allowed the individuals to speak without any language prohibition. It also served as a connection point for those speaking the same language which was an advantage in our sessions as everyone understood one another. Witnessing this, I came to realise that playful activities should not be caged within any language. Playfulness is a language on its own and is enough to bring a group together; therefore, language should never be fixated on in playful

class activities or in research. It is the responsibility of the researcher or the teacher-educator to make knowledge accessible to the learners if there are any language barriers within the setting.

Other moments of comfort that occurred during the sessions were when the participants and I were enjoying what was taking place. I was able to identify their enjoyment through their verbal as well as their non-verbal expressions, which I interpreted as their comfort in the activity. Below are some excerpts that illustrate these moments.

“On that Wednesday, I announced that we would participate in creating poetry together. The interjectory sounds of ‘*hmm*’ emanated from the group. I also saw smiles on some faces while some looked at me with wide eyes and others simply nodded. These expressions indicated approval of the proposed activity. I asked if any people in the room had either written or enjoyed poetry, and many hands were raised” (Session seven).

“At this point, I could sense they were warming to me and were engaged as they listened attentively. At this point, they appeared comfortable and smiled and giggled. There were also gasps of awe and zestful interjections as I spoke. I was confident that they were drawn into what I was saying” (Session one).

The next was the moment after I had spoken about the academic paper I had written about playing house, focusing on the indigenous game *ukudlala izindlu*:

“In our conversation after playing the games, it was clear that there was rapport among the participants and between them and me. This was evidenced by their willing participation and collective agreement when I asked if they had enjoyed the experience and engagements. Nearing the end of the session, I asked the participants if they had detected any educational value in the games or even in ones that we had just mentioned” (Session one).

“As they entered the venue, there was animated chattering which indicated comfort and familiarity, and which contrasted with their entrance the previous week when there had been tangible anxiety and tension as they had had no idea what to expect” (Session two).

The stories that the participants shared were also an indication of comfort. Below is an excerpt where Namhla shared a story from her teaching practice experience:

“I did not have a problem with playing, but my only problem was that I usually wore a weave [wig]. When we had practicals in class, the weave would move a bit back from my head, wanting to come off when I jumped. The learners would also see this and say to me “remove it Miss”, I would ignore them [laughter from others]. I ended up leaving practicals. When it was time for me to teach them, I would dictate and just tell them what to do and not do it myself” (Session one).

The group laughed, but she had shared the story without feeling embarrassed about the weave (wig) falling off and shared in the laughter. My observation indicated that she trusted the participants to share her story and laugh with her. The following excerpt illustrates our interaction during the I AM.../I AM NOT... activity.

“This activity elicited a lot of laughter from the participants as they started guessing who had given which answer as I read them aloud. Some laughed in disbelief at answers such as: ‘I AM 3 (slow to anger) as it was hard to believe that there was an individual among us who was slow to anger. This was a moment of comfort because it showed that the participants were getting more at ease with one another during the sessions as they were able to laugh with and not at one another. The participants were talking animatedly, agreeing and disagreeing with the answers I was reading out. I felt that this contributed significantly to creating rapport and a feeling of togetherness among the members of the group while forging friendships. In the earlier sessions I had noticed the beginning of some friendships among the participants, and their reaction to this activity confirmed this” (Session two).

The next excerpt highlights some of the casual conversations among us at the beginning of the sessions. I found these conversations cheerful and authentic and exuding moments of mutual happiness as we built rapport in our working relationship. Casual conversations often elicited laughter, giggles, chuckles, and smiles. I learnt that such chats can also bring comfort, especially when starting the research process or getting to know new students. As conversations are also a part of playful pedagogy, such amiable engagement can also be evoked and expected when integrating a playful teaching approach. I learnt to understand that the nature of informal conversations serves as a positive contribution to playful pedagogy, as such interactions not

only provide insight into the subject matter, but also into how the conversation itself formed part of playful pedagogy.

“Namhla was among the first to enter and she said jovially, “*Aw kwafika wena, kuqala M’am?*” (*Oh, you are the first one, M’am?*) and I jokingly responded, “*Ugqozi we-Namhla*” (*It’s the eagerness, Namhla*). Sandiso added as he sat down: “*Nathi usibona singena kuqale nje, M’am, ugqozi impela*” (*As you see us being the first ones to arrive, it’s eagerness*)” (Session five).

In my view, these excerpts I presented indicate an organic progression of comfort among us. The comfort I experienced was sometimes felt instantaneously as the moment occurred. At times, I only identified it when listening to the audio recordings or when reading the data representations. Analysing the data, I could identify certain words like ‘laughter’, ‘eagerness’, ‘rapport’, ‘giggles’, ‘smiles’, and ‘enjoyment’ that infused the sessions with a sense of comfort that affected the participants and myself, enabling the activities to progress.

Other moments of comfort were elicited by the activities the participants engaged in. It warmed my heart when I was able to identify that learning was occurring among them. In the different sessions, there were moments when I noticed the sharing of knowledge, and it was evident that the person who shared had learnt something from the session.

“Mhlengi said that he had once believed that playing had nothing to do with teaching, but now he could see, as a Creative Arts teacher, that playing games is useful for teaching and helped to build a good relationship with the learners” (Session five).

I was also comforted when the participants managed, through their insight, to connect whatever we were doing or discussing in our sessions with knowledge received in their formal learning. This could be knowledge from my classes or other classes. Witnessing knowledge sharing was also an indication of learning:

“...*I think all our sessions were very productive and I discovered something from it. It reminded me of one of the theories we learnt about last semester that learners always have prior knowledge*” (Nhlakanipho, Session eight).

“I was asked an important question by Siyandisa, which I believed resonated with many of the participants as it focused on teaching large classes. ...Before I could answer,

Themobile politely interjected, as she had experienced teaching 150 learners in Creative Arts during her teaching practice” (Session five).

Themobile shared the knowledge she had gained through an experience during teaching practice to answer Siyandisa’s question. Although I was present, they did not expect me to give all the answers. They managed to share the knowledge they had to assist one another to face their challenges. This is why I felt that we were all knowledge bearers, as the participants were confident that the knowledge they possessed could be shared. This was another comforting moment for me. Listening to the students sharing their opinions of the sessions in session eight was also an overall comforting experience. I was able to relate to their opinions about the sessions and how they felt about their participation:

“I personally learnt a lot from these sessions and kancane (gradually) it changes the way I think and also developed me as a teacher” (Ndumiso).

“I enjoyed the class, everything we did ingenze ngabona ukuthi (it made me see that) this class was important” (Milani).

“For me, the sessions were successful and very helpful and showed that we can even use indigenous games to teach and have clear understanding of why it has to be included in teaching, especially in Art” (Nhlakanipho).

“M’am, yonke nje le (all this) experience was really good, yabona nje senze izinto eziningi (we did a lot of things). Okunye nje ngiyafisa ukuthi besikwenza naseklasini ngoba kubalulekile kakhulu (I also wish that some of things we did here, we do in class as well because they were very important)” (Mhlengi).

“Thanks again for organizing this for us, M’am. Some of the challenges that I came across during my TP teaching Music art form and those difficult children and futhi ngikwazile ukukhuluma ngalokho lana ngaphinde ngalalela ozakwethu (also I got to speak about my experience and also listened to my peers)” (Themobile).

“In a way it answered a lot of questions in my head, and the games we did in class were very nostalgic and they reminded me what teaching Creative Arts is all about and also the challenges we, the Creative Arts teachers, face every day” (Zizwe).

“Namhlanje (today) I realised it’s not only about questioning but there are other ways

of teaching. I would also like to thank you for helping us because besingele sizicabangele sisodwa lezinto (we would not have thought of all this by ourselves)” (Thembani).

“I found it very interesting because I learnt that the things we did like creative writing, games, and hotseating can be used for academic purposes rather than playing for fun” (Yandisa).

“I think this program you started, M’am, is productive and helpful because now, as a teacher, we can teach learners some of the games as well esasizenza sisakhula, okuyinto ebesingakaze siycabange leyo njengothisha (we played growing up, which is something we would not think of as teachers)” (Namhla).

What I elicited from these responses was an overall sense of appreciation among the participants for partaking in this project. It was something they had not participated in before and they were appreciative of being there. This was indicated through multiple phrases like “ngiyabonga” (thank you) either when a participant started or ended sharing their session reflection. Their reflections made me realise that this process had not only been valuable to me, but to them as well. Sharing such positive views affirmed the value of these sessions and reminded me that this is how seeds are sown. Although I did not realise it then, as a preservice teacher in Liz’s classes I was guided to invest in learning, and seeds of playful pedagogy were sown in my consciousness. It was only five years later when I engaged in this doctoral study, and I now realise how those classes with Liz shaped my becoming as a teacher and teacher-educator.

The students’ reflections made me realise how playful activities can be used in research, as unpacking them can assist in quickly fostering a positive relationship with participants while allowing them and the researcher-participant to share parts of themselves without getting emotional or feeling scared or ashamed in any way. Playful activities provoke courage and open up learning possibilities that may not even have been envisioned or intended.

9.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the themes that emerged from the data and discussed my discoveries and learnings. I explored the key patterns that had been identified and discussed various themes, namely moments of comfort and discomfort and their role in our sessions; missed

opportunities that could not be explored during these sessions; and the impact of bilingualism on our conversations. I honestly acknowledged that my inexperience had caused some challenges and evaluated my learnings to suggest how I could have mitigated them. After fine-combing the data, I realised that the process had not only been valuable to me, but that it had also been a valuable learning experience for the preservice participants who were on the threshold of their careers in education. They frankly shared stories of their related experiences and participated enthusiastically in most activities, even when they were not very confident, like during the letter- and poetry-writing sessions. Afterwards, they admitted that these had been positive experiences as well.

I discussed some in-depth reflective realisations and learnings, such as that playful pedagogy is complex and multi-dimensional and that it may evoke a sense of discomfort in some or all participants. I also realised that discomfort, if not eased, may prohibit engagement or stifle the extent of enjoyment in participation in playful learning. I also explained that conversation may aid in sense-making and in processing the learnings gained from playful activities, arguing that the playful pedagogies we had engaged in clearly provided extended opportunities for learning by all the participants, myself included.

CHAPTER TEN – WEAVING A TAPESTRY OF PLAYFUL LEARNING

“...a way of life, not just a way of work.”

-Morris- (1979, p. 12)

10.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented the themes that emerged from the data were presented in Chapter three to Chapter eight. I expanded on my learning moments and what I had taken from those moments of learning. I presented the primary themes that emanated from the data, namely: silence in playful pedagogy, comfort and discomfort, and missed opportunities. I engaged with these themes to demonstrate my understandings and learnings through and about playful pedagogy and its importance for learning to enhance my teaching. In this chapter, I revisit and expand on the themes drawn from previous chapters. These themes are: the value of play in childhood, discomfort and comfort in playful pedagogy, and unlearning and becoming. I also integrate the knowledge of other scholars to illuminate and expand my understandings and knowledge of the emerging themes as identified during this investigation.

10.2 Unpacking the Value of Play in Childhood

10.2.1 The value of play in my childhood

Upon revisiting my childhood memories of play, I explored the role of play and how it had sustained me through the difficulties I encountered as a child. Play became a socio-cultural tool that brought the community together but, as I discovered, there were potential dangers associated with children’s play, thus parents imposed the necessary restrictions on play for their safety. My discoveries of play are: sustenance in childhood through play as a socio-communal activity, restrictions on play, and the dangers associated with play. These understandings ultimately led me to realise the significant value of play for children for their development and learning processes. Looking at the phenomenon of play through the teacher-educator lens, I now understand that play is a space that offers possibilities for playful learning approaches for both children as learners and adults as students and educators. My observations have broadened my view on play and shaped my lens on playful pedagogy. Studying my and the participants’ childhood memories and integrating my findings with relevant literature, I explore the impact that play has on children’s development and becoming. Moreover, having explored the data generated from the sessions with the participants, I believe there are possibilities for adult

learning through play, particularly when preservice teachers who need to transition from the preservice teacher environment to the professional setting of classroom education, are involved

10.2.2 Understanding play

Childhood play is a phenomenon that has been widely researched in various fields such as psychology, sport, and education. Pioneering theorists Friedrich Froebel (1782–1852), Donald W. Winnicott (1896–1971), Jean Piaget (1896 – 1980), and Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939) and others offered conceptual and empirical views on play which have widely inspired and influenced scholars to pursue research in various fields to expand knowledge on the concept of play. Some scholars like Garvey (1990), Pellegrini and Smith (2003), and Sutton-Smith et al. (1977) have offered explanations about play, and also described the characteristics that are associated with play activities. There are two dominant aspects that are often considered when explaining play: the activity and the environment (Beattie, 2015; Maynard & Waters, 2007). Barnett (1998b) believes that environment is of secondary importance, while Pellegrini et al. (2007, p. 263) view environment as of primary importance as “children sample their environment and through play learn and practice behaviours adaptive to that environment”. Play theorist Elizabeth Wood (2013) cautions other theorists to be mindful of how play is understood. She argues as follows:

“Definitions of play should take into account different contexts as well as the cultures, interests, affective states and preferences of children at different ages. What counts as play will vary according to what is being played, the choice of play activity, and the knowledge dispositions that children transfer from their home cultures and everyday experiences...” (Wood, 2013, p. 10).

I understand Elizabeth Wood’s definition of play as a warning for other scholars to consider how the activity and locality of play may differ among contexts. This difference should never disadvantage any play activity and its locality as that would disqualify other activities of play because they are played differently from what is accepted as play. Göncü and Gaskins (2007) and Göncü et al. (2007) support Wood’s argument as they present an understanding of play as a cultural activity that is different in various contexts, arguing that the culture within which that context is embedded determines what the play may be or may not be.

There has been plethora of research studies over many years that have contributed to explaining what constitutes play and how it impacts learning and the overall development of children. The

works of a few theorists (Caillois, 2001; Holmes & Hart, 2022; Paley, 2004; Jean Piaget, 1962) who have led the conversation on play in various fields underpin my understanding of what constitutes play. For instance, Paley (2004) explains that play is ‘the work of children’, while Piaget (1962) explains play as ‘the language of childhood’. Paley and Piaget thus explain play in simple yet holistic statements.

Play is also described as a non-literal activity that is intrinsically motivated and flexible in form and context; it brings pleasure and joy to the child (Krasnor, 1980; Zachariou & Whitebread, 2015). It is an intrinsically motivated activity that focuses on the process rather than the outcomes (Holmes & Hart, 2022), but this is not to say that the outcomes are unimportant. Caillois (2001, p. 6) explains that play is a “free and voluntary activity, a source of joy and amusement”. In my understanding, all these authors view play as an essential activity that children are self-motivated to engage in. I also understand, through their statements, that play places emphasis on process and how the play activity occurs, notwithstanding the importance of what it may produce. Moreover, Caillois (2001) agrees that the activity of play is something that brings joy to children as it is unrestrictive and played willingly.

10.2.3 The well-being of children at play

Well-being is an important concept that speaks to the holistic state of being of an individual. There are various explanations to understand well-being, and I share a few of them. The American Psychological Association (APA) Dictionary of Psychology (n.d.) explains well-being as “a state of happiness and contentment, with low levels of distress, overall good physical and mental health and outlook, or good quality of life”. Davis (2019) explains well-being as “the experience of health, happiness, and prosperity”, while Ruggeri et al. (2020, p. 1) describe well-being as “the experience of positive emotions such as happiness and contentment as well as the development of one’s potential, having some control over one’s life, having a sense of purpose, and experiencing positive relationships”. The Global Wellness Institute (n.d.) explains that well-being is “the active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health”, whereas Schwartz et al. (2015) express that well-being is an umbrella term that refers to a set of indicators of positive functioning. According to authors such as Swann Jr et al. (2007), these indicators include self-esteem and the meaning of life (Steger et al., 2013), subjective well-being (e.g., life satisfaction) (Pavot & Diener, 1993), psycho-logical well-being (competence, mastery, and the ability to meet the demands of daily

life) (Ryff & Keyes, 1995), and eudaimonic well-being (discovering and actualizing one's highest potential) (Waterman & Schwartz, 2013).

Considering the above views on well-being, I understand it as a state of being that encapsulates the individual's holistic state. With these definitions in mind, I demonstrate in the following section how play may contribute to the well-being of children. There are three developmental aspects that contribute to the development of well-being, which are physical, mental, and psychosocial development. Figure 32 is my depiction of well-being, as all three these attributes are related to play.

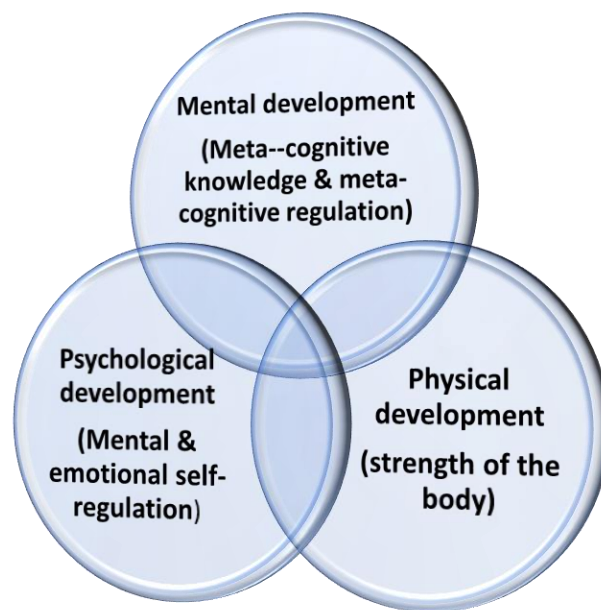


Figure 32: Diagrammatic presentation of well-being in children

As a universal activity, play occupies the mind and body of the child, which further aids in his/her holistic mental and psychological development (Barblett, 2010). The body of the child engages in play as a physical activity which contributes to the development of various physical abilities, including but not limited to locomotor abilities for the mastery of activities such as jumping, running, kicking, hopping, and tumbling. Physically, through play children also have opportunities to learn rhythm and master their kinaesthetic and fine motor skills. They develop bone and muscle strength as they exercise their bodies by playing and they develop muscle memory through the various games and activities of play they engage in (Zosh et al., 2022). In the memories I presented in Chapter three and Chapter four, the games I elaborated on were games that required high physical activity from the players. In my childhood, *uqithi* required

jumping from a tree, running away from the other player chasing you, or running toward the tree to climb it. *uDonkey* was another game that required a lot of running, either toward the ball if your number was called or away from it if someone else's number was called. Our bodies were engaged as we played with our childhood friends, and we consequently grew muscle strength, mastered locomotor and non-locomotor movements, and hurt our bodies through play (as I did multiple times by falling out of a tree). Without being aware of it, we were growing mentally, physically, and psychologically while we played.

Play is vital for a child's mental development (cognition) and psychological (self-regulation) well-being (McInnes et al., 2009). During play, children demonstrate increased self-regulation (Whitebread, 2010) which is an "internal mechanism that enables one to engage in mindful, intentional and thoughtful behaviours" (Bodrova & Leong, 2008, p. 1). Whitebread et al. (2007, p. 437) explain self-regulation as "the traditional concept regarding the monitoring and control of individual performance, or intrapersonal regulation". I understand self-regulation as the ability children develop generally from an early age where they are able to make metacognitive decisions to govern and control their physical, emotional, and mental decisions without the assistance of another, like an adult. Some of the indications of a developing self-regulatory child are displaying the ability to remember information, processing information, and making predetermined decisions based on information received to positively display empathy, affection, confidence, and self-control (Bodrova & Leong, 2008; Whitebread & Neale, 2020; Zachariou & Whitebread, 2015). Self-regulation is two-folded. Firstly, it is the ability one has to prohibit oneself from doing something even if one desires to but, due to circumstances, one will not. For example, a child will wait its turn during an activity. Secondly, it is to have the ability to do something for oneself and others even if one does not desire to, but one will do so against one's desire because of the circumstance. For example, sharing a favourite toy with another child who may or may not be one's friend (Bodrova & Leong, 2008).

Drawing on my childhood memory, I sought to identify the ability of self-regulation. I reflected on the two games, *uqithi* and *udonkey*, as playing them were based on activities in which self-regulation was acquired and/or developed. Looking at how these games were played as elaborated in Chapter three, there were some indications of self-regulation that I detail below.

During playing *uqithi*, we had to be mindful of how we played the game. We collaborated in choosing a tree, considering how many could climb it and our 'escape opportunities' depending how many branches it had. We did not choose trees with few branches as that would potentially

cause a commotion when so many kids tried to climb the tree at the same time. This choice presented us with options: which branch to climb to without being crowded by other players; how high the branch was from the ground if we had to escape; and how sturdy it was to bear our weight. We also set parameters collectively such as how far the stick could be placed from the tree and limiting the escape routes (trees) to only the yard in which we played. The parameters were thoughtful and gave the chaser and the one being chased a fair chance of running a limited distance. In my assessment, the game was fair and was played with mindful, thoughtful, and intentional behaviours, in keeping with Bodrova and Leong's (2008) explanation of self-regulation.

Another example of self-regulation from my childhood was the times when we played in our yard. The site was popular because it was bigger than those of others. Therefore, even though my mother continuously forbade us to play there, we persisted in using it. Cleaning up our play accessories, quickly running from the yard when my mother approached, and allowing the dust to settle (which always gave us away) indicated mindfulness. Cleaning up the yard and stopping the game abruptly so that we would not be scolded by my mother were deliberate and thoughtful actions. In my view, the intent associated with these acts was another demonstration of self-regulation.

Elaborating on self-regulation, Zachariou and Whitebread (2015) detail the three elements that stem from mental development which are also significant for self-regulation. These are: metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive regulation, and emotional and motivational regulation. Metacognitive knowledge is a person's ability to receive and retain information that affects cognitive performance. Therefore, metacognitive regulation is a person's ability to process through monitoring, control, and the evaluation of information and activities; i.e., what is taking place in the moment. Conversely, emotional and motivational regulation refers to a person's ability to monitor and take control of their emotions and motivation at a particular time (Corno, 2013; Zachariou & Whitebread, 2015; Zimmerman, 2000). Whitebread et al. (2009) conducted a study to determine how play contributed to metacognitive development and self-regulatory skills in children, and present empirical evidence that demonstrates how play is significant for children as it has the benefits of increased creativity and the development of problem-solving skills. Other studies (Blair & Razza, 2007; Veenman & Spaans, 2005) have also presented empirical evidence on the meta-cognitive skills developed by children, showing how their intelligence and their memory performance increased with age. This ability to

“inhibit one behaviour and engage in a particular behaviour on demand is a skill used not just in social interactions (emotional self-regulation), but in thinking (cognitive self-regulation) as well” (Bodrova & Leong, 2008, p. 1).

Again drawing from my memory of childhood, I focused on our excursions to collect sugarcane. As children, we were forbidden to go into the sugarcane fields because it was dangerous in various ways. It was far and the journey included passing through bushy fields and a deep quarry pool. There was danger in cutting the sugarcane as it was illegal and there were punitive consequences if caught by the field workers. Nevertheless, we still pursued the activity, making the choice to go together against many warnings and risks posed by the activity. To mitigate the risk, we made provisions. We devised ways to cross or pass the quarry and its deep pool, sourced money to buy a pint of milk to appease the multi-headed monster, and walked between the sugarcane rows and not on the designated path to avoid being spotted by the field workers. These measures are an example of our demonstrated ability to process information about collecting sugarcane as we assessed the risks and devised solutions to the challenges to lessen our fear.

In pursuit of play activities that were directed and played on our terms, our actions could be misconstrued as disrespect or defiance as we did not listen to our parents’ instructions. However, our play can be also interpreted as an indication of self-confidence, self-learning, and a growing ability to make decisions by ourselves, stick with them, and accept the consequences. I believe that our play was also an indication of resilience, which was an essential characteristic in my self during my childhood. Having resilience is associated with self-regulation and metacognition and is important in the psychological and mental development of children. In my understanding, venturing against many odds to the sugarcane fields was an example of metacognitive and emotional regulation.

Emotional self-regulation and cognitive self-regulation comprise similar elements (Bodrova & Leong, 2008). This means that when children grow in age and in self-regulation, they also grow their ability to take control of their thinking and feelings – as we did when we took charge of our emotions and decided to venture to the fields to collect sugarcane. We thus reduced risk in ways that we knew how. Some benefits of adequately self-regulated children are the ability to delay gratification, to be compassionate, and to either suppress or evoke feelings and thoughts that may assist them in dealing with difficult situations. They also have the ability to think ahead and predetermine the benefits and consequences of the decisions they make. Children

who do not have opportunities to develop self-regulation or who fail in their attempts without receiving guidance may be at risk, as the relevant brain areas may not develop optimally to gain self-regulatory ability in their thinking and in managing their feelings. That is why it is important for children to play regardless of their context (Skelton, 2009), because when children engage in play they develop and demonstrate increased metacognition and self-regulation (Whitebread, 2010), which I believe manifested when my mates and I engaged in the sugarcane-cutting activity.

10.2.4 Playing regardless of adversity

In the following section I explore play engagement despite difficult contexts. My motivation for including this section is that I had childhood experiences of adversity that played a role in my life at that time. As a child, I faced difficult contexts and situations as detailed in the sections on my childhood memories. However, I managed to play *through* and *regardless* of all these adversities. Briefly, these were living in foster homes, being separated from my parents, hurting my body, and dealing with the adverse conditions that emerged as a consequence.

Fearn and Howard (2012) state that play is an important activity for children faced with adverse situations such as war, poverty, abandonment, or other distressful situations that plague children globally. In Ng'asike's (2022) study on the impact of poverty on children's play in Kenya, he details that growing up in a poverty-stricken community, forces children to accept the responsibility to look after themselves, keep themselves busy, and learn independence at an early age to be able to live in such challenging circumstances. Play is then one of the ways children occupy themselves during the day in the absence of their parents, unaware of the multiple benefits it brings to their development (Ng'asike, 2022). Therefore, in such cases, lacking the privilege of owning manufactured toys, children construct play materials or use their bodies to play (Prinsloo, 2015). I concur with Ng'asike's notion because as a child I grew up in a township where we had to learn to look after ourselves from an early age. My mother gave instructions and allocated chores to her daughters when we were very young. When I started preschool, I was responsible for washing my undervest and underwear and polishing my shoes. I was also responsible for taking out my lunchbox from my bag and washing it. In addition to the lunchbox, every glass, plate, bowl or dish I ate from outside the designated breakfast, lunch and supper times was my responsibility and I had to wash it. Playing outside with other children was better than watching television because if my mother was at home, she needed her space to clean the house without us. And watching television was generally not

encouraged for children. The instructions we received became our tool to gain independence. They were also supposed to guard us in the absence of our parents, but we rarely followed them to the letter.

When children face stressful situations or live under challenging circumstances, play becomes a way to escape reality. They engage increasingly with their imagination and enter a world of fantasy as forms of escapism or to temporarily create a new reality in their minds. This decreases their anxiety and assists them to live in their reality. Through play, children are also able to develop and devise coping mechanisms that are adapted to rise above their challenges (Felix et al., 2006). They may also create opportunities to play where they can re-enact, mitigate and diffuse the challenging situations they are faced with and to release their anxiety (Bateman et al., 2013; Little et al., 2009). Through socio-dramatic play, they are able to “re-enact specific traumatic events in their play so that they are able to gain control over any negative effects” (Bateman et al., 2013, p. 204). They also develop physical strength, fine and gross motor skills, and body muscle through the games they play (Lester & Russell, 2010). In Petriwskyj’s (2013) reflective study following a natural disaster in Australia, she details how the children who had experienced this natural disaster were able to rebuild their confidence and develop increased resilience through play. They were also able to decrease their sense of fear in the environment and find security in their place as they continually played different games which allowed them to trust the space which had been the cause of their instability and trauma. This is why it is crucial for children to play as they discover and grow in their agency and self-regulation. The promotion of children’s play is important for the development of children’s agency and their overall well-being, as this contributes to their self-worth and self-esteem (Howard & McInnes, 2013; Mashford-Scott & Church, 2011). Moreover, psychologically healthy children have an increased ability to articulate and master important aspects of their lives that may otherwise cause strain (Barnett, 1998b).

Having processed this information, I understand the impact play may have on children who live in challenging circumstances and why it is also important for children to continue playing regardless of their challenges and context. “Children who cannot play (in the full sense of the word) are at a disadvantage when it comes to making [forging] relationships and tackling new learning tasks” (Youell, 2008, p. 125). Their opportunities to develop their self-regulation and other crucial abilities are reduced by their inability to play. Reflecting on my childhood play through my engagement with the literature, I gained deep understanding of the meaning and

impact of play in my childhood against the challenges of residential instability, separation from my parents, and the instability of parental care that I faced as a child. The resilience I developed by continually playing in the neighbourhoods I moved to and in school provided an advantage and opportunities for my psycho-social and emotional development. Through continuing to play regardless of my context and situation, I was able to progress in my psychological development, which I believe contributed to building resilience.

I believe that resilience is pivotal to well-being and that the ability to deal with difficulties/adversities also positively contributes to well-being. I believe that I developed the attribute of resilience as a child because of the difficulties I faced, and that it was this trait that assisted me in weathering adversity. Resilience is a psychological concept that has been widely researched. It can be simply explained as a person's ability to "bounce back following negative emotional experiences, and demonstrating flexibility in response to changing situational demands" (Denovan & Macaskill, 2017, p. 854). Clinically, it is defined as the ability to recover from adversity and react adaptively to stressful situations (Sisto et al., 2019). It is an important psychological trait as it supports a human's holistic development, and those who are able to develop resilience are able to experience subjective well-being as they possess the ability to overcome difficult situations when they have to face them (Pavot & Diener, 1993).

10.2.5 The atmosphere of play

Play theorists who have led the discussion on play have widely researched the activity of play, such as what is done during play, the effects of play on a child (Bogopa, 2012; Oliver & Klugman, 2002; Pellegrini & Smith, 1998) and the environment (geographical and physical conditions) where the play takes place (Howarth, 1988; Vickerius & Sandberg, 2006; Waller, 2014). He (2018) focused and expanded on the atmosphere or ambience created during play. In my view, atmosphere does not refer only to the physical conditions, but to the intangible conditions that are created by the nature and experience of the play activity. I thus understand that the intangible conditions that are influenced by the play activity as well as the participants and the physical conditions produce the atmosphere that permeates play. The atmosphere becomes a product of play, which is an idea that He (2018) supports.

My idea of play is that it is a space of production where atmosphere is produced during play, and this atmosphere affects the players in various ways. The ideas of Lefebvre (1991), a pioneering theorist on play, focus on knowledge about what space is and what it produces.

These ideas have been expanded by many other theorists into multiple disciplines such as architecture, sociology, economics, the performing arts, and many others. In essence, Lefebvre's (1991) ideas about space detail that space is not natural; it is produced by humans, their actions, and the consequences thereof. While reviewing Lefebvre's book titled *The production of space*, Molotch (1993, p. 887) explains space as follows: "Space is produced and reproduced through human intentions, even if unanticipated consequences also develop, and even as space constrains and influences those producing it". As Lefebvre's work was lengthy and sophisticated, Fuchs (2018, p. 7), in the unpacking of his work, selects short phrases from Lefebvre's book to simplify the ideas about space. He writes:

"Space is not a thing (p. 73) and not a container (p. 94). It is a product and a means of production (p. 85). Human beings have a space and (...) are in this space (p. 294, emphasis in the original). Space is neither subject nor object (p. 92). It is a social reality and a set of relations and forms (p. 116)."

Three key interrelated aspects of space are identified by Lefebvre (1991), namely representations of space (conceived space), which are planning concepts, theories, visualizations; spatial practices (perceived spaces) which are the concrete, daily behaviours of people in space; and spaces of representation (lived space) which is perceived through our senses. Spaces of representation are lived spaces formed by having inhabitants and users in the space. They are felt by people and include emotions, atmosphere, myths, and symbols (Spies, 2018). They are also a social product of the society and indicate an inextricable relationship between the social space and its inhabitants (Fuchs, 2018; Watkins, 2005). Representations of space are the dominant spaces in society. These spaces refer to how we understand space through our knowledge (Fuchs, 2018). This knowledge, as Lefebvre explains, is "a mixture of understanding and ideology" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 41). Spatial practices develop from production and reproduction. The perceived space in essence refers to the way in which we perceive the world through our senses, and through being in the world (Fuchs, 2018).

Play spaces are produced by children through their spatial practices (Spies, 2018), and play spatial practices from the activity and environment produce atmosphere, which is the representational space of play. Spatial practices also produce feelings or thoughts within children that may produce increased liking for the activity, the environment, and the participants (Spies, 2018). This atmosphere, I believe, has the ability to affect a child's psycho-social development as atmosphere has qualities that produce emphatic and affective capacities.

In play, children are the ‘makers’ of their space (Spies, 2018 p. 7) while they also demonstrate their social relations and representational spatial practices that produce and aid their psychosocial abilities. In play, children are the “insiders and participants” (Pallasmaa, 2016, p. 127) because of their “omnidirectional, multisensory, embodied and emotive encounters” (Pallasmaa, 2016, p. 129). Play is their work of art and, as art, play should be open to intellectual and emotional interpretations. In essence, atmosphere forms part of an emotional production from the playing child, extending it from the activity and the environment.

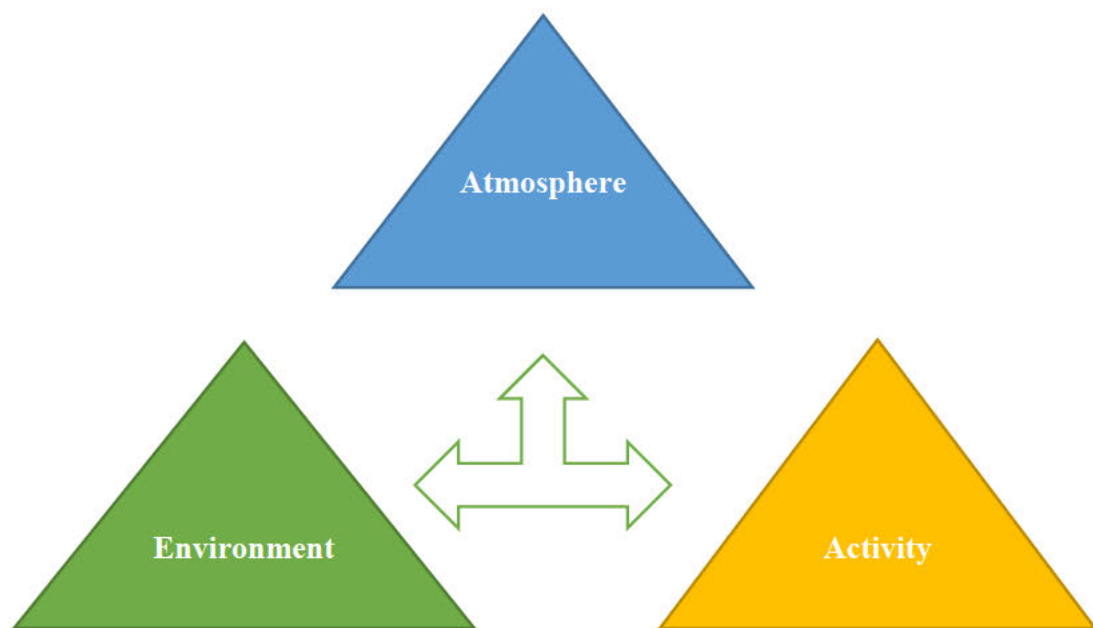


Figure 33: The play spatial triad

Based on her research on play, Larsen (2015), like many other scholars, refers to two important pillars of play: the activity and the environment, and she refers to this relationship as “*play as the spatial dyad*” (Larsen, 2015, p. 184). In this section of her research article, she identifies the first layer of the dyad to be the area where play takes place and the second to be the activity that takes place, thus constituting play or playing. Having considered the works of the other scholars above, I believe that atmosphere is the third important aspect of play as I identified the opportunities created by play for psychological and physical development and understand how my development was influenced by play (see Figure 33). I believe that there are atmospheric properties within play that are charged when children play, and that they offer various possibilities for children’s development. Therefore, in extension of Larsen’s (2015) idea of play as the spatial dyad, I include atmosphere as another important aspect, extending the spatial dyad as a triad that includes activity, environment, and atmosphere.

10.3 Playful Pedagogy in Teacher Education

Under this theme, I expand on playful pedagogy as a concept, drawing on other scholarly voices and my discoveries from the data analysis. I also unpack playful pedagogy further through a synthesis of literature and my analytic discoveries about comfort and discomfort within playful pedagogy. Lastly, I integrate the discussion of playful pedagogy into the context of teaching and teacher education.

Playful pedagogy and/or a play-based teaching approach has been widely researched and its integration has been advocated within the early years, kindergarten, and primary schooling (Barblett, 2010; Cheung et al., 2022; Wood, 2005). Its benefits for children in their learning and their mental and physical development have also been empirically demonstrated and presented through various research sites such as journal articles, blogs, books, and even in online videos. The high dissemination of this knowledge has made it possible for teachers and other interested parties with little or no training in playful pedagogies to find relevant playful methods and practices they can integrate episodically into their teaching (Bennett, 1997). Moreover, a growing number of teachers are finding moments that are relevant for playful approaches in their classrooms such as using ice-breaker games to begin a lesson or using drawings, pictures, and multimedia to improve the quality of their teaching (Canaslan-Akyar & Sevimli-Celik, 2022). These efforts to incorporate creative and playful methods into their teaching are significant acts that indicate teachers' interest in improving their teaching capabilities and the learning experience of the learners they teach.

Playful pedagogy is a growing phenomenon among play theorists who have made various scholarly contributions to explain what playful pedagogy is and to simplify understanding of playful pedagogy through research. Harvard university's Project Zero research team (Mardell et al., 2016, p. 2) has contributed to this field by describing playful pedagogy as "a systematic approach to the practice of playful learning and teaching". Wood (2005, p. 27), in her book *Play, learning and the early childhood curriculum* explains playful pedagogy as "the ways in which early childhood professionals make provision for play and playful approaches to learning and teaching, how they design play/learning environments, and all the pedagogical decisions, techniques and strategies they use to support or enhance learning and teaching through play". Pyle and Danniels (2017, p. 276) explain that it is "a teaching approach involving playful, child-directed elements along with some degree of adult guidance and scaffolded learning objectives". Having perused these explanations and other literature on

playful pedagogy, I understand it simply as a teaching approach with a playful methodological approach to teaching and learning.

In the context of this study, playful pedagogy was studied in a teacher education institution with preservice teachers as participants and myself as the novice teacher-educator. My focus on playful pedagogy is thus imbued within the parameters of adults who are teacher-educators and preservice teachers within a teacher education institution. This is because, as mentioned earlier, the concept of play and playful pedagogy emanates largely from children and primary school education, but through its wideness, it has transitioned into higher education and adult playfulness.

Narrowing the focus of playful pedagogy onto adults, particularly teachers, academics and students (i.e., preservice teachers), my research placed emphasis on the playfulness of the participants (a teacher-educator and students) as the activity and environment were already determined. The element of playfulness was added in an existing space where the activities (teaching and learning) and locality (classroom or lecture room) were predetermined. Unlike in children's play where children create their activity and choose their environment, I needed to ask: "What can a playful approach bring to the teaching and learning of preservice teachers and teacher-educators?"

10.3.1 Understanding playfulness

Drawing from the literature and the data, I explain scholarly understandings of playfulness here as they are significant in the conversation on playful pedagogy. Playfulness can be understood as a multidimensional personality and an attitude that constitutes particular traits within that personality (Holmes & Hart, 2022; Liu et al., 2017; Wallin et al., 2021). These traits are: imagination, curiosity, openness, humour, emotional expressiveness, novelty-seeking, and communicativeness (Barnett, 1998a, 2007; Barnett, 2017). Based on her extensive research on playfulness, Lynn Barnett (1990) identifies five playful dimensions that assist researchers in determining the playful traits of a person, which are: cognitive spontaneity, social spontaneity, physical spontaneity, manifestation of joy, and a sense of humour (Barnett, 1990). Other researchers (Linde, 2021; Magnuson & Barnett, 2013; Proyer et al., 2019; Yue et al., 2016) also describe similar traits of playfulness.

I believe that being a playful person carries other positive traits as well. Yue et al. (2016) argue that there is a link between playfulness, happiness, and humour among adults who are playful,

and that these traits increase in workplace performance. Proyer et al. (2019) found a connection between playfulness and satisfaction, arguing that being playful increases creativity among playful adults and engenders relationship satisfaction. Magnuson and Barnett (2013) state that being playful has a positive influence on coping with stress, while Waldman-Levi et al. (2015) posit that being playful positively contributes to healthy ageing.

It has been argued that the concept of playfulness, as demonstrated earlier in Barnett's (1998a) five playful dimensions, is paradoxical and multifaceted (Linde, 2021) as it presents both advantages and challenges. In my understanding, the paradox lies in the challenge that play was historically not deeply understood, and it thus took scholars decades to unpack it. This has caused the discussion on playfulness to come at a late stage after much literature has been generated on play. As scholars continue to present empirical and conceptual understandings of what constitutes play and how play is important to society, the discussion on being playful also moves forward and draws it into the phenomenon of teaching and learning. The multifariousness of the concept of playfulness lies in the various traits that researchers have discovered in their research of playfulness – such as Barnett's (1990) five playful dimensions. The multifariousness concept of playfulness can also present either a challenge or an opportunity for teacher-educators. It can be a challenge because some may not be able to develop activities that will engage, evoke, or build playful traits, while others may identify these multiple traits as an opportunity to explore various ways to engage or evoke playful traits within themselves through teaching and within students through their learning.

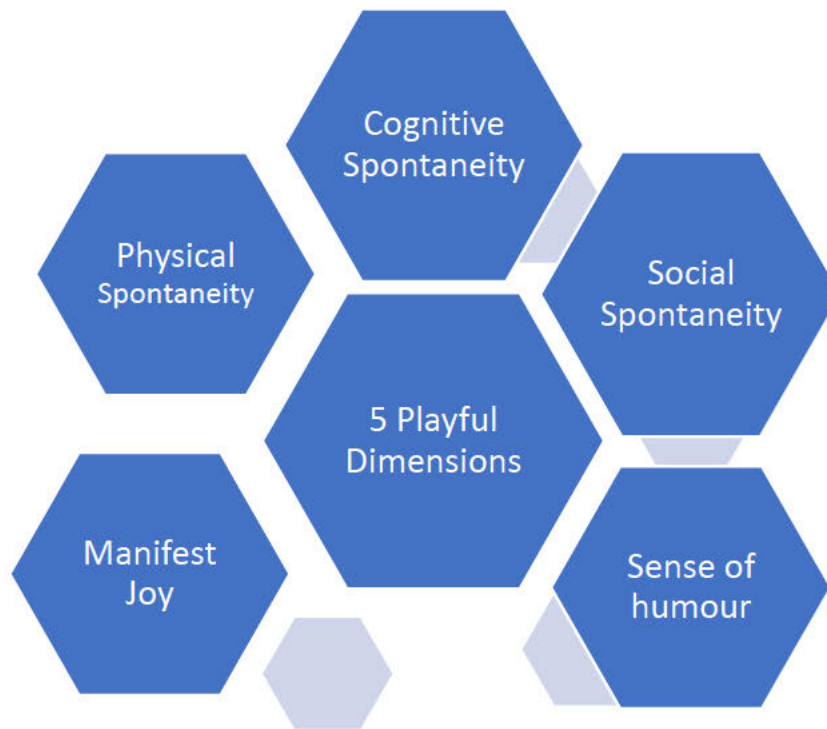


Figure 34: Barnett's (1990) five playful dimensions

10.3.2 Playful Creative Arts preservice teachers and their teacher-educator

Upon considering these playful dimensions to describe a playful person, I understand a playful person as someone who is a conversation starter, not shy, not easily intimidated by the presence of others, and a friendly person with intrapersonal skills that contribute to the person's social spontaneity. Also unpacking cognitive spontaneity in playfulness, it is someone who is able to speak first or speak up among other people, and who is unafraid to share their thoughts among people regardless of the outcome (such as giving the right or wrong answer in a classroom context). The physical spontaneity of a playful person, I believe, includes the ability to engage in a physical activity other than basic activities such as walking, and it is someone who is unafraid to engage in a rehearsed or impromptu physical activity with or in front of others. This is also a person who has the ability to find joy and have fun in the activity through participation or engaging with co-participants. Lastly, this person has a sense of humour and has the ability to share or be the butt of a joke without rising to anger. He or she is also able to identify a humorous moment during an activity. With reference to their research on play and emotional intelligence, Holmes and Hart (2022) emphasise that a playful person should have the ability

to possess and develop a significant level of emotional intelligence and to be able to regulate their emotions and process through the playful activities that s/he engages in. The latter, according to Holmes and Hart (2022), is one trait that will contribute to the success of playful activities.

Describing a playful person, Staempfli (2007, p. 394) elaborates that such a person “is guided by internal motivation, an orientation towards process with self-imposed goals, a tendency to attribute their meaning to objects or behaviours, a focus on pretence and non-literality, a freedom from externally imposed rules, and active involvement”. This explanation indicates that being playful is a personality trait that a person can exhibit as an adult regardless of their context even outside the classroom. It is within most persons’ ability to have self-imposed goals, determine their objectives, be focused, and determine the extent of their involvement in any given activity. Therefore, being playful as a teacher or a teacher-educator is a trait that should be welcomed in the classroom or lecture room without seeing it as a nuisance, silly, or ill-behaviour. It is a trait that can be harnessed and redirected positively within the learning context.

Reflecting on my past, I realise that I was a playful child as I always found ways to keep playing even when I lived in a foster home where I was forbidden to play. However, as an undergraduate university student I was conservative and considered an introvert. I believe that this demeanour was due to my past traumatic experiences. The labels that I was allocated were “she’s quiet”, “she chooses safe roles”, or “she’s nice”. Unknowingly, I suffered from depression throughout my undergraduate studies, but in Drama school I embraced playful learning approaches and really crept out of my shell as a preservice teacher to find myself again. Through intensive therapy, I made self-discoveries and began to see I had been an extrovert trapped in trauma all along.

Thinking of the participants of this study and recalling their level of playfulness, it seems plausible to argue that most of them were playful. I identified this trait through the confidence that was so soon evident in many on the first day after we had spent some time together. Their ability to play games, speak up, and share their stories without visible fear was heartening. I also identified this through the willingness to play the games in our first session, participating with or without a partner, and expressing their feelings whether they felt discomforted or not. I also identified this trait in our ongoing sessions through the light conversations we would share as they walked into the venue, the jokes some made during the sessions, and some of the

embarrassing stories they had no problem sharing with the rest of the participants. Some were less playful and I identified this as they spoke only when required, participated when invited, and did not offer to be first in any activity or volunteer an answer first. I believe these participants admired other playful personalities and wanted to be part of the activities, but they were not outgoing enough to volunteer. However, they admired and took the lead from those who did. In essence, their personalities were such that they did not obstruct or refrain from any activities. They were also not a separate study topic and their presence and participation were enough.

10.4 Learnings from Liz

As a novice teacher-educator, I identified emerging lessons from Liz's personality and teaching practice. In my memory as a student-teacher, I noted with gratitude the influence of her teaching on my practice as a novice school teacher and teacher-educator. I was also filled with gratitude for the personal support she had offered me, and I understood how the impact of her support had sustained me during my time as a preservice teacher. I learnt from her the importance of compassion for students as teacher-educators and I also learnt about modelling and meta-teaching skills and how such teaching methods can deepen a lesson and enhance learning. Furthermore, I learnt how the confidence of a teacher-educator allows for the lesson to be used as a site of inquiry (Crowe & Berry, 2007), which engages the preservice teacher in pedagogical reasoning. Below are my expanded reflections on the lessons I learnt from this memory.

10.4.1 Be an interested teacher-educator involved in learning

From my memory, I realised that Liz's interest in her students' learning was profound. The emphasis on and the success of her lesson were not only about teaching, but about learning. She walked the learning journey with her students. As a preservice teacher, I could not at the time connect Liz's interest in my learning as one of the threads that sustained me. However, being older and as a novice teacher-educator, I can now make that connection and acknowledge its depth. However, her ability to have students gravitate towards her is something I am still trying to understand as a teacher-educator. I realised though, that her compassion was one of the traits that drew students to her. From this memory, I have learnt to strive to show interest in my student's learning. Genuine interest in their learning may create a mindset in students that focuses on successful possibilities.

10.4.2 Model your teaching

From this memory, I also learnt how Liz taught through playful pedagogy and not explicitly about it. As students, we were not intently aware of how she was teaching even though she engaged us at a meta-cognitive level. However, today her influence permeates through my teaching (and maybe that of many of her students). When I began teaching Creative Arts as a high school teacher, I utilised playful teaching without intent. I taught how I had been taught as a preservice teacher, and I was not aware of it. Although I was unaware of Liz's influence on my teaching at the time, my lack of awareness did not block her influence on me.

Now, as a teacher-educator and an emerging scholar, I realise the necessity and power of modelling one's teaching through practice. The necessity for playful pedagogy lies in it being both a method to teach *in* but also a method to teach *about*. In that way, preservice teachers get the learning experience of the pedagogy and understand it as a concept, which allows unpacking and discussing playful pedagogy. These conversations may assist students to be conscious of the pedagogical decisions they make in their teaching practice as they decide how to and in what ways to integrate playful pedagogy in their lessons, which means that they may then begin to teach *through* it. It also means they may be possibilities for preservice teachers to make connections between the demonstrative and conceptual knowledge of playful pedagogy, allowing them to weave their pedagogy through abstract conceptualisation.

Abstract conceptualisation is the stage in Kolb's (1984) four-part learning cycle where a student (i) has received the experience of learning (concrete experience), (ii) has reflected on the experience and knowledge received (reflective observation), and (iii) is faced with making decisions based on what they have received. Then, the student (iv) assimilates the knowledge and experience and decides how this knowledge may be implemented through active experimentation. Drawing from this cycle, teaching *about* and *through* playful pedagogy may offer students various opportunities for conceptualising how they might integrate playful pedagogy in their practice during their practice teaching and their professional practice.

10.4.3 Creating the Student-teacher experience for Creative Arts Teaching

Reflecting on the times when Liz sent her students to a school and be taught in a Creative Arts classroom by a Creative Arts teacher, I am inspired to seek ways to cultivate rich experiences for the students in my classroom. Liz taught Creative Arts in a lecture room that was not designated for this discipline, therefore she could not create a visually appealing classroom.

However, knowing the importance of having this experience, she found another way to open our eyes to the wonder of the Creative Arts experience in a classroom. Currently, I teach Creative Arts in a designated classroom where only art subjects are taught. Therefore, I can transform the classroom into a visually stimulating space that exudes the atmosphere of the Creative Arts. I need to share this activity by involving my preservice teachers in the process of reimagining the Creative Arts classroom and working collaboratively towards recreating the space. Having reflected on this memory, I acknowledge the need to take a fresh look at my teaching space and transform it to create a place that contributes to the learning experiences of the preservice teachers who attend my classes. I need to inspire my Creative Arts preservice teachers to imagine what a Creative Arts classroom should look like regardless of the experiences (positive or negative) that they may have encountered during their teaching practice. My reflection of this memory has taught me to assist my preservice teachers in *seeing* what a creative arts classroom may look like and not to shift their vision to their teaching practice experience of a boring classroom, as some schools do not have designated art-based classrooms.

10.5 Delving into Comfort and Discomfort as Factors in Playful Pedagogy

Having established that the participants in this study were engaged and had playful or admired playful personalities, in this section I discuss the issues of comfort and discomfort in playful pedagogy as a fundamental emerging theme in this study. As evidenced in the data presentation and analysis sections, there were moments of comfort and discomfort during our sessions. Briefly, the moments of discomfort occurred during the recruitment phase when I was anxious as a novice researcher and did not know what to expect. Fear of the unknown also evoked a sense of discomfort in the participants at our first meeting, as none had ever been participants in a research study before. Other moments when discomfort was experienced included the letter-writing activity, being required to play games in unsuitable clothing, and when some participants shared empathy-provoking stories. All these moments were infused with various shades of discomfort in the participants and in myself.

However, there were also moments when a sense of comfort eased the tension during the data generation sessions. Both the participants and I experienced this sensation such as when I was witnessing the enjoyment the participants exuded when engaging in an activity, when they were sharing their stories, and during our discussions when there were laughter and smiles. In my view, the often-deep level of their engagement was a testament of their sense of comfort, and

witnessing this made me feel comforted as well. Moreover, our ability to converse in both IsiZulu and English at will eased any tensions about a possible language barrier, and the sharing of food was a bond that exuded an atmosphere of comfortable friendship.

In my attempt to understand discomfort and comfort as expounded in the literature, I was inspired by the research conducted by Cohen-Lazry et al. (2022) on discomfort and Kolcaba's (1994) comfort theory. The research on discomfort extensively covered past explanations of discomfort, misinterpretations about it, and offered valuable and pertinent descriptions of discomfort. Cohen-Lazry et al. (2022) corroborate a notion expressed by de Looze et al. (2003) that comfort and discomfort are subjective feelings. De Looze et al. (2003) identified three issues of discomfort that Cohen-Lazry et al. (2022) extended to four in their discomfort model. These four issues are as follows: "(1) Dis/comfort is a construct of a subjectively defined personal nature; (2) dis/comfort is affected by factors of a various nature (physical, physiological, psychological); and (3) dis/comfort is a reaction to the environment" (De Looze et al., 2003, p. 986). In the fourth instance, (4) "...dis/comfort results from the interaction between an individual's subjective perception of external stimuli and their internal needs and expectations" (Cohen-Lazry et al., 2022, p. 4).

These four issues are themes Cohen-Lazry et al. (2022) used in their discomfort model and are also my perceived understanding of discomfort. From my childhood memories, I identified moments of discomfort that occurred during play which were also harmful to us as children. These were: playing *uqithi* and breaking either of my arms three times, venturing far from home to cut sugarcane and being aware of the dangers of this activity, and playing *ufihla bande* (hiding the belt) that was fraught with the danger of potential sexual violence. I realise that the danger we placed ourselves in as children and the feelings of discomfort associated with these experiences were brought upon ourselves. Realising that playful experiences may be harmful, as a teacher-educator or teacher it is important to have the same awareness when teaching and to be mindful of activities that may expose students to physical or psychological harm.

The comfort theory was first developed by Katherine Kolcaba (1994) in the nursing environment. However, over the years it has been expanded from nursing (Kolcaba, 1991) to other disciplines such as education (Che Ahmad et al., 2017) and psychology (Roongruangsee et al., 2022), among others. Although there are many other explanations of comfort, I argue that Kolcaba's explanation is encompassing and inclusive and that it relates well to my understandings of this phenomenon. She explains comfort as "the immediate state of being

strengthened through having the human needs for relief, ease and transcendence addressed in four contexts of experience (physical, psychospiritual, sociocultural and environmental) (Kolcaba, 2003, p. 251).

10.6 Pursuing Comforting Experiences for Teaching and Learning

Understanding dis/comfort in light of the notions expressed by Cohen-Lazry et al. (2022) and the four issues illuminated by Kolcaba (1994), the comfort theory enabled me to explore my thoughts on how discomfort could be mitigated by a teacher-educator in one's attempt to achieve a comfortable atmosphere and playful experiences in the classroom (or lecture room). Recalling the moments of comfort and discomfort during the data generation process, I identified four characteristics to mitigate discomfort and increase the possibility for comfort, which I can integrate into my playful teaching approach. These are the following:

10.6.1 Playfulness requires preparation

Although play is associated with impromptu decisions and actions as well as spontaneity, the literature and my study experiences suggest that, in the context of teaching, the playful approach still requires planning by the teacher or teacher-educator. Therefore, it is crucial to plan in order to adhere to stipulated concepts and the desired outcomes of a lesson. The *what is being taught* aspect must be aligned to the curriculum even if the *how it is being taught* may be delivered in a playful approach. Planning also assists the teacher-educator to begin thinking of activities that may be potentially harmful to the learners/students, and to mitigate or avoid them.

10.6.2 Talk them through it

In a lesson presented by a teacher/teacher-educator where playful pedagogy is used as an approach to teaching and learning, the learners/students may not be familiar with the approach and may consequently be anxious. Therefore, to mitigate any anxiety or discomfort, guidance is fundamental in playful pedagogy. When introducing playful activities, it is important to explain the activity, what it is, how it is played, what is expected of the participants, and what they can expect from the activity. Reflection is also important as it allows the participants to internalise the experience and express their views about it verbally.

10.6.3 Shared participation (doing it with them)

As a show of support and belief in the activity, it is crucial for teachers/teacher-educators to introduce activities they are able to do with their learners/students. *Doing it together* is a way to build rapport with the students, and this may occur in two ways. First, the teacher-educator may demonstrate the activity. This shows leadership and confidence and will enhance a sense of trust in the other participants. It may also encourage the students to join in even though they may feel discomfort. Secondly, the teacher-educator may also join the group as a participant in the activity and partnering with a student when necessary. This shared participation may also be used as a way to supervise the activity while being actively involved, which will minimise any potential harm that may ensue. Shared participation involving the teacher/teacher-educator may also assist in diminishing anxiety and may contribute to building rapport with the learners/students. This may also address and ease the power relationship dynamic as the participants will experience the teacher-educator as ‘human’, ‘an equal’, and playful, which will build rapport and enhance trust.

10.6.4 Start with a simple, short activity

When introducing a teaching concept using playful pedagogy, it is important to keep it short and simple at first. Short activities that are easy to follow make it possible for the students to participate successfully and this will diminish their anxiety as they are successful in their attempts. Short and easy-to-follow activities make it possible for the teacher-educator to add other activities following the first. Such brief activities could also be used prior to activities that may be perceived as challenging for the participants. Taking breaks is also important, and a more complex activity may be done in phases. Completing playful activities successfully comforts participants, builds trust, and enriches enjoyment.

10.7 A Personal Perspective: The role of Play in my Unlearning and Becoming

Throughout the journey of this doctoral study, I identified my exposure to and experiences of play in my childhood and during my undergraduate program in Drama school. These experiences significantly contributed to my becoming and functioning as a teacher-educator. For this section, I draw from relevant data presented in Chapter seven and Chapter eight to illustrate the role of play along my journey of unlearning and becoming. Using these terms, I underscore my willingness to let go of perspectives that no longer served a purpose and to

allow new perspectives to be integrated into my life for the improvement of self and my teacher-educator practice.

In my childhood memory of play in Chapter three, I referred to the role in and the impact of play on the challenges I faced as a child, such as inter-township migration and a sense of destabilization when I was removed from my birth home and nucleus family. In those transitions, play contributed positively to my becoming and was one of the spaces in which I learnt to self-regulate the emotions I was feeling at the time, such as anxiety due to abandonment. Play was a space I continued to thrive in as I felt accepted and loved, which mitigated feeling rejected and marginalised due to a lack of attention during the time I was compelled to live with relatives.

As an undergraduate student, one of the significant challenges I once again faced was transitioning. I struggled initially to feel that I belonged in the university community. I was challenged by having to live in a different province, far from home. Transitioning to a new province and a new learning environment challenged my perceptions of living and being. However, the playful learning approaches I was exposed to in Drama school, as detailed in memory two Chapter three (games, ice-breakers, dance, and voice activities) all assisted in changing the perceptions I had about people and their way of life that was so different from mine. I also gained a sense of belonging once I had adapted to my new community.

I was unaware that the process of unlearning and becoming had begun within me. I realised I was changing even though I could not identify and contextualise where the change was taking place in my life and how this change was affecting my becoming. At the time, I could see I was becoming different from the conservative and introverted high school girl I had been when I arrived at university. I was becoming open and accepting of the community I was living in and of the people who were different from me. These were my class mates, university professors, and others who were in my life. In the dance, voice training, and acting classes the activities (exercises, rehearsals, and training sessions) were fundamental in assisting me in my transitioning, unlearning, and becoming. Activities such as dance routines (one example is mentioned in memory 2, Chapter three) made me feel uncomfortable at first, but I learnt to release my tension and discomfort and to accept my body and how I looked. Through dance, I also learnt to trust others as I was compelled to dance closely to another person and even being lifted up into the air, and this 'letting go' assisted me in becoming more trusting and accepting of others' proximity during training sessions. There are other examples, like the tongue-twister

exercises and the animal characterisation activities we had to do in acting classes (memory 2, Chapter 3), which all contributed to my unlearning and becoming.

Reflection brought the realisation that the playful teaching approach offered possibilities for exploration, acceptance, unlearning, and becoming. We were exposed to various activities and processes to find our characters through physical and vocal explorations. I believe it was the idea of playful learning that offered possibilities for exploration in my personal life as well. The playful approach to learning made it possible for me to explore, change, and emulate different personalities as I developed comforting perceptions of myself. I saw it happening in others as well as many of my fellow students were evolving in different ways. During our undergraduate years, there were students who discovered their sexuality, their commitment to religion, or reasons to denounce it. Many even explored other forms of spirituality. There were also those who explored different recreational activities for the first time such as clubbing, smoking, drinking, travelling, or hiking. The ability to evolve was also encouraged as a strength by our directors because as thespians, transitioning from the actor to the character and evolving from the text-based character to the developed-stage character was a skill we needed to master. These abilities were learnt through identifying and learning about various aspects of self that could potentially have prohibited the development of our skills. As Eric Morris eloquently describes, acting is “a way of life not just a way of work” (Morris, 1979, p. 12). This statement resonates with me because it addresses the intentionality of personal and professional self-development and also acknowledges that intentionality is associated with the intersection of our personal and professional selves, which is possible when we engage in self-development. I also relate this statement to teaching because, as teacher-educators, our work should not just be a way of work but a way of life that should never be marred by unintentionality and a lack of purpose.

10.8 Becoming a Teacher-Educator

The holistic approach to becoming as depicted in Figure 35 includes self, context, and others. This significant concept has taught me to approach being an academic with a wider lens and to respect and acknowledge other people and the spaces in which I work. This approach to becoming was an important lesson I learnt as a novice as the academic environment subtly and at times saliently encourages an individualistic approach to becoming an academic. However, this approach encourages a collective approach, and I therefore acknowledge the importance

of other people in my becoming rather than adopting an approach that encourages a silo mentality that lacks acknowledgement of others.

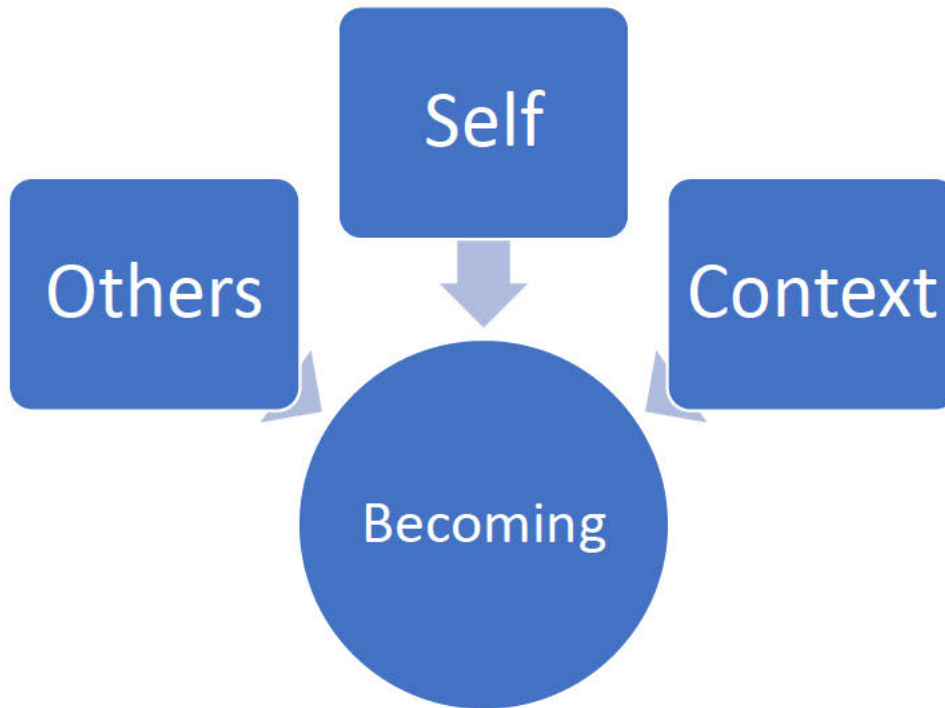


Figure 35: Aspects of the theory of becoming

I understand self-development as an intentional and process-oriented engagement. Drawing from an argument by Vinz (1997, 2000) who unpacks becoming within educational research, I outline key points from her theoretical perspective that have influenced me and contributed to my understanding of becoming. In Vinz’s (1997) understanding of becoming within educational research, she captures it as a ‘moving form’. I understand this as a process that is constantly evolving and changing. As a novice teacher-educator who has actively participated in my becoming, I have allowed myself to embrace change and what Vinz calls dispositioning. Dispositioning is an experience that requires a teacher-educator to step into a liminal space where they will *unknow* and *not-know* certain things (Vinz, 1997). In my development, the liminal space was significant as it was where I began *unknowing* and *not-knowing* with colleagues who were also novice academics grappling with teaching, research, and supervision responsibilities in the academia space. I collaborated with a small group of academics to publish articles and to engage in other academic activities (see Chapter 2). The liminal space which we referred to as ‘Room 32’ (Mbatha et al., 2020; Mbatha et al., 2021) allowed me to

let go of debilitating entrenched epistemologies and practices. The space of liminality and being dispositioned also pushed my intellectual and psychological boundaries and gave me the opportunity to unlearn while reformulating and repositioning myself to discover a multiplicity of meanings in the continuum of becoming.

Vinz (2000) extends the elements of becoming by looking at the past. She theorizes about the necessity of breaking some of the aspects many teachers carry from their past. She argues that to break with the past “requires a keen awareness of situatedness – the social present interpreted in relation to a historic past [of] (re)membered and (re)made events that take form in various narratives of experience and memory” (p. 73). My interpretation of Vinz’s statement is closely associated to liminality. In order to break (or separate) into the liminal space, it was fundamental for me to first identify where I was at the time of my breaking or separation. As a novice teacher-educator and emerging academic, I began to realise that I had inadequate knowledge of what it meant to be a teacher-educator and that my high school teaching experience was insufficient for the responsibilities ahead. Not only did this realisation overwhelm me, but it also made me understand that I needed to position myself as a learner and give myself time to understand what being a teacher-educator meant and what it entailed. This was also true for the other key academic responsibilities of research and supervision. Realising that I was not ready to be a teacher-educator opened me to possibilities of learning how to ‘learn on the job’. Commencing this study and engaging in play activities to learn with my students were part of ‘learning on the job’.

The first learning opportunity was when I adopted doctoral-student positionality. Assuming this identity from the beginning, I immersed myself in the research process which included reading, writing, and sharing my work with others. Positioning my study in the self-study sphere validated the undertaking of *becoming* a teacher-educator. My doctoral-student identity and the methodologies I adopted gave me ‘permission’ to allow myself to *not-know* and *unknow* without any judgement. The second learning opportunity emanated from Room 32, our liminal space. This was a small, unused office on the periphery of campus where my colleagues and I studied. Initially, we met three times per week to write notes about our respective doctoral studies. We also used the space to vent our frustrations and discuss our challenges. However, through continuous meetings, our understanding of the space evolved and we began to see it as an opportunity to cultivate the skills we felt we lacked as emerging academics. We shared our self-identified inadequacies as well as aspects of academia we recognized were important

but realised we lacked. This became a safe space where we shared what we did not know and unlearn what we had thought was right. Now the space was used for academic development, where we had regular conversations about our understanding of academia, our responsibilities, and our trajectories. We also became intentional in our professional mandate as teacher educators and the services we were expected to perform by embracing every learning opportunity and conceptualising meaningful projects related to our teaching and respective research interests.

Vinz (1997, p. 139) explains *unknowing* as “giving up present understandings (positions) of our teaching to make gaps and spaces through which to (re)member ourselves as we examine the principles behind our practices”. I understand this as allowing myself as a teacher-educator to ‘let go’ of the shackles of the past by interrogating certain perspectives that may have run their course and have served as obstacle to my *becoming*. She describes *not-knowing* as “to acknowledge ambiguity and uncertainty, [and] dispositioning [oneself] from the belief that teachers should know or be able to lead or construct unambiguous journeys toward knowledge about curriculum and practice” (Vinz, 1997, p. 139).

I realise that I struggled to allow this process to evolve during the sessions with the participants. I found it difficult to appear ‘not to know’ when the participants were present as it made me feel unsafe. I felt I would be judged as much as I was judging myself. However, for me to become, to *not-know*, became an opportunity to be open and to accept that the learning experience should occur in a cohesive environment with trusted individuals. I had to allow my learning experiences (the doctoral study process and Room32 – my safe spaces) to bring new meanings that would fill the gaps in my knowledge and make me accepting of not knowing everything. This was a perspective that opened me to further learning. Initially, my self-admittance of *not-knowing* was fraught with a sense of vulnerability and caused intellectual discomfort. For instance, struggling to recruit participants, the initial process of data generation, the anxiety that overwhelmed me, and the negative thoughts of failure even before I started were some indications of my discomfort (Chapter 2, data generation section). Other forms of intellectual discomfort became evident in Room 32 where I had to admit to my colleagues that I struggled with structure and interpreting the data. At first, it evoked a sense of weakness and heightened the imposter feeling. However, my colleagues shared similar struggles and we admitted our vulnerabilities, and this generated a feeling of unity among us.

Although we did not label this process or understand its magnitude, we began the process of unlearning and becoming academics together.

In *becoming*, self is a central and integral part of development as “the construct of the self is always changing” (Woolever, 2013, p. 19). There are also other fundamental aspects that contribute to the becoming of self, namely others and context. This perspective is presented by Dorfler et al. (2017), who view becoming as a systematic process of continuous self-making. In the process of becoming, the self may be experienced and represented in various ways (Dorfler et al., 2017). This is when the self is at an exploratory state and may manifest different behaviours. In my positioning as a novice teacher-educator, this phase manifested when I became intentional in becoming an academic. I began observing my behaviour during teaching and identified the lack of patience I sometimes had with my students, and this awareness compelled me to exercise more patience in various ways with the students I taught. For instance, I was more intentional in the assessments I required in the first month of the semester as I discussed them in class, set negotiated due dates with the students, and shared the rubric with them. In my attempt to mitigate my lack of patience, I adopted measures to better assist the students so that they would have the necessary information timeously. This, in turn, eased my frustration about their lack of understanding of the assessment tasks required for the module.

An aspect that is fundamental to self is the presence of others who are the people surrounding the self and who may share some experiences (Dorfler et al., 2017). As a teacher-educator, others are the students I teach, the colleagues I work closely with, other academics on campus, and the management teams of the School and university. Considering the aspects of others as a teacher-educator, my becoming cannot be successful or improve if I alienate the students in the context where I teach. Context is another aspect of becoming. It can be understood as the locations where the relationships between self and others are forged (Dorfler et al., 2017), and understanding the pivotal role of context underscores the importance of brokering and maintaining sound relationships on campus, particularly with the students I teach, the colleagues I work with, and management. Establishing and maintaining collegial relationships is therefore another important aspect of my becoming, but exploring these relationships was beyond the scope of this study.

10.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I wove a tapestry of my understanding of playful pedagogy by exploring various aspects of play and playfulness and unpacking the benefits of various psychological, mental, and emotional attributes that contribute to self-regulatory skills. I highlighted some childhood experiences to demonstrate how self-regulatory skills developed in me during childhood and playing with friends. I expanded on Larsen's (2015) play spatial dyad that incorporates activity and environment and postulated a triad by extending the dyad to include atmosphere as another layer to play. I integrated the experiences I presented in the data to illustrate the value of play and the possibilities for teaching and learning through playful pedagogy. I also delved into experiencing a sense of comfort or discomfort in playful activities and argued that, although discomfort can be harnessed for learning, it needs to be curbed during playful activities. To conclude, I discussed my becoming a teacher-educator through the discoveries I had made during this doctoral study and considered the prospects for improvement I envision for myself. In the concluding chapter that follows, I share the crucial lessons I learnt from this experience and present some considerations that other scholars may consider when adopting self-reflexive and arts-based methods in their studies.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: LOOKING AT THE PAST FOR ANSWERS AND FINDING THE FUTURE

“Learning about teaching is a very personal experience”

-Loughran (2006, p. 118)

11.1 Introduction

In this doctoral research, I embarked on a journey of self-study to improve my teaching practice as a Creative Arts teacher-educator. The research process drew my attention to the professional and personal aspects of my becoming. I revisited my memories of childhood and my tertiary studies from which I drew an understanding of my development as a teacher-educator using memory-work and its associated analysis methods. On a personal level, I was able to identify important aspects of my past that had remained with me for a long time and that had evoked both pain and pleasure. Through the research process and in-depth therapy, I was able to revisit my childhood memories honestly and acknowledged the pleasurable and uncomfortable experiences of childhood. These included the privilege of living in a nuclear family at first, being compelled to transition to relatives' households, and my mother's efforts to reconcile our family again. On a professional level, the research process increased my capacity to engage with academic work and I learnt about some of the important aspects that academia entails such as research, student supervision, grant projects, and community engagement through research. I was not aware of these aspects when I first entered the academic environment as teaching at secondary school level was the only academic engagement that I understood. I also learnt about the crucial need to manage time and to forge interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, self-care, and socially cohesive working relationships. Through the data generation and analysis phases, I experienced the intertwined roles of being a teacher-educator and researcher. As a teacher-educator, I learnt about integrating playful pedagogy as a teaching approach in a preservice teacher classroom and, as a researcher, I learnt about qualitative and self-study methodological research processes and practices. In this chapter, I offer an overview of my personal and professional learning, discuss my research contribution, and reflect on the overall process that guided me to bring this study to fruition.

11.2 Review of the Thesis Chapters

Chapter one: I began this thesis by sharing my purpose and the significance of this research endeavour. I shared a brief narrative of the preservice teachers I had assessed during teaching practice who were not using demonstration as a teaching method, explaining that that was the catalyst for this study. I explained how this observation had spiralled me into self-reflection and to examine my teaching practice, arguing that these actions had spearheaded this study. I also shared my understandings of the key concepts of reflexivity and playful pedagogy that were central to the research and discussed the theoretical perspective on *becoming* that was the thread that permeated the entire research endeavour. I presented the research objectives, questions, methods, and methodology and concluded the chapter by giving an overview of the thesis chapters.

Chapter two: Chapter two presented the methodological processes I employed. I shared my methodological understanding of self-study and qualitative research, elaborated on the participant selection and recruitment processes, and described the context and location of the study. I also presented information about the arts-based and memory-work research methods and overviewed the data generation sessions involving preservice teachers as participants. The data generation and analysis methods were discussed and I described the four different critical friend groups, namely the self-study research cohort group, my supervisors, a therapist, and my co-writers. Referring to my critical friends, I described this research process and the kind of support emanating from these people who were friends, critics, and supporters. I also reflected on my experiences as a researcher and a participant and the research challenges I had encountered. Overall, this chapter encapsulated my ability to engage in qualitative research using self-study methodologies and provided insight into my methodological ability.

Chapter three: I presented the first two of my four memories of my earlier life in this chapter. The first two memories detailed my childhood memories of play and the location transitions I had been compelled to make as a child. The second memory detailed selected experiences as an undergraduate student in Drama school and my internal transformation during that time. Key to this chapter were the two memories I detailed pertaining to my childhood and undergraduate experiences. These memories assisted the data analysis process and were key in discovering emerging themes related to the first part of my first research question: “What can I learn about playful pedagogy from *my memories* and the participants?”

Chapter four: In Chapter four I continued to explore my memories of my earlier lived experiences. The third memory detailed selected experiences of being a preservice teacher, which included my experiences and learnings as a student in Liz’s classroom. In the fourth memory, I detailed selected experiences of being a novice teacher in a high school, and I focused on some pertinent teaching challenges. These memories provided insight into the moments of my earlier life and also assisted me in the data analysis stage where I used them to discover emerging themes related to my first research question. The overall importance of the memories was the process I engaged in as I learnt how to use memory-work in research. The memories also presented opportunities to understand the self personally and professionally as I attempted to answer the first research question and gain a better understanding of my lived experiences.

Chapter five: I commenced the presentation of the data that had been generated through my engagement with the preservice teacher participants. I detailed the recruitment process and shared some challenges and successes I experienced during this phase of the study. I detailed the events of the first session to give insight into how the session proceeded and the manner of participation by myself and the participants. Data from this session later assisted me in the analysis phase of the research to answer the second research question: “How can artistic methods offer possibilities for playful pedagogy in my practice as a Creative Arts teacher-educator?”

Chapter six: In this chapter, I presented the activities of sessions three and four. In session three, we explored the nature of a playful person and a good Creative Arts teacher. In session four, we did the hot seating activity which allowed some of the participants to share their teaching practice experiences. An important highlight of these sessions was the emerging evidence of trust when we shared personal traits and narratives that exposed some of our vulnerabilities. Another significant contribution of these sessions was the development of rapport and my facilitation ability as we managed to complete the intended activities on time.

Chapter seven: In this chapter, I discussed sessions five and six. In session five we discussed our misconceptions about play and teaching with the purpose of highlighting the importance of unlearning and becoming as emerging teachers. In session six, the participants engaged in creating tableaux and a letter-writing activity. The purpose was to engage in playful activities that depicted the traits of a playful teacher by creating tableaux, and to give the participants the opportunity to envisage themselves as future teachers through the letter-writing activity. A

challenge I experienced in these sessions was to facilitate them efficiently, but my inexperience showed even though I had prepared well. Nevertheless, what was important was the ability to complete the sessions in spite of the difficulties experienced

Chapter eight: Data pertaining to sessions seven and eight were presented in this chapter. Under session seven I detailed the poetry-writing activity during which the participants collectively engaged in a process of writing a poem about teaching and play. In session eight, I shared the found poem I had written using their sentences related to the topic *Being a student AND a teacher: I am a student teacher!* We also engaged in reflective discussions on all the sessions. The highlight of session seven was our ability to create the poem even though we did not complete all the stages together in this session. This was a significant experience for me as it was the first time I co-created poetry and developed found poetry. What was important in the last session was to listen to the participants' experiences of our sessions and what they thought the highlights and lowlights had been. I also explored what they would take away with them based on their play activities. Overall, in presenting these sessions in Chapter five to Chapter eight, I managed to provide insight into the activities by analysing the data in a manner that positively contributed to the transparency and credibility of the research process.

Chapter nine: In this chapter, I offered a four-part thematic analysis based on the presented and analysed data. The themes covered the emerging discoveries of silence, discomfort and comfort, and my missed opportunities in exploring playful pedagogy. Significantly, this chapter exposed elements of playful pedagogy that I had not realised before. Analysing the data, I found that silence and discomfort were also part of the experiences during playful pedagogy. I understood that these themes, which were emerging discoveries, also exposed my blind spots during the data generation process. Some of these blind spots were my tendency to talk too much and the crippling anxiety I experienced when confronted with the loss of control in a situation. Acknowledging these discoveries expanded my in-depth understanding of playful pedagogy and of myself.

Chapter ten: This chapter, presented the themes I had developed from my discoveries discussed in Chapter nine. The themes were: the value of play in my childhood, the role of play in my unlearning and becoming, and playful pedagogy in teacher education. I integrated the voices of other scholars with my data to gain in-depth insight into playful pedagogy and becoming a teacher-educator. Presenting my insight on the value of play, I also presented atmosphere as the third aspect of play, thus extending Larsen's (2015) play spatial dyad that

comprises of activity and environment within play to a triad that includes atmosphere as the third aspect of play. This was one of the highlights of the chapter. I also shared how the data generation experience assisted me in gaining an overall illuminated perspective on playful pedagogy and being a teacher educator.

Chapter eleven: In the current chapter I conclude my reflections on my learning and intersperse them with recommendations for future researchers in this field. I conclude the chapter with pertinent closing remarks.

11.3 Personal Learning

In her research article on compassionate play, Julia Reeve (2021) writes an opening statement that resonates with my growing understanding of play. I understand compassionate play simply as participating in playful activities that intentionally or unintentionally consider and integrate solicitude into playful activities. Julia briefly relays the personal impact of becoming a playful teacher in a higher education institution. She describes how becoming a playful teacher has improved not only the mental health of her students, but hers as well. In her study, she emphasises how a playful teaching approach provides a space for human connection and even quiet reflection (Reeve, 2021). She writes: “Looking back over my years working in education, I can see how becoming a playful educator has been a way for me to counter my tendency towards anxiety, depression and underlying low self-esteem. For me, taking a playful approach is not just about considering students’ mental health, [but] being a playful teacher makes me feel calmer, happier and more relaxed too” (Reeve, 2021, p. 7). I relate to Julia’s thoughts on becoming a playful teacher as I, too, have come to better understand the impact of becoming a playful teacher and person in my professional and personal lives.

Reeve’s (2021) self-observation and discovery indicate an in-depth level of reflexivity that assisted her in identify within herself her personal growth in becoming a playful teacher and how her improved teaching approach has affected her personally and professionally. Self-study, by its very nature, aims for improvement in practice, personally and professionally. I have experienced this as I shared moments through my writing that illustrate the improvement and insight I have gained through engaging in self-study research as a novice teacher-educator. Reimagining oneself as a teacher is a process that develops one’s professional identity congruent with one’s personal identity (Korthagen & Verkuyl, 2007). In my understanding, the development of the teacher identity is not isolated from the personal identity as there are parts

of the teacher identity that may be integral to the personal identity. By reimagining my teacher-educator identity and discovering my interest in playful pedagogy, I have discerned how my identity as a teacher-educator has evolved from my lived experience. Through this process, memories provided insight about myself from a personal perspective, revealing my *becoming* a teacher-educator.

I identified two significant personal insights through this research showing how they have affected my personal and professional development. They are (1) the opportunity and assisted capability to heal psychologically, and (2) the depth of self-knowledge. Embarking on this research enabled me to revisit my memories by engaging with participants and sharing our childhood memories of play (see sessions one and two in Chapter five), and writing about them through memory-work (Chapter three and Chapter four). This memory-work process evoked feelings of joy as well as uncomfortable feelings and pain. As I continued to open myself to the process and shared my experience with critical friends, I managed to identify which parts of the memories had evoked these feelings and began reconciling myself with these painful memories and the heartache they had caused. Spencer (2010) proposes that self-reflexivity is always coupled with emotional reflexivity and argues that one cannot be explored without the other. Emotional reflexivity can be explained as “a very intricate process that places serious demands upon researchers to know themselves – not only in the positions they occupy but also their bodily and psychological proclivities and the dynamics of our ‘inner self’” (p. 32). I relate to Spencer’s statement because my reflexivity process also compelled me to work through the uncomfortable emotions that partnered with certain aspects of my memories. This process required me to engage deeply with myself and make emotional and psychological connections based on the memories. These connections became starting points for healing, which is an ongoing process for me as I continue with therapy. The opportunity for healing began with overwhelming flashbacks of pain from my memories. Therefore, I would advise others who may have the desire to use memory-work to keep in mind that although there may be therapeutic benefits based on the process, they may also unearth painful emotions that may lead to depressive episodes or even a more permanent state of depression if not addressed psychologically.

A significant challenge I encountered was facing the personal and interpersonal, private and public, and individual and collective paradoxes generated by self-study. Samaras and Freese (2006), Samaras (2011), and LaBoskey (2004) argue that these paradoxes are part of the

process and are actually benefits in self-study research. However, the process was also a challenge as it implored me to continuously unearth past personal narratives and contributing them as data for this research. Commencing this research meant opening up to others and sharing my motivation and rationale. It also meant opening up my teaching practices to critical friends who became privy to how I taught and what some of my challenges were, which was an uncomfortable experience as I thought that others might think negatively of me. However, through the ongoing process of this research, I began to realise that opening up my teaching practice led to being open about myself, and the benefits thereof for me and my teaching practice are immeasurable.

Having engaged in the research, I understand how paradoxes are beneficial to the self-study practitioner. However, the complexity of working privately with self, surrendering to the inductive process, and then bringing the raw preliminary discoveries to my critical friends who became privy to personal narratives and witnessed the effect of having gone through this process were difficult. I needed to trust the process by following scholarly guidelines, listening to feedback and suggestions by critical friends, and believing that the benefits would be realised in the near future. Gaining the benefits first required maintaining commitment to and transparency about self while working privately. I also found that it required courage to expose my work to critical friends and the self-reflexive community by means of this thesis.

The involvement of critical friends in my research provided a third space to engage with and about my ideas. The first spaces of engagement were my mind and the literature. Other students considering reflexive research processes and incorporating critical friends into their process may find benefit in their inclusion in ways relevant to their research process. For my process, critical friends were important as they were generous with their time and listened to me attentively and non-judgementally. My critical friends also assisted in identifying ideas from my engagements with them, which was a practice I found useful as I did not always have the ability to identify the value of some of my thoughts. They were also able to analyse the ideas I presented to them and offered suggestions which further extended my thinking. Critical friends also at times played the role of friends by lending me a sensitive ear about my challenges and encouraging my self-confidence, which diminished the self-doubt that lingered on emotionally difficult days. They also emphasised rest, extra-curricular activities, and validated the work I was doing. This was beyond the research process; however, their generosity in offering me their time, attention and words of encouragement propelled me forward significantly. What

others can take away is the value that critical friends may bring to their research process and their student life, which may be fundamental in the progression and completion of a doctoral study of this nature.

11.4 Professional Learning

When I commenced this doctoral journey, I was troubled by what I had discovered about preservice teachers' practice I had assessed during teaching practice. I was concerned about the way they taught and the lack of demonstration as part of their teaching method. This concern became a mirror for me to look within myself and to be honest about how I was teaching and what methods I was intentionally using to teach. Before concluding my reflection, it was important to consider the possible reasons for their lack of demonstration in class. They admitted that they felt silly and shy, but I had to discover why. This line of questioning shifted the mirror onto me. When I reflected on my teaching practice at the time and my observations of the preservice teacher's practice, I realised that I was not teaching with intention and needed to delve deeper into my teaching practice. Delving deeper through this study was a primary catalyst for dispositioning myself as it challenged what I knew about teaching. It provided a safe space to *unknow* (letting go of what I thought I knew) and allowed me to *not-know* (to not have an answer for everything).

I have learnt the ability to identify where I am (context) and who I am (among others, both personally and professionally). The ability to identify myself thus created awareness and assisted me in understanding the teacher-educator identity (self). This supposedly simple ability to identify self, context, and others propelled my thinking about my identity and the means to develop it for myself and the context in which I work. This ability has also deepened my awareness of my other identities and the relations I have with self, context, and others in my other identities. Overall, I have managed to intentionally deepen my purpose of engagement not only professionally, but also personally.

My overview of the research process and experiences (Chapter nine and Chapter ten) allowed me to gain insight into the importance of intentional teaching. I now understand that teaching with intentionality means keeping a learning mindset even as a teacher-educator and embracing both uncertainty or spontaneity that may occur during teaching. From the data, I learnt that silence and discomfort could be embraced as part of playful pedagogy. I have learnt to allow the process to take its form and not to be fixated on leading the process to become what I

envisaged. I struggled with these concepts during the data generation sessions but I managed to identify their value during data analysis. I have learnt to be intentional about doing an activity *with* the participants or students and not to stand aloof from planned playful activities.

At first, I identified the outcomes of some sessions as negative. However, I now realise they were opportunities for deeper reflection and learning. As someone who also struggled with discomfort in multiple instances (see Chapter nine) such as during the data generation process when unexpected silences occurred, I have come to realise that filling such silences with my voice would not aid learning as learning may occur in silent reflection. This understanding has assisted me in embracing times of silence during a practical activity or when there is silence soon after participants have been asked to engage in a discussion. In some instances, I volunteered to start the discussion to cover the silence, but this should not happen as my attempts to fill up these spaces interfered with the participants' reflective opportunities. Genuine, intentional demonstrations and participation rather than interference during silences are paramount.

By reflecting on the data that emerged from the various sessions, I have learnt that planning remains a fundamental aspect when teaching through playful pedagogy. Through the co-creation of knowledge and sharing the learning space, spontaneity is encouraged (see sessions 3 and 4, Chapter six). However, this does not absolve the teacher-educator from establishing a framework to guide the teaching and learning activities. The time constraint challenge that impacted some sessions was unexpected and uncomfortable, and I thus acknowledge my inadequate planning which I believe was indicative of my inexperience. However, it was also difficult to determine precisely how much time I needed to conclude each data generation session, as much evolved as the process continued. Furthermore, being a novice researcher was another important factor that contributed to feeling inadequate, but my ability to begin and complete the data generation process is, I believe, indicative of my growing courage and my determination to learn. One lesson I take away is never to underestimate the planning process and to give planning as much attention as the data generation and teaching activities.

I affirm that feeling uncomfortable is part of playful pedagogy and that experiencing a sense of comfort is a state of relief that enables uninhibited participation. Discomfort is an unpleasant sensation and interferes with participants' ability to engage in activities with ease. The data suggest that comfort may result from a playful teaching approach and that it will aid learning, whereas discomfort may impede learning during playful activities if there is no intention to

mitigate it. Nevertheless, discomfort may be a necessary generative teaching tool in teacher education as it may urge reflection, while comfort may contribute to students being more open and less anxious. However, if discomfort is not curbed, it may directly contribute to students' anxiety and their resistance to participation. What I take away from these two feelings as a teacher-educator is that it is important to acknowledge when these sensations are experienced by myself and my preservice teachers, and to develop ways to balance them out as this will aid in the value of playful activities.

Making discoveries that aided my professional development is a positive contribution to understanding the phenomenon of becoming. The lessons I have learnt have not only affected my teacher-educator identity, but my researcher identity as well. This experience has capacitated my ability to conduct research and given me the confidence to write for publication. I have also learnt to embrace the value of pursuing socially cohesive relationships as I have witnessed the benefits of critical friendships. Although I may continue to struggle with tendencies such as over-speaking and feeling anxious when losing control, the knowledge of my fallibilities cannot be erased as each struggling moment will become an opportunity for improvement.

11.5 Methodological Learning

This research gave me the opportunity to immerse myself in scholarly processes that guided me through the practices and principles of self-study (see Chapter two). The methodology did not only experientially teach me about self-study, but it also impacted my personal life, as stated under my personal learning above. By employing an appropriate methodology, methods, and a theoretical perspective, I was given 'permission' to revisit my memories, even the most sensitive ones, and to engage truthfully with them. The reflexive nature of self-study guided my engagement with many pertinent memories and gave me room to reflect continually on the data generation process and the findings that emerged.

The highlights of engaging in self-study were the learning opportunities that presented themselves. I believe that, if I had used an un-reflexive methodology, I might not have had the opportunity to make so many insightful personal discoveries. The self-study methodology offered possibilities throughout the research process that contributed to my personal development. I highlight personal development as a primary purpose of self-study research even though some may consider personal development a secondary purpose. However, I feel

there were moments that intertwined my personal life with my professional learning. In fact, this research would have failed to progress without examining the personal aspects that were exposed when they were. Self-study allowed me to pause and examine my personal life while allowing me to engage with critical friends and journaling, which were integral components of this study. Therefore, even at times when I felt I was not focusing on playful pedagogy *per se*, I was consistently yet often inadvertently engaged in reflexivity which ultimately became beneficial to the overall research process and its outcomes while consistently addressing the topic under investigation. A consideration that postgraduate students using this methodology should keep in mind, is that reflexivity is a process that occurs continuously in-action and on-action (Finlay, 2008). Thus, even when one is not actively engaged in one's research, reflexivity on what has already occurred percolates in one's subconscious, which is what I experienced.

Using arts-based methods to generate data was encouraging and valuable in multiple ways. I used poetry writing, hot seating, tableaux, and letter writing. As an artist, I was familiar with artistic methods and found the ones I used highly effective. The ability to incorporate artistic methods into my research gave me confidence in the research process even though I was a novice self-study researcher.

The use of childhood games also made the research relatable to the participants and myself. Hot seating provided an opportunity to share our experiences as emerging teachers/and teacher educator and to offer one another some counsel. Creating tableaux is generally an impactful teaching method as I witnessed in Liz's classroom as a preservice teacher. However, my inability to connect the guidelines appropriately to the activity resulted in misalignment and a lack of understanding by the participants, making the activity seem like a failure at first. Letter writing was a personal and individual method yet it elicited enriching and meaningful discussions. In facilitating this activity, I witnessed the participants envisaging and reimagining themselves as teachers (see session 6, Chapter seven). These and other experiences connected the dots in the research and I value the use of arts-based methods as they generated deep insight and created possibilities for intentionally exploring their use in my teaching practice in the future.

Integrating arts-based methods into my teaching practice has become plausible as Creative Arts modules already premise the importance of arts in general. This method thus opens possibilities for integrating research and teaching and I could use my classrooms as a research site where I

will have ample time to work on my teaching and research simultaneously. Franklin (2012) implores arts-based researchers not to rush the process that engages the arts in research. This is because Franklin believes that arts-based research must remain as authentic and organic as possible. As I grappled with the issue of time constraints, engaging in Franklin's work gave me a better understanding of how to approach arts-based research. For instance, the researcher should entirely give in to the process and allow emergence from the process to occur. Keeping this perspective in mind will assist arts-based researchers to remain in touch with the data as they continually reflect on emerging themes or findings. In my future use of arts-based research methods, I intend to always allocate additional time to data generation so as to allow the completion of a research processes that may not have been completed in the allocated time. Franklin's (2012) perspective is corroborated by Reeve (2021), who believes that integrating the playful approach with teaching allows the teacher-educator to remain present in the research or the teaching process. Integrated arts-based methods into my teaching will, as Reeve (2021) suggests, afford me the opportunity to be present in both my teaching and research and to utilise my time effectively, which may positively affect my experiences as I probably will not feel as pressured as I did during this research process.

Even as I am hoping for future teaching and learning experiences that are not affected by time constraints, I am also aware that I could encounter other challenging tensions. In an article by Rumbold et al. (2012), they share their experiences of and views on dilemmas and opportunities in arts-based research, stating that there may be tensions in using arts-based research 'when art meets research'. This is because research is aligned with structure and frameworks, whereas the arts are aligned with spontaneity and creativity. They explain that tensions may emanate due to conflict between "structure and spontaneity, process and product, the individual and the social, and between image and text" (p. 68). This was not my experience in using arts-based research. Contrarily, the frame of qualitative research and the flexibility of arts-based methods as used in self-study methodology made it possible for my research to progress. The qualitative self-study methodology and the appropriate methods I employed provided guidance that assisted my thinking to remain within the research parameters and prevented me from deviating from the research focus. Moreover, the ability to infuse creativity in the data collection sessions through arts-based methods afforded me the opportunity to draw from what I knew. Though I may have been a novice self-study researcher and teacher-educator, I was familiar with artistic practices and drew from some familiar methods.

11.6 Theoretical Learning

Focusing this study on *becoming* opened me to the lessons I learnt. For instance, “learning about teaching is a very personal experience” (Loughran, 2006, p. 118). It is internally motivated and pursued with commitment and intentionality. Being intentional about learning about teaching shone a light into some areas of my personal life to aid my professional development. It also revealed areas (e.g., writing for publication) that need improvement in my professional development other than teaching. Teacher-educators who are reflexive and who have developed self-awareness may be able to help preservice teachers discover their own intentionality and commitment to becoming teachers. This is because “one cannot help others look more closely at their own inner selves if one has not done this oneself” (Korthagen & Verkuyl, 2007, p. 107). Teacher-educators who “embrace the challenge of self-actualisation will be better able to create pedagogical practices that engage students, providing them with ways of knowing that enhance their capacity to live fully and deeply” (hooks, 1994, p. 22). Through this research process and understanding myself as a novice working towards becoming a teacher-educator, I carry the same awareness about the students I teach – that they are also becoming teachers and require an opportunity to find themselves. Part of my role as their teacher-educator is to assist them by offering a learning experience that might aid in their becoming.

The study also deepened my intentionality to become an academic and to learn more about research, supervision, and community engagement. Although my research focus was on teaching, learning, and becoming, my intentionality to learn about teaching has also been extended to learning about other academic duties such as supervision and writing for research publication. Continuing my academic focus, I shall invest my time in learning about supervision and research to grow my academic capabilities and my professional development. These lessons were made possible through positioning myself in liminality, assuming the doctoral student identity, and immersing myself in learning, all of which allowed me to *un-know* and *not-know*, giving me the opportunity to unlearn and become.

11.7 Using Memory-work to Reflect on Play

Engaging with my childhood memories of play guided me to revisit the matter of destabilisation as a child due to inter-township migration and being forced to live with relatives in the absence of a parent and siblings for some time. In writing about my childhood memories

of play, I had to touch on sensitive issues such as the separation of my parents, being compelled to move from my home, and living in different homes with different family members, which opened me to parental care issues and emotional and physical abuse. The impact of remembering brought tears while I wrote about it and, being older, I could understand the gravity of what I had experienced and how it had affected me. The memory-work method thus allowed me to engage with my memories, process them, and heal through them. I was also guided by identifying an entry point into my memories to gradually meander throughout the writing process with the assistance of literature and critical friends.

Researchers interested in the memory-work method should be open to consulting a therapist as a critical friend, as psychological support and insight offer an enlightened perspective that impacts both personal and professional understanding of memories. They may also consider creative or playful triggers to access their memories which can be a short reflective activity, like mine was about play, or they can use artefacts. Triggering memory is seemingly an easy activity as one may think it only involves remembering. However, the activity of remembering is complex and requires patience and, at times, various ways of recalling the same memory. So, having creative ways of triggering memories may aid in the process (also depending on what the memory is about). Moreover, researchers who engage in memory-work need to be gentle with themselves and their process of remembering. Some comments by my supervisors and therapist indicated that I was self-judging my former self without considering the context of the past. Those comments assisted me in understanding that it is not progressive to judge one's former and younger self and that it is incumbent to extend gentleness to appreciate the progress of *self* in spite of difficulties. Approaching one's memories with kindness is vital in memory-work as it assists acceptance of the insights they bring without judgement. Judgement may lead to the rejection of insight and this may obscure some research findings.

Seeking and submitting to psycho-therapy were recommended by one of my supervisors, who referred me to a therapist as my challenges were both scholarly and personal. Considering therapy began even before the doctoral research process.

As the inductive analytical approach steered me into uncomfortable moments in my memories (Chapter two), it opened up wounds that I thought had healed because I had forgotten about them. At first, I found myself overwhelmed by the data analysis process based on my memories. However, due to therapy, the data analysis process began to take shape and my therapist and I began unearthing the multiple aspects of my life that I had been struggling with

from the past to the present, including the time of this doctoral study. The discoveries I made and the lessons learnt from my doctoral research have not only contributed to my professional practice, but have also impacted my personal identity. Radstone (2008, p. 32) outlines how memory work possesses raw data material that a researcher can use to learn or even transform their relationship with the remembered self, leading to a better relationship with their personal and public, the individual, and the social selves. I can attest to forging a better relationship with my remembered self.

By engaging in memory-work, I managed to ‘fill in the gaps’ in my identities by making meaning from my lived experiences as I remembered them (Bain, 1995). Memories are undeniably “a diary we carry with us at all times” (Wilde, 1989, p. 501). Memory-work has also enabled me to explore and learn from my lived experiences and integrate into my academic community with a better understanding of myself, and I can now focus on learning and becoming as an emerging teacher-educator (Onyx & Small, 2001).

11.8 Summary of the Research Findings in Response to the Research Questions

My doctoral research explored the possibilities of integrating playful pedagogy for teaching and learning in a teacher education institution. The two research questions the study posed were: (1) *What can I learn about playful pedagogy from my participants and memories?* and (2) *How can my memory work offer possibilities for playful pedagogy in my practice as a novice Creative Arts teacher-educator?* To answer the research questions, I explored the use of various playful and artistic methods by involving preservice teachers and engaging in memory-work. Through the analysed data, I discovered that playful pedagogy can be an exciting, spontaneous and fruitful teaching and learning approach for preservice teachers and teacher-educators alike. It can also be uncomfortable and evoke anxiety. Therefore, planning playful activities is crucial as it can assist in mitigating discomfort and anxiety while contributing to confidence and learning. It is also important to mentally prepare for unexpected challenges and allow for flexibility, which were aspects I struggled with. I also understand that playful pedagogy offers increased possibilities to build rapport and create an emotionally and psychologically safe space for the participants and teacher-educator. It also creates a space for vulnerability as all the participants will approach learning through playful activities which may not be a comfortable method for all involved, unless mitigated.

I also discovered that integrating playful pedagogy in institutions of higher learning may offer other possibilities for academics and students. For instance, they may experience how a playful approach adds value to teaching and learning and they could encourage academics to take intentional control of their professional development while increasing their creative autonomy as they learn from other colleagues and their students (Diaz-Varela & Wright, 2019; Kolb & Kolb, 2010). The integration of play into teaching and learning in teacher education offers both preservice teachers and teacher-educators the opportunity to revitalise their playful selves and engage in playful opportunities. This enables teacher-educators to relate to preservice teachers (Diaz-Varela & Wright, 2019) and for preservice teachers to relate to their learners in their professional teaching.

11.9 Moving Forward

Envisaging that my teaching practice will now premise playful approaches, I refer to the following excerpt that encapsulates my reimagined, desired practice. In Koeners and Francis's (2020, p. 143) research article on the physiology of play, the authors write:

“Imagine a place of learning where progressive failing, building resilience and developing individual and collective skills, values, and creativity are not only thought about as a theoretical exercise but fostered within the pedagogic culture. A place where academic drive is created and nurtured through joy, engagement and play, where learning to solve problems and overcome obstacles is a reward in its right. Is this not what learning is about?”

As I read this research article, I was inspired as I imagined my classroom as the place that is described in this article. Drawing from Forbes's (2008) pivotal pillars of reflexivity, to know (acquisition), to do (application), to be (experience) and to live (embodiment), cultivating the classroom environment described above is a process that implores a pedagogical shift from the teacher-educator first before extending to the students. As I let go of the doctoral student identity and step out of the liminal space, I fully embody the teacher-educator identity having explored through this study the pedagogical practice of playful approaches to teaching in higher education and gained a theoretical and practical insight beneficial to my teaching practice. Through this doctoral research, I was able to build theoretical knowledge, and apply it congruent with our lived experiences. The experience offered possibilities for self-discovery and increased self-awareness (Dikilitaş & Mumford, 2023) and opportunities for intuitive and inductive reasoning (Vettraino et al., 2019). The experience has also inspired the desire to

intentionally share my research and insight on the possibilities offered by playful teaching approaches to others.

I would also like to share my lessons with other novice teacher-educators or emerging academics who are unfamiliar with self-reflexive practices and arts-based research but may be interested in learning. Abegglen et al. (2021) support the integration of play in teaching and learning, arguing that play disrupts and contravenes the conventional transmissive teaching approach. In their research article, Abegglen et al. (2021, p. 83) advocate for play and creativity as these can “liberate persons who may feel unwelcome within the formal academic settings of higher education. Play may assist them to define their learning and becoming students on their terms.” Demographically, my university classroom context has preservice teachers who may relate to this statement as they may come from under-resourced learning environments and may find the university space unfamiliar and divergent. Therefore, using playful activities such as their indigenous childhood games for teaching and learning may be one way to build rapport and make learning accessible and relatable to them. A colleague and I wrote a chapter (Kortjass & Mbatha, 2022) for a book (Kitchen et al., 2022) about our efforts through our doctoral research to make learning accessible and relatable to our students through artistic methods with which they could relate. These were indigenous childhood games as used in my study and artefacts such as grass basket bowls and traditional Zulu necklaces and bracelets she had used in her study. In conjunction with my doctoral research, the book chapter was a way for me to engage in research that was directly linked to my teaching practice. This experience has encouraged my efforts to align my teaching and research and to share my insights and findings in publications and on other platforms. Whatever the curriculum instructs, I would like to continue developing my teaching practice by offering my preservice teachers a learning experience that builds resilience, encourages collaboration, and offers a space where their creativity is welcomed, cultivated, and appreciated.

11.10 Reimagining my *becoming* as a Teacher-Educator

Embarking on my doctoral research was a point of ‘pedagogical turn’. Russell (1997) unpacks this as the second level of thought where a teacher-educator not only focuses on the content of her subject, but where she is also concerned with the manner in which she teaches. For me, this means concerning myself with *how* I teach, which requires reflexivity and becoming. The doctoral journey began when I assessed preservice-teachers during their teaching practice and noticed that they taught without integrating demonstration or any artistic methods in their

Creative Arts lessons. I was concerned, and this concern became a prompt to explore my own teaching practice in an effort to understand how I taught and the possible implications of my teaching in their understanding of teaching. Having completed my doctoral journey, I have learnt to teach with intention and understand now how the threads of playful pedagogy can be woven into my practice. I have learnt that the classroom is a space to negotiate teaching and learning between myself and the students and to allow students to lead their learning. As an emerging researcher, I have also learnt the value of integrating teaching and research. The lessons learnt have strengthened my academic identity. Dinkelman et al. (2006) emphasise that a teacher's identity and practice are crafted over time in the process of *becoming*. Understanding this, I appreciate the experiences the doctoral process has given me about *unlearning*, *not-knowing*, and *becoming*, which all occurred in the 'safe identity' of being a doctoral student.

Now, I can reimagine myself as a developing teacher-educator who has confidence in the lessons learnt and who will apply them over time into my teaching practice. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) liken the process of becoming to that of re-imagining. Re-imagining is relevant to all teacher-educators and documenting the process is important as it may assist other teacher-educators who may be grappling with transitioning from teacher to teacher-educator, or with re-imagining themselves as teacher-educators. Therefore, although I struggled at first to put my work on a public platform as it contains many references to my vulnerability, I take heart in knowing that it may inspire others with the confidence to embark on a similar journey.

11.11 Conclusion

Closing the chapter of my doctoral journey, I realise that I still have much to learn and experience about academia. Nevertheless, this doctoral journey was the first step towards *becoming* an academic. I have already begun integrating the lessons learnt into my teaching practice as I am able to plan ahead and more effectively for my teaching and my students' learning. In the future, I shall use methods such as hot seating and childhood games and I shall organise workshops to share my insights, learnings, and newly acquired skills with interested colleagues. I shall, during these workshops, introduce and present practical ways in which teacher-educators can integrate playful teaching approaches into the disciplinary modules they teach. Workshopping will be an opportunity to put into practice what I have learnt (as I have done with the grant awarded) and to discover new lessons during my interactions with

attendees, and this will contribute to my becoming an accomplished academic along my life-long journey of learning.

This doctoral research has capacitated me with many skills and fuelled my confidence to keep working on my *becoming*. I am now at ease with not-knowing and understand the importance of continual reflection in order to identify and discard perspectives that no longer aid my *becoming*. I recognize the importance of unlearning those perspectives and refining myself and my teaching craft in pursuit of maturity in my professional development. I believe that through continuing to delve into the self-study methodology and artistic methods, I shall further develop my research skills through learning additional ways of improving my practice, deepening my intentionality, and growing my professional development. I am also looking forward to exploring the integration of teaching and research in my practice and the endless possibilities that such an approach may yield.

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APPENDICES