

**INTEGRATING CULTURAL INCULSIVITY IN A GRADE 4 CLASSROOM: A  
TEACHER’S SELF-STUDY**

BY

NTOKOZO SIBUSISIWE MKHIZE

IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF

**MASTER OF EDUCATION-TEACHER DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (TDS)**

IN THE

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

EDGEWOOD CAMPUS

Date: December 2016

Supervisor: PROF. KATHLEEN PITHOUSE-MORGAN

**COLLAGE OF HUMANITIES**  
**DECLARATION-PLAGIARISM**

I, Ntokozo, Sibusisiwe Mkhize, declare that

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

Signed.....

## **STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR**

This thesis is submitted with/without my approval.

.....

PROF. KATHLEEN PITHOUSE-MORGAN

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- Thank you Lord for making what seems impossible very possible, for your strength, guidance and abundant love.
- To my lovely grade 4 learners who were exceptionally gracious, creative and imaginative, your ideas certainly added value and crafted my self-study research.
- To my mother for always having a heart- warming smile and motivating me to keep pushing.
- I extend my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan for her phenomenal support and encouraging words, for being dynamic and going beyond the call of duty.
- Thank you to my critical friends, for identifying errors I might have been blind to, your support, motivation and your courage to deliver good work all the time.

## ACRONYMS

- BEd Bachelor of Education
- AIDS Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
- CAPS Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
- DBE Department of Basic Education
- HIV Human immunodeficiency virus
- MEd Master of Education
- UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
- UKZN University of KwaZulu-Natal

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of my self-study research was to explore integrating cultural inclusivity, particularly children's culture. As an aspiring inclusive practitioner I wanted to explore and reflect on what I could learn about cultural inclusivity and children's culture from my own personal history and how I could integrate cultural inclusivity and children's culture in my teaching. I was drawn to the practice of inclusivity as a focal point for my research. White Paper 6 policy stimulated me to explore how I could include my learners and take into account all my learners' needs, interests and cultural backgrounds. I looked forward to implementing diversity in my classroom and to learn from my learners. A socio-cultural theoretical perspective channeling my thoughts to the fundamental nature of children, how they bring in conceptual resources into the classroom and introduce their cultural and daily encounters into the classroom before learning or attending school. I took inclusive participation inspired by the Children's culture perspective which was to bring in games, toys and interests into their learning. I was the main participant in the research study. My 37 learners were participants in my study. I also worked with two critical friends who were also doing their Master's Degree in Teacher Development and my supervisor. My two research questions were: 1. What can I learn about cultural inclusivity and children's culture from my personal history? 2. What can I learn about cultural inclusivity and children's culture from my grade 4 learners? To respond to these two questions, I generated data through practicing: artefact retrieval; collage making, poetry, journal writing, audio-recording and taking photographs. From this, I discovered that, as teachers we need to emancipate and not cage our learners' thoughts and ideas. I appreciated the feedback I received from my learners, their participation, activities and games. I also explored that in children's culture there are daily adventures and challenges that stimulate heroic moments for them. Additionally, I learned that children can create their own learning resources through toys, games and live passionately through laughter, questions, smiles, curiosity and uncertainties. Teaching and learning is not predictable. My most imperative lesson from self-study research was I discovered that as a teacher I make mistakes and so I need to constantly question and reflect on my teaching methodologies and lessons. We are constantly learning from our own practices through inquisition, reviving ourselves and accommodating differences.

## **CONTENTS**

### **CHAPTER ONE: PLANTING THE SEED: INTRODUCING INTERGRATING CULTURAL INCULSIVITY IN A GRADE 4 CLASSROOM**

Introduction to my study	1-3
The motivation for my research	3-5
Background information	5
My methodological approach	5-6
My research questions	6
My theoretical perspective and key concepts	7-14
Conclusion and review of the dissertation	14-15

### **CHAPTER TWO: CULTIVATING: MY SELF-STUDY RESEARCH PROCESS**

Introduction	16
Research methodology	16-17
Location of the study	18-19
My research participants	19
Critical friends	19-20
Data generation	21-24
Making meaning	24-25
Ethical Issues	25-27
Validity	27

Research Challenges	27-28
Conclusion	28

### CHAPTER THREE: REFLECTING ON THE PAST

Introduction	29-30
Personal history self-study research strategies	30-31

#### **My personal history related to cultural inclusivity and children's culture**

My first year of school: A whole new world	31-33
Life time treasures	33-36
Moving to another new school: Mixed feelings	36
Mr. B. hardly smiled with us	37-39
Assembly: My escape from destruction	39-40
Unforgettable moments in the garden	40-41
The media centre: A place of complete serenity	42-45
Name badges provided a sense of belonging and identity	45-46
I wish my teachers knew...	46-48
A different approach to teaching	48
Memories of my high school days	49-53
Experiences of a more traditional society	53-54
Collage making	55-59
My collage transcript	59-62



Conclusion	63
------------	----

## CHAPTER FOUR: REAPING CHILDREN’S CULTURE

Introduction	64-65
Lesson One. English: Folktales and Myths (22 April 2016)	65-71
Lesson Two Life Skills: Menus from different cultures in South Africa (28 April 2016)	72-75
Lesson 3. Life Skills: Collage making (23 May 2016)	76-83
Lesson Four Natural Science: Indigenous Musical Instruments (10 August 2016)	83-86
Lesson Five Mathematics: The day we played (16 August 2016)	86-90
Lesson Six English: Magical myths (18 August 2016)	90-92
My collage representation of what I learnt from my learners	93-98
Conclusion	98-99
References	

## Appendices

## CHAPTER FIVE: A PLACE OF DELIGHT– THE GARDEN

Introduction	100
A review of the dissertation	100-102
Personal-professional learning	102-103
Methodological learning	103-104
Conclusion	104-105

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 4.1. Lessons identified in folktales	69-70
--	-------

## LIST OF FIGURES

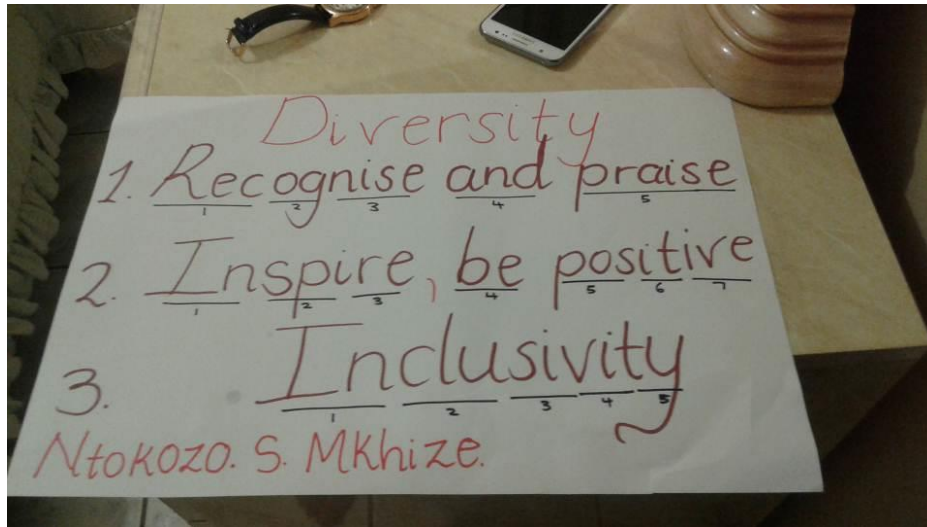
FIGURE	CAPTION	PAGE
Figure 1.1.	The Haiku poem that revealed my research focus	1
Figure 2.1.	A WhatsApp group conversation with my critical friends	20
Figure 3.1.	My grade 1 Abacus	33
Figure 3.2.	Memories entrenched in this old building	38
Figure 3.3.	The School garden: Where I found my sanity	41
Figure 3.4.	Sweet Valley High: Reconnecting the dots; visiting my timeline	42
Figure 3.5.	Grade 7 media centre monitors: Cheerful and excited	44
Figure 3.6.	My high school blazer: The good old days.50	
Figure 3.7.	My personal history collage	55
Figure 3.8.	My personal history collage transcript	60
Figure 4.1.	An extract of Cinderella shared by Carla	66
Figure 4.2.	An extract from the “ <i>The Boy Who Cried Wolf</i> ”	67
Figure 4.3.	An extract from “ <i>The Girl Who Broke her Promises</i> ”	69
Figure 4.4.	Examples of posters related to life lessons70	
Figure 4.5.	Menu for Mama Africa’s Kitchen	74
Figure 4.6.	Examples of menus made by my learners	75

Figure 4.7. My collage: A new perspective on learning	76
Figure 4.8. Examples of my learners' collages	79
Figure 4.9. An extract from our reading on indigenous musical instruments.	84
Figure 4.10. An extract from "The Magic Water Pot"	91
Figure 4.11. An example of a learner's ending for "The Magic Water Pot"	92
Figure 4.12. My collage: "Walking resources"	93

## CHAPTER ONE: PLANTING THE SEED

### Introduction

In developing my research focus, I was asked by my research supervisor to create a haiku poem. According to Samaras (2011), “a haiku poem of three lines with 5-7-5 syllables in each respective line can capture your research and why the topic matters to you” (p. 93). The haiku poem format served its purpose by allowing me to begin to articulate a topic for my research.



**Figure 1.1. The Haiku poem that revealed my research focus**

I am a grade 4 teacher at a primary school based in the Umlazi district of the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. I have been teaching for 3 years. The haiku poem (Figure 1.1) that I composed early on in my research journey expressed some of my initial research ideas on teaching and learning for inclusivity, embracing diversity and building my grade 4 learners<sup>1</sup> in positive ways to recognise and respect each other's differences and their own uniqueness. As part of this, I was interested in exploring children's culture by unfolding their ideas and games they enjoy playing, and connecting with their daily experiences and what they find interesting and intriguing. Developing the haiku poem encouraged me to do research on how I could give my learners a platform to share their feelings, ideas and interests. I

---

<sup>1</sup> In South Africa, “learners” is used to refer to children and adolescents in school, while “students” refers to those studying in higher education institutions.

realised that I wanted to be creative in my teaching methods and approaches as a grade 4 teacher. I believed that I had to reflect on my daily classroom experiences and to learn about using a variety of teaching methods and resources to aid education that would be inclusive of my learners' diverse cultural heritages, as well as their unique children's culture.

South Africa is a country that is rich in diversity of cultures, races, beliefs, abilities and ways of living. Our inclusive education policy embraces diversity, advocating that all schools and teachers should recognise the importance of respecting and accommodating differences among learners:

whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability, HIV or other infectious diseases. It also goes broader than formal schooling and acknowledges that learning also takes place at home and in the community, and within formal and informal settings and structures. (Department of Education, 2001, p. 6)

From this, I realised that teaching and learning should involve embracing diversity, understanding differences and appreciating ourselves and each other. This alerted me to look at the importance of inclusivity in my teaching.

My concern was raised by the fact that as teachers we encounter countless challenges in education; some of these challenges are related to negotiating differences in social backgrounds, cultural heritages, religions and languages, as well as the genuine interests and concerns of learners. In my experience, we teachers often struggle to enact inclusivity simply because we are not certain of the tools or approaches we can use to instill inclusivity in our classrooms. At times, these problems are obstacles in our teaching and learning as we have a hard time adapting to change or challenging what may be seen as socially acceptable by others.

In thinking about my research topic, I was reminded of our county's flag, which symbolises the meaning of diversity and embraces inclusivity. The Department of Education (2008) stated that our flag is a comprehensible example of South Africa's commitment to inclusivity. It also emphasises that we are

liberated to make our colours of the flag personally meaningful, as long as we remember to celebrate diversity.

Another point highlighted by the Department of Education (2008) is that “our constitution lays the foundation for a democratic and open society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights. It is the supreme law of our country and ensures government by the people” (p. 33). I wanted to plant the same ideas and values through my teaching and learning. As a teacher, I wanted them to respect and acknowledge the essence of diversity and democracy, which underlies the true meaning of inclusivity.

In this chapter, Chapter One, I elaborate on what stirred me to undertake my research. This is followed by some relevant background information and a concise introduction to my methodological approach. I then present the research questions. I also clarify my understanding of the theoretical perspective and key concepts that are woven into my thinking and learning (Samaras, 2011). To end, I offer an overview of the subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

### **The motivation for my research**

According to the Department of Basic Education (2010), in July 2001 the Ministry of Education introduced the *Education White Paper 6 Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System*. White Paper 6 policy mirrors our South African constitution, highlighting the importance of equality and non-discrimination in education. The policy framework in White Paper 6 outlined the education ministry’s obligation with respect to the provision of educational opportunities by accommodating diverse learning needs (Department of Education, 2001). This means that as teachers we should minimise barriers in learning and teaching and maximise a culture of learning to grant all learners an opportunity to participate in class. In my understanding, inclusive education encourages us as teachers to recognise that all children and youth can learn and that all children and youth need support. We are also encouraged to facilitate education structures, systems and learning methodologies to accommodate the interests and needs of all learners. Furthermore, the Department of Basic Education (2010) emphasised that the White Paper 6 outlined how the education and training system must be transformed to contribute to create a compassionate and humane educational culture.

I was drawn to the practice of inclusivity as a focus for my research. Reading the White Paper 6 policy encouraged me to explore how I could include and take into account all my learners' needs, interests and cultural backgrounds. Inclusivity challenges society to be open to diversity, consequently minimising any form of discrimination, stereotyping and being prejudiced. I looked forward to embracing diversity in my classroom and to learning from my learners. As an aspiring inclusive practitioner I wanted to explore and reflect on what I could learn about cultural inclusivity and children's culture from my own personal history and how I could integrate cultural inclusivity and children's culture in my teaching.

Seekings (2008) described the apartheid system (1948-1994) in South Africa as a system of racial ordering and discrimination. Legacies of apartheid are deeply rooted divisive racial, cultural and social norms (Seekings, 2008). This has resulted in unequal treatment and opportunities in our society. Hunt (2011) further explained that as apartheid education was based around racial grouping, apartheid as a social structure formalised inequalities in education. This manipulated the way education was delivered and the outcomes set. It was intended to produce certain types of citizens according to racial groups. As such, education for white people was geared towards preserving their dominance and superiority over other race groups.

As a black African woman, I have never looked at myself as a victim of the apartheid system or any other social order since I think it is a mind-set that makes you vulnerable even in a democratic society. However, when I started to reflect on my own experiences as a learner and a teacher, my ideas about inclusive education erupted in my thoughts. I wanted to explore what I could learn about inclusivity from my personal history and how I could integrate inclusivity into my teaching. My focus was particularly on inclusivity in relation to "the complex socio-cultural matrix that is South African society" (Department of Basic Education, 2010, p. 11). Allender and Allender (2006) explained that our understandings and values as teachers often "[grow] out of the wounds we experienced as children" (p. 14). Reflecting on my positive and negative experiences as a learner inspired me to be a positive influence on my learners. I felt encouraged to learn from my personal history and from my learners regarding cultural inclusivity and children's culture in order to integrate cultural inclusivity and children's culture in my classroom.



hooks (1985) described the classroom as a room of possibilities, even with all its limitations. She explained that as teachers we have the opportunity to allow emancipation, to command ourselves with an open mind and heart that permits us to face reality even as we jointly imagine ways to change our practices for the better. This inspired me to explore how I could approach inclusivity by using a variety of purposeful teaching strategies that could keep my learners intrigued and allow them all to participate in classroom activities and discussions. In other words, I wanted to explore how I could open and cultivate new learning opportunities for my learners and myself. I anticipated that this could take place if I was creative in my teaching strategies and approaches.

### **Background information**

My research was based in the primary school where I teach. Our school has experienced teaching and learning during the supremacy of the apartheid system and the transformation to democracy. It is a school that is rich in diversity, not only among its staff members, but also among its learners. We have diversity in terms of cultural heritages, religions, races and languages. We also have a dedicated special needs classroom.

The school enrolls over 1300 learners from different cultural backgrounds, religious groups and races. However the majority of our children are black African children. These include learners that come from our neighbouring African countries. We have a policy of inclusive education and our school is recognised as one of the most inclusive schools by the Department of Basic Education. Our school received an award in 2013 as one of the most inclusive schools in KwaZulu-Natal.

### **My methodological approach**

I employed a self-study research methodology. (I give a comprehensive account of my self-study research process in Chapter Two of this dissertation.) Pithouse, Mitchell and Weber (2009) explained that a self-study methodology is frequently used by teacher educators and teachers who are studying their own practice, assisted by colleagues or students or learners. I chose self-study methodology because I anticipated that would allow me as a teacher to reflect on and improve my teaching

approaches and methods. Through applying a self-study methodology, I aimed to learn how to better practice inclusivity in my classroom. Furthermore, Pithouse, Mitchell and Masinga (2009) stressed that “self-study is a way for teachers, teacher educators and other practitioners to study ourselves in action within our professional contexts” (p. 240). As a teacher, I also aimed to gain a better understanding of cultural diversity and children’s culture within my particular school context.

LaBoskey (2004) highlighted how self-study researchers can learn by “[articulating] and [interrogating] their personal histories and resultant understandings” (p. 829). I was motivated to recall and question my past experiences as a child and adolescent to see what I might learn with respect to cultural inclusivity and children’s culture.

LaBoskey (2004) described self-study research as a reflective practice that promotes life-long learning. I understand that as teachers we need to revisit and analyse our teaching practices; we should also strive to grow and better ourselves in our field. We are called to facilitate learning, to create a culture of learning and induce a positive atmosphere in our teaching through reflecting. We cannot be ignorant, but rather we have to acknowledge that the essence of self-study research is that our knowledge of teaching and learning is continually growing and changing.

### **My research questions**

The following questions guided my research:

*Question One: What can I learn about cultural inclusivity and children’s culture from my personal history?*

Samaras, Hicks and Berger (2004) explained that in self-study research “personal history – the formative, contextualized experiences of our lives that influence how we think about and practice our teaching – provides a powerful mechanism for teachers wanting to discern how their lived lives impact their ability to teach or learn” (p. 905). Because I wanted to learn about the possible impact of my lived experiences on my teaching, I narrated my personal history by retracing stories and descriptions of my remembered childhood and adolescent experiences (see Chapter Three of this dissertation).

*Question Two: What can I learn about cultural inclusivity and children's culture from my grade 4 learners?*

Samaras (2011) advised that teachers can address self-study research questions through planning and enacting and reflecting on “purposeful pedagogies” (p. 137). For the purposes of my research, I planned, enacted and studied lessons where my grade 4 learners and I explored issues of cultural inclusivity and children's culture through English, Mathematics, Natural Science and Life Skills lessons (see Chapter Four).

## **My theoretical perspective and key concepts**

### **A socio-cultural perspective**

I adopted a socio-cultural theoretical perspective in my study because, as Kelly (2006) explained, according to a socio-cultural perspective on learning, learners bring conceptual resources to the classroom based on or adopted from their cultural backgrounds and their beliefs prior to learning or attending school. Kelly (2006) also stated that learning can be enhanced when resources are provided in the classroom that take into account and build on learners' conceptual resources. In planning my purposeful pedagogies, I aimed to bring in a variety of teaching resources and strategies that would help to incorporate cultural diversity and children's culture. For example, I planned to bring children's games into the classroom. Bringing games into a learning environment can help to link classroom concepts to our learners' daily encounters outside the classroom, which can make more learning interesting for them (Nkopodi & Mosimege, 2009).

According to Gerhard and Mayer Smith (2008), "socio-cultural theories of learning are based on the assumption that learning is not an individual activity but rather a social phenomenon" (p. 5). Hence, I planned to encourage my learners to work collaboratively with each other and with me. I wanted to promote learning through sharing ideas that were linked to my learners' daily experiences, interests and concerns (Gerhard & Mayer-Smith, 2008). As stated by McMurtry, (2015), "most human cognitive skills originate in social interactions, practices, and tools" (p. 1). When I read this statement it made me realise that learning takes place through interacting socially, through communicating with parents, family, fellow learners and friends. I hoped my learners would be able to identify this social interaction and make it active in the classroom. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) also highlighted that learning takes place through social interaction. They emphasised that we learn through interaction with our social environment and that we learn through participating in classroom discussions, in the playground and communicating with people around us. As McMurtry (2015) explained, "That why it is crucial to engage students in a well-organized, collaborative activities" (p. 1). Based on my understanding of socio-cultural learning theory, this can take place when we read with our learners, find new words and construct sentences together, look at different shapes and colours or play games as a class. Through my reading, it became clearer to me that there is a community and language that exists within the classroom and promotes social interaction.

McMurtry (2015) stated that teachers must be considerate of learners' knowledge, not only of the content found in textbooks, but also to draw from their learners' background knowledge such as language abilities, cultural heritages, and personal interests. This statement encouraged me to look at my learners' daily experiences, the games they play, their favourite television programmes, the music they listen to and dancing styles they are attracted to.

Banks et al. (2001) maintained that, "teaching should be culturally responsive to students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups" (p. 197). When I think of being culturally responsive, I question my roles as a teacher and realise that as teachers we need to approach teaching and learning in a manner that respects and understands diversity. This means that in our teaching and classrooms we need to accommodate differences and uniqueness. We need to be knowledgeable of our own historical backgrounds and cultural backgrounds and learn how these can influence our teaching and learning. We also need to look at individuals who are dominant and subordinate in society, as this perpetuates discrimination and stereotypes regarding racial and ethnic groups.

### **Inclusive Education**

My study was underpinned by White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001), which is the driving force for inclusive education in South Africa. White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) defined inclusive education as recognising that all children need support. It advocated facilitating a culture of learning and teaching to meet the needs of all the children through acknowledging and respecting differences such as age, race, gender, ethnicity, languages, class, and disability. The policy stated that inclusive education endeavours to transform negative attitudes, and exclusionary behaviour, teaching methods, curricula and educational environments in order to meet the needs of all learners. In other words, no one should be excluded. This means the policy aimed to eradicate or to at least minimise possibilities of discrimination and prejudice.

De Jager (2013) stated that teachers are key role players in inclusive education. According to my understanding, to be inclusive as teachers we have to be creative in our approaches and methods of teaching. Creativity can positively enhance teaching and learning: “this is a process which takes time, and which uses the hands and body as well as the mind. The approach is optimistic about people’s ability to generate interesting theories themselves.” (Gaunlett & Holzwarth, 2006, p. 1). I yearned to be creative in my teaching methods and understood that I could also learn from my learners about how they perceived, understand or communicated with the world around them, moreover I could learn about what they easily identified and linked to their learning as their culture. This realisation heightened my inquiry and prompted me to reflect on my teaching methods and my level of creativity.

UNESCO (2004) explained how teachers can create a friendly and conducive classroom that celebrates inclusivity, stating that we should use a range of creative materials for all subjects. For example, in Mathematics we can use materials made from newspapers, or in languages, we can use posters and puppets (UNESCO, 2004). Furthermore, we should think of ways to involve our learners in making lessons inclusive by planning this aspect of our lessons in advance (UNESCO, 2004). Hence, in my research I planned to use a variety of learning tools and to ask my learners to share their ideas about cultural heritages and children’s culture with me.

UNESCO (2004) also discussed the importance of a “learning-friendly” environment for cultivating inclusivity. This is a “child-friendly” and “teacher-friendly” environment. According to UNESCO (2004), a child-friendly environment places emphasis on the significance of teachers and learners learning together as a learning community. It places children at the centre of learning and promotes their active participation in learning. I aimed to create a child-friendly and teacher-friendly environment by exploring cultural inclusivity and children’s culture through a variety of learning resources that learners brought to school, such as newspapers, magazines and toys. I anticipated that this would allow us to work as a community. I was also hoping to be able to acknowledge learners’ interests and what they found intriguing inside and outside the classroom. I thought that by allowing my learners to share their ideas and concerns, they would be able to participate actively in their learning

According to the Department of Education (2001, p.12), the White Paper 6 “arises out the need for changes to be made to the provision of education and training so that it is responsive and sensitive to the diverse range of learning needs”. I strongly believe that as teachers we should challenge society to be open minded towards inclusivity and to respond to diversity by encouraging and implementing a culture of treating and addressing issues of discrimination in a sensitive manner that instils a sense of humanity. We should teach in a way that displays and promotes respect, tolerance, equality and democracy.

Inclusive education embodies a fundamental process in the transformation of educational culture and traditions to construct an inclusive approach. Inclusive education needs a partnership where everyone is dedicated and involved in wanting and implementing change (Mitchell, De Lange, & Nguyen-Thi, 2008). Teachers and student teachers need to be supported to gain skills and knowledge regarding inclusive education (Mitchell et al., 2008). We also need to consider some of the challenges we might encounter. We need to look at the meaning of democracy and equality thoroughly with understanding and a hunger to practice all that our South African constitution stands for.

### **Multicultural Education**

White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001) portrayed inclusive education as a tool that fosters teaching and learning in a multicultural environment. Gorski and Covert (2000) explained that multicultural education is an enlightened approach for transforming education that analyses and addresses discriminatory practices in education. They described it as based on principles of social justice, equity, and education for all. Gorski and Covert (2000) stressed that multicultural education recognises that schools and teachers are vital to counteracting social discrimination and prejudice and to enhancing learners’ understanding and commitment to the democratic ideals, such as human dignity, justice and equality. Therefore, in my research I aimed to encourage my learners to celebrate their cultural diversity and children’s culture, and to respect peoples’ differences and uniqueness.

Du Preez and Roux (2010) cautioned that “contradictions between human rights values and cultural values could entrench confusion if people do not engage in reflection and dialogue about their

confusion” (p. 25). I began to direct my thoughts to the kinds of values I was instilling in my classroom, as well as to the cultural values that had influenced my own childhood. I questioned if I adopted a cultural perspective that encourages conserving traditions and protecting these from external forces. I had a great desire to preserve cultural values, as well as to promote values that would understand and instil democratic rights, such as freedom. I realised that I needed to look critically at my own teaching to consider how I might find a way to negotiate a positive balance between human rights values and traditional cultural values (Du Preez & Roux, 2010).

According to Weeks (2012):

Culture transformation to nurture a culture of learning within South African schools would, within more contemporary emergent approach, imply that teachers as well as other key role players start to live out the required cultural determinants. In so doing they not only serve as role models for students but also in bringing about meaningful social interaction to establish a learning community with the classroom (p. 9).

I envisaged that a contemporary cultural approach I could adopt would involve exploring children’s culture. I anticipated that I would learn from my learners. I looked forward to exploring children’s culture and embracing new ways of learning through understanding children’s culture.

Banks et al. (2001) explained that “powerful multicultural schools help students from diverse racial, cultural, ethnic and language groups to experience academic success” (p. 202). I found it motivating and intriguing to know that being culturally aware requires teachers to design and plan lessons that are related and relevant to cultural symbols and multicultural representations to help fill the gaps existing between what our learners already know and what they still need to learn. This means that in our classrooms we can introduce, discuss and interact with what takes place at home in our communities. Assuming that all learners are uniform is misleading in guiding our teaching methods and approaches. This does not aid or improve our teaching and learning. It also creates a margin in the classroom where



some learners feel isolated and rejected in society. We need to acknowledge differences, respect and embrace the beauty of diversity and multiplicity. Teachers are agents of positive change and transformed mind sets regarding inclusivity. Whatever we practice will influence the way children respond to differences.

### **Children's culture**

Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2002) highlighted that reflecting on our childhood can help us to understand children's culture. They explained that as teachers we often recall episodes of playing school as children. We remember lining up, the sound of the chalkboard, the smell of crayons and many items and episodes related to our learning environments. This evoked some of my childhood memories and encouraged me to retrace my personal history of my own school days and also observe my learners' daily encounters in school, to look at the different games they play during their break, their favourite toys and so on.

Motivated by Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2002), I realised that there is a culture of learning that exists outside the classroom. I aimed to incorporate my learners' ideas and interests through uncovering children's popular culture. This assisted me realise that I did not want to cultivate passive learners, but rather learners who were active. I had to walk into their footsteps and reflect on my own childhood experiences and question whether or not I was embracing and integrating cultural inclusivity and children's culture. Johanson (2010) agreed that research conducted in schoolyards and playgrounds led to the conclusion that children had their own culture. She also emphasised that children have their own particular values. Based on this understanding, I realised that could not turn a blind eye to what drives and motivates my learners.

Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2002) stated that taking into account children's culture can encourage a view of children as the subjects, rather than objects of research. They argued that children are experts on their own learning and cultivate children's culture on a daily basis (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh). Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2002) considered children's culture as playing a fundamental element of learning. For example, they also supported looking at children's toys in responding to questions related to children's culture and how they learn. They also emphasised that marginalising children in the classroom does not

aid teaching and learning in a positive manner. As an alternative, we teachers should integrate children's culture into classroom activities. I aimed to echo the same ideas in my teaching and in the classroom. I wanted to listen to and to incorporate my learners' thoughts regarding children's culture through observing games, stories, movies and toys they found intriguing.

Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2002) explained that children's culture can be researched by exploring numerous texts in which children's culture is visually represented, such as children's television and films, as well as children's toys, children's books, and fairy tales. This inspired me to ask my learners about their favourite television, films, toys, books and fairy tales and to bring these into the classroom where possible (see Chapter Four). Mitchell and Reid-Walsh also proposed that another way to explore children's culture is through adults' memories of childhood. This encouraged me to explore my own childhood memories, in the interests of better understanding my learners' interests, needs and concerns (see Chapter Three).

Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2002 p. 202) advised that those "doing research on children's culture [should do so] through employing methods that respect children and children's knowledge." I found it fascinating to think of children as active resources that play pivotal role in learning and teaching. Mitchell and Reid-Walsh further stressed (2002) the importance of listening to children's voices and perceptions as displayed in their daily encounters and activities, their interests and passions. I also planned to discover and respect my learners' preferred learning methods, which I anticipated might be learning through playing games and living in an imaginary world (see Chapter Four).

### **Teacher learning**

LaBoskey (2004) explained that "our instructional techniques derive from our theories of teacher learning so that they will be most likely to benefit our [learners]" (p. 820). My research aimed at enhancing my own learning as a teacher. In my understanding, from a socio-cultural perspective, teacher learning

involves working collaboratively, sharing ideas and teaching methods. In addition, teacher learning needs full participation in the classroom, since it requires interaction (Kelly, 2006). According to Easton (2012), "Learning means that we work with many people, encouraging discoveries and learning from mistakes, helping everyone to find what work" (p. 52). In reading this I discovered that teacher learning involves people around us. We should have an opportunity to share our ideas, opinions based on what we regard is important in learning. This can support a culture of learning not only for teachers, but for our learners too.

I aimed to encourage interaction and participation in my teaching to allow my learners to share their opinions and experiences so that I could learn from them. Kelly (2006) explained that teacher learning is visibly dispersed across teachers, learners and resources that aid teaching; for example: abstract objects, models, theories and physical pieces like books and computers. Hence, in my research I aimed to use a variety of resources and aids to enhance my learning about teaching and the way my learners learnt.

Jurasite-Harbison and Rex (2010) stressed that teacher learning also involves teachers drawing knowledge from personal and professional experiences and translating that their teaching. Hence, in my research, I planned to use my own personal experiences to engage with inclusive education. I hoped that this would have a positive impact on my knowledge as a professional. I felt it would allow me grow as teacher and to work closely with my learners; to get know some of their beliefs, values and cultural influences (Gerhard & Mayer-Smith, 2008).

As Kelly (2006) advised, reflecting on our learning as teachers is critical. Therefore, I decided to reflect on my teaching methods and lessons. According to Kelly (2006), teacher learning takes place when teachers progress towards expertise. Through applying a self-study methodology to research my practice of inclusivity I aimed to enhance my own learning, to allow me to grow. As Kelly (2006) stated that teacher learning engages the process of knowing-in-practice so as to permit teachers' full involvement in classroom activity. Through practicing inclusivity I aimed to be able to enact the values

underlined by our inclusive education policy that celebrates diversity, equality and respect for differences.

Day and Gu (2007) stressed that “to sustain teachers’ commitment to learning throughout their careers means that they must engage in lifelong learning. (p. 428) I agree with this statement as we need to constantly upgrade ourselves in order to be fully engaged in our teaching practices. This can take place when we learn through studying further, workshops or seminars. Easton (2008) agreed that “It is clearer today than ever that educators need to learn, and that’s why *professional learning* has replaced *professional development*. Developing is not enough. Educators must be knowledgeable and wise” (p. 756). What I understood from this statement is that we need to initiate our own teacher learning instead of waiting for development from the outside.

### **Conclusion and overview of the dissertation**

In Chapter One, I elaborated on what motivated me to conduct my research. This was followed by some background information and a brief introduction to my methodological approach. I then explained the research questions that were the driving force of my research. I also explained the theoretical perspective and key concepts that served as a guide in my research.

In Chapter Two I give an in-depth description of my self-study research process. I discuss my choice of research methodology, the location of the study, the research participants, as well as the value of working together with my two fellow Master’s students. Additionally, I explain my data generation and how I made meaning to respond to my research questions. Also, I discuss validity and ethical issues, as well as my research challenges and how I dealt with those challenges. To end, I offer my core learning about doing self-study research.

Chapter Three responds to my first research question: *What can I learn about cultural inclusivity and children’s culture from my personal history?* I begin this chapter by briefly recapping the research strategies that allowed me to narrate my personal history. To follow, I recount stories and descriptions of my remembered childhood and adolescent experiences. (I place more emphasis on my childhood

years because these are most closely connected with my practice as a grade 4 teacher.) I then demonstrate how I represented my personal history narrative in the form of a collage, which I presented for feedback from my research supervisor and my fellow Master's students. I close by highlighting my key learning in response to my first research question.

In Chapter Four, I engage with my second research question: *What can I learn about cultural inclusivity and children's culture from my grade 4 learners?* I offer a comprehensive account of and reflection on the lessons that I planned, taught and reflect on for the purposes of my self-study research. I describe and illustrate everyday teaching and learning experiences with my 39 grade 4 learners. I further explain how I created a collage to make visible my learning from teaching these lessons and how I enriched my learning in discussion with my fellow students and research supervisor. I conclude by emphasising my vital learning in response to my second research question.

In the closing chapter, Chapter Five, I reconsider my self-study dissertation. I reflect on how my study has influenced me personally and professionally. I also deliberate on my methodological learning. Finally, I shed light on what I aim to do in the future as a consequence of this study.

## **CHAPTER TWO: CULTIVATING**

### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter, Chapter One, I explained what motivated me to conduct my research. This is followed by some relevant background information and a brief introduction to my methodological approach. I then listed the research questions that were the driving force of my research. I also explained theoretical perspective and key concepts that informed my research. To end, I offered an overview of the dissertation.

In this Chapter (Chapter Two) I give an account of my self-study research process. I discuss my choice of research methodology, the location of the study, the research participants, as well as the importance of having critical friends and how they helped me. Furthermore, I illustrate my data generation and explain how I made meaning to respond to my research questions. In addition, I discuss validity and ethical issues, as well as my research challenges and how I tackled those challenges.

### **Research methodology**

Samaras (2011) stated that choosing a self-study research methodology demands that we as teachers acknowledge our experiences and understand differences. For example, we must acknowledge that we have diverse classrooms, not only in terms of culture, race or languages, but also with respect to the way our learners learn. This means that as teachers we can be motivated through self-study research to reflect on our past experiences as well as our present experiences. We can continually learn from our own practices through inquiry, rediscovering ourselves and accommodating differences.

According to Lunenburg and Samaras (2011), self-study begins with something that captures one's awareness in one's work environment. In my case, I felt that as a teacher I needed to find out what my learners could relate to and value. I discovered that this need called me to be more involved in and to listen to my learners' curiosity and topics they found intriguing. I anticipated that this would keep them captivated and stimulated, particularly if they had the opportunity to

share their thoughts and backgrounds. I comprehended that I needed to build a learning community in my classroom.

LaBoskey (2004) pointed out that in self-study research, “we recognize and accept the uniqueness of our circumstances . . . , we serve as powerful role models for our learners, whether we acknowledge it or not” (p. 819). In reading this, I felt encouraged to work in a collaborative manner and to constantly seek different views and perspectives from my grade 4 learners. I anticipated that this could assist me to transform and construct new ways of teaching and learning without excluding my learners’ needs and children’s culture. In other words, I wanted to become more flexible in my teaching and to be less restricted. I decided to use a variety of resources and to find autonomy and freedom of creativity, as well as critical thinking. I anticipated that my learners could assist me to break through boundaries and find new ways of learning about children’s culture.

Self-study research reveals that teaching requires continuous reflection, not to mention introspection (Samaras, 2011). I was optimistic to step into my past and present and better myself in every aspect. As LaBoskey (2004) clarified, “self-study researchers are both actors and spectators who act and think with regard to educational questions; they are attempting to be “good judges” who help others to be so as well” (p. 820). Therefore, self-study research is not just looking in the mirror, but we as self-study researchers are the authors and characters of real life stories waiting to bring positive change.

Self-study research allows us to re-evaluate our teaching and the way we address certain issues; as Chiu-Ching and Chan (2009) explained, “it is through inquiry that teachers examine self within the teaching environment and their practices in terms of roles, actions, and beliefs, in order to consider making changes for improvement.” (p. 20). Through questioning my own teaching practice and reflecting on my past experiences regarding inclusivity I hoped to be able to make changes that would improve teaching and learning in my classroom.

Furthermore, Hamilton, Smith and Worthington (2008) agreed that sharpening our teaching approaches through self-study research can add value to our teaching and can add to our understanding of teaching and learning. In choosing a self-study methodology, I aimed to

identify my shortcomings and gaps in my teaching. I anticipated that reflecting on my teaching would have a positive impact on my professional development and my relationship with my learners. As stated by Kelly (2006):

teachers with a high degree of commitment and motivation and who gain much satisfaction from their work, or in a socio-cultural terms are those who identify most closely with the communities in which they act, are most effective in influencing their students' attainments and attitudes. (p. 515)

Through self-study research, I wanted to work closely with my learners and to be more effective in influencing their attitudes in a positive manner such as being respectful and tolerant to differences in culture, religion and race.

### **Location of the study**

My research was based in the primary school where I teach grade 4. This school is located in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Our school has experienced teaching and learning as a school for white children during the supremacy of the apartheid regime<sup>2</sup> and as a multiracial school after the subsequent transformation to democracy in 1994. The medium of teaching and learning is English. My school has over 70 teachers and teacher assistants. The teacher-learner ratio is 1 teacher to 37 learners. It is a school that is rich in diversity, not only in its staff members but also in its learners. We have diversity in terms of races, cultures, religions and languages.

The school is a fee paying school and has good infrastructure. It is situated in an urban area. It has numerous teaching and learning resources, such as whiteboards, laptops, computers, Ipads and many more. Our school has an after care system. We also have a dedicated special needs classroom. The school's governing body decides the amount of school fees the school charges per annum.

Most of our learners are from suburbs or townships around Durban. Most learners are brought to school fetched by their parents in private cars. However, some of our learners use public

---

<sup>2</sup> Under the apartheid system, South African people were separated according to their race, and these races were obliged to live and go to school independently from each other (Clarke & Worger, 2016).



transport or use the *Malume* system. *Malume* is a transport system that collects learners from the same neighbourhood that go to the same schools or schools situated around the same area. Their parents pay the *Malume* on a monthly basis. *Malume* means uncle IsiZulu. This form of transport is called *Malume* by our learners and our school community.

### **Research participants**

Because self-study is self-focused (LaBoskey, 2004), I was the primary participant in my self-study research. I am a grade 4 teacher. I have been teaching for 3 years. I teach all subjects in my class, meaning I spend most of the time with my class. I have 18 girls and 21 boys in my classroom, with ages ranging from 9 to 11 years old. Most of my learners live with both of their parents, while the others are raised by single parents or by their grandparents.

Working with my 39 grade 4 learners as participants in my research was convenient for me. I was able to reflect on my teaching approaches and methods through working with my whole class and looking at my lesson plans and their classwork (see Chapter Four). However, for my research purposes, I only used the classwork of learners whose parents/guardians gave consent for them to participate in my study.

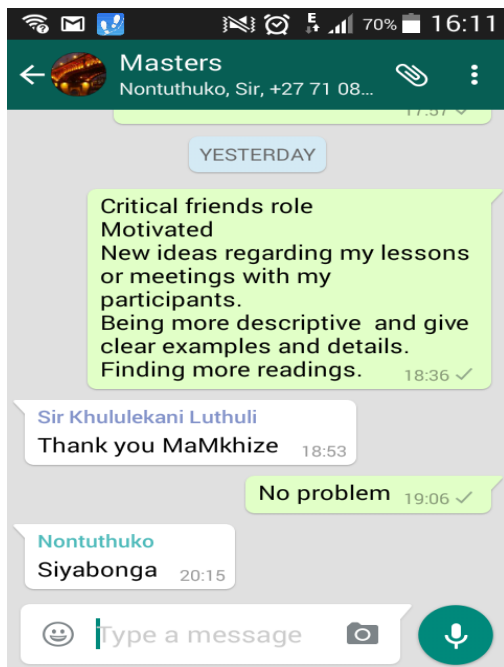
By involving my learners as research participants, I cultivated my own learning as a teacher and acknowledged that my learners as active resources who played a pivotal part in my learning. Moreover, I was able to explore different perspectives and understandings by engaging my learners in diverse activities.

### **Critical friends**

According to Samaras and Roberts (2011), “critical friends encourage and solicit respectful questioning and divergent views to obtain alternative perspectives, and they work to help validate the quality and legitimacy of each other’s claims” (p. 43). During the course of my self-study research process, I worked with two critical friends who also schoolteachers, Khulekani and Nontuthuko. Like me, they were both doing their Master’s research, specialising in teacher development and using a self-study methodology. Also like me, both of my critical friends are African and speak isiZulu as their home language.

As shown in Chapter Three and Four, my critical friends' input helped me find alternative ways to make sense of my research and respond to my research questions. They were also able to identify errors I might have been blind to, such as managing my classroom activities and using different approaches to generate data and to communicate with my learners. They provided insight and motivated me to record my work, to be more descriptive, to give clear examples and details related to my study and reflect on my study. According to my understanding, having critical friends helped me to visualise and distinguish shortcomings that I might possibly have disregarded; they helped me to picture relationships that existed within my study as well as to overcome barriers. In other words, I realised that I am not just an individual but that I belong to a learning community of self-study researchers (Samaras, 2011).

We met at least three times a month; sometimes with our research supervisor, Dr Kathleen, and sometimes as a group of students. We read each other's work, helped each other to edit our work and recommended possible readings. We constantly used the social media text message service of WhatsApp to share ideas and meet deadlines (see Figure 2.1). We also kept each motivated through seeking each other's help and being optimistic about our self-study research.



**Figure 2.1. A WhatsApp group conversation with my critical friends**

**Data generation**

As stated by LaBoskey (2004), “we need to use methods that will provide evidence to us, to our students, and to our colleagues that we are discovering that we are reframing our thinking and transforming our practice in defensible ways” (p. 824). For my self-study, data were generated through using multiple research practices: artefact retrieval and taking photographs, collage making, journal writing, audio recording of lessons and collecting examples of learners’ classwork. These practices allowed me to learn about cultural inclusivity and children’s culture in my classroom. I was also able to explore how my past experiences might have influenced my teaching in relation to cultural inclusivity and children’s culture.

Samaras (2011) advised self-study researchers to “be patient and purposeful about the process of collecting data while you also try it out in the same time frame” (p. 161). I was motivated to work on methods that could direct me to answer my research questions. Samaras (2011) also recommended having a clear data generation plan and being organised. I started by having a timeline of my lesson plans and meetings with my critical friends and keeping a record of events and challenges that took place. I also aimed to be clear and descriptive in my writing about my data generation (Feldman, 2003). For example, if I was writing about an artefact I had to state what kind of memories it evoked and how those memories linked to my research topic.

Using multiple research practices allowed me to explore my own and my learner participants’ values, beliefs, ethnicities, religions and cultures. I was able to discover and share my own educational and learning experiences through journal writing, taking photographs and artefact retrieval (see Chapter Three). My learners also got an opportunity to engage in expressing and voicing their opinions related to cultural inclusivity and children’s culture by using different methods (see Chapter Four). This permitted me to identify answers for my research questions by looking at my personal history and my learners’ responses.

### **Artefact retrieval and taking photographs**

According to Mitchell and Weber (1999), artefacts are objects with a personal meaning that can be used to help recall childhood memories that might be difficult to put into words. In retracing my personal history (as presented in Chapter Three), I used artefacts to provoke my memories and reflect on my past experiences. In writing about these artefacts, I “discovered deeper

meanings about [myself]. . . . as they served as mirrors that prompted deeper reflection” (Evans, Ka’opua, & Freese, 2015, p. 29). Using artefacts also helped me to explore my educational background and cultural background. As Cole (2011) explained, through artefact retrieval I was also able to explore positive and negative emotions and relationships in my personal history.

I took photographs of significant artefacts to help elicit thoughts and emotions related to my past experiences (as presented in Chapter Three). According to Mitchell, Weber, and Pithouse (2009), photographs in self-study research “can literally help us see things differently” and to “step back and almost literally look at ourselves” (pp. 119; 124). I also took photographs of places and spaces that assisted me to look at myself and my past experiences in context (as shown in Chapter Three). .

### **Collage making**

Butler-Kisber (2008) proposed that the art of cutting and sticking images and words and the eagerness to experiment can result in a creative and innovative collage that can cultivate creativity and levels of understanding. I used collage making with my grade 4 learners as way for them to express their interests and personalities. I made my own collage as an example to show my learners how collages can represent stories of ourselves and our experiences. I explained to them how a collage can mirror the way we view the world with images being given meaning by how they stand in a relationship to one another (Butler-Kisber, 2008). Graham, Powell, and Taylor (2015) stated that bringing in visuals can allow learner to participate more freely in classroom discussions as some of them are able to express themselves better through visuals. Through collage making, my learners got an opportunity to share their children’s culture using pictures and words. As described in Chapter Four, my learners were energised; they felt liberated, but also at times puzzled. I realised that they were not used to being given a task that allowed them to show their creativity and make choices about what and how to create something. My learners were inspired to engage in classroom discussions about their collages and they were full of enthusiasm. I appreciated the opportunity to learn about children’s culture through their collages and these discussions.

### **Journal writing**

Masinga (2012) stated that, through using journal writing, we can discover that the route of reflecting is a knotty one, since it requires us to expose our essence for all to see. I used a journal for narrative writing about my personal history in relation to cultural inclusivity and children's culture. I also used my journal to record or write about my daily experiences and lessons. This allowed me to reflect on my on my teaching approaches and teaching methods. Journal writing assisted me to record my lessons and to reflect on my lessons. I could more easily identify events and ideas that resonated with cultural inclusivity and children's culture. In Chapter Four, I give examples of excerpts from my reflective journal to show my views and feelings and to show how my learning progressed.

My learners also got opportunities to write journal entries about the activities that we were doing together for the purposes of my research. For example, I encouraged them to write about their favourite toy, game or book and to explain how this aided their learning (see Chapter Four). Through journal writing, they were able to acknowledge their own experiences and perspectives. My learners took pleasure in writing in their journals, even though at times they would seek for my approval or seemed confused since I was flexible and I told them that they could choose any subject to write about.

### **Audio recording of lessons**

Masinga (2012) used audio recording for her sessions with her participants in her self-study research. She explained how listening to the recordings enabled her to gain more understanding and analyse events that took place during the sessions. This also provided an opportunity to reflect on issues or emotions she might have overlooked. Audio recording assisted me to record my teaching and my lessons when dealing with themes related to cultural inclusivity and children's culture (as discussed in Chapter Four). I recorded the lessons where my learners were working with journal writing and collage making and I also audio recorded lessons where I addressed issues of cultural inclusivity and children's culture through my English, Mathematics, Natural Science and Life Skills lessons.

At first, in listening to the recordings, I felt a bit overwhelmed. I noticed that I tended to repeat quite a lot of words and I talked more than my learners, such as asking the same questions over

and over again, especially if they were reluctant to participate. This prompted me to reflect on my own teaching practice. Initially, some of my learners were very disruptive and pretentious when I told them about audio-recording. Some of the others were perfectionist and did not want to make a mistake that would be audio recorded. However, I was heartened to see how the learners became more comfortable and involved in classroom discussions. As the lessons progressed, I found them very genuine and more relaxed.

### **Making meaning**

My meaning making was inductive, given that I looked for patterns, concerns and understandings that appeared during the course of my research (Nieuwenhuis, 2010). In consolidating and making sense of my lived experiences in relation to my research questions, I made use of collage making (see Chapter Three and Four). As Butler-Kisber (2008) pointed out, “collage can be used as a helpful way of conceptualizing a response to a research question (p. 270). Creating collages helped me to conceptualise through cutting and pasting pictures and words that were meaningful to my research questions. I was able to depict, review and think again about my learning. I presented these collages to my research supervisor and my critical friends and obtained different responses and alternative perspectives from them (Samaras, 2011). These collage discussions were audio recorded and are presented in dialogue form in Chapter Three and Four to show how my learning was enhanced through conversation with my critical friend and research supervisor.

According to Van Schalkwyk (2010), a collage is a poster or visual representation in which a person can use photographs, pictures, cuttings and texts from magazines, newspapers or any other print material that defines him or her as a person. She also explained that making a collage by using pictures and images can represent life changing events that tell a life story. In making a collage to respond to my first research question (see Chapter Three), I was able to learn a lot about myself, including my strengths and my weaknesses and how my background influenced my learning and development.

Van Schalkwyk (2010) also stated that collage making can be therapeutic as it can become a process of making sense of past selves, events and past circumstances. I found that I was able to heal old emotional wounds as I made new meaning of my personal history by using pictures and words to create a collage (see Chapter Three). This was a comforting journey as I was amazed to find that I gained new perspectives on “self-defining memories” (Van Scalkwyk, 2010, p. 676) in my life story that were captured through cutting and sticking pictures and text. As I recalled the tragedies that occurred in my life at a very young age, I made sense of the past and looked forward to adopting an optimistic attitude and embracing children’s culture.

Butler-Kisber (2008, p. 269) highlighted that the “collage making process moves from intuition and feelings to thoughts and ideas.” In the course of collage making, I was able to express myself visually and then articulate my thoughts and ideas as I presented my collages to my research supervisor and my critical friends. Furthermore Butler-Kisber (2008, p. 272) underlined that “collage making has the potential of providing new and different ways of thinking about phenomena and revealing aspects about everyday life.” In creating and presenting my collages, I became mindful of my own childhood experiences and made new sense of these experiences. I was moved emotionally and encouraged to learn more about children’s culture.

### **Ethical issues**

In conducting self-study research we should strive never to harm people in any way, whether it is emotional, physical or psychological (Samaras, 2011). In researching with children as participants, I had to take into account particular ethical issues I might encounter. Morrow and Richards (2011) stated that researchers need to think cautiously about the ethical implications when working with children. Hence, I had to consider my learners’ feelings and their ideas related to my study. In other words, I had to take into account children’s perspectives.

It was imperative to get consent from both parents/guardians and my learners to use their classwork for my research. I explained to my learners that I was intrigued by things they found fascinating and captivating and that I wanted us to work in unity to explore learning using a thrilling approach. I told them I wanted to find ways to approach learning through their favourite toys, books, games and cartoons. They were excited and eager to participate.

I wrote letters to my learners' parents in which they were given clear explanations about the aims of the study, and that learners were not compelled or forced to participate in the study. I sent the letter home to my learners' parents to obtain their approval and permission (see Appendix A). I also reassured them that participation in the study would not negatively affect the learners' academic progress or my attitude towards them. I explained that they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. In addition they were reassured that their beliefs regarding their values would be respected and treated in an ethical manner. These ethical considerations were essential for the success of my study. I also let the parents know that this study was aimed at having a positive impact on my teaching. In the end, all parents consented.

All the learners in my class participated in the lessons that I planned and taught as part of my research because these were in line with the national curriculum policy. However, for my research purposes, I planned only to use the classwork of learners whose parents/guardians had given consent for them to participate in my study. I approached my principal and explained that I would like to pursue studying a Master's degree in Teacher Development Studies, and I would need to reflect on my own learning experiences and discover children's culture. Therefore, I needed her permission to conduct my research since I would be working with my grade 4 learners. Fortunately, she was supportive of my research.

Graham et al. (2015) explained the importance of privacy and confidentiality, stating that this is a basic human right. Therefore it was vital for me to respect my learners' privacy and confidentiality, especially in relation to what they wrote in their journals. To ensure confidentiality, learners' classwork has been presented in Chapter Four without their names and all names of learners have been changed when mentioning particular learners. However, I did use the names of my research supervisor and two critical friends as this was reciprocally decided to show their contributions to my research.

In narrating my personal history, I included some memories of lived experiences that involved my family. Ellis (2007) cautioned that in writing about family members, we need to be aware of issues of "relational ethics". She explained: "relational ethics requires researchers to act from our hearts and minds, acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others, and take responsibility for



actions and their consequences” (p. 3). I discussed my research with my family and friends as most of my personal experiences are influenced by them and memories we share together. I mentioned that this would be a healing and rewarding journey for me as I would be able to identify my shortcomings and soar like an eagle in my teaching practice. I also told them I would respect their privacy and would not use their names in my study. They all supported my research.

### **Validity**

Feldman (2003) advised that, as self-study researchers, we need to address issues of validity by giving “reasons to believe and trust the self-study” (p. 28). Through using multiple data sources for my self-study research such as collages, journal writing and audio recordings of my lessons, my study’s validity was strengthened (LaBoskey, 2004). Furthermore, as stated by Feldman (2003), it is important to give clear and thorough descriptions of how we generate data and to make clear what counts as data in our self-study research. In this dissertation, I have given clear details on and illustrations of how I generated my data. For example, I have provided extracts from audio recordings and journal writing. My lesson plans are also attached as an appendix (see Appendix B).

### **Research Challenges**

One challenge I encountered was that I found that my learners were not that used to being given autonomy or freedom to contribute to learning, to be critical thinkers and to be involved in their own learning that embraced children’s culture and echoed their curiosities and interests (see Chapter Four). I assured my learners that their ideas, thoughts and opinions were valuable and would also aid teaching and learning. I reminded them that this was pivotal for my research as I wanted to explore their minds and hearts and their culture of learning and daily encounters.

Another problem that I encountered was when some of my learners’ parents initially refused to allow their children to participate due to not understanding the importance of my study. I encouraged my learners’ parents and guardians by highlighting the importance of inclusivity and explaining that though my study I aimed to teach my learners to respect and value cultural diversity and children’s culture.

The school calendar and the weather conditions were not always conducive for me to conduct the lessons that I had planned as part of my research (see Chapter Four). We also had quite a number of public holidays, which created a lot of pressure for me and my learners as we had to catch up on work missed during the public holidays. I also had the pleasure of having a student teacher assigned to me, but unfortunately that also stole some of my research lessons. I had to adjust my dates and work with learners who were present in school and adapt to working under pressure.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I gave a thorough explanation of my self-study research process. I presented my motives for taking a self-study research approach to this study. In addition I discussed my research surroundings and explained why I chose my grade 4 learners as participants. This was followed by a detailed explanation of my data generation strategies and data sources. Subsequently, I discussed my approach to making meaning through collage making. To follow, I gave details of how I handled issues of validity and ethical issues. Lastly, I discussed my research challenges.

In doing self-study research, I was able to develop into being a long-life learner by starting to question my teaching practices and methods. I was able to acknowledge and identify how my personal history influenced my own learning and development and also that my learners are capable of learning through reflecting on through their own daily encounters. I saw my shortcomings and strengths through the mirror of my learners; their eagerness to participate inspired and motivated me.

## CHAPTER THREE: REFLECTING ON THE PAST

### Introduction

My self-study research was inspired by my realisation that as teachers we can encounter and experience countless challenges and opportunities regarding cultural inclusivity and children's culture. In my self-study research I aimed to explore what I could learn about cultural inclusivity and children's culture. I wanted to know more about how my learners learnt through their daily experiences, games and favourite characters and television shows. I also hoped to better understand the connection between learning and playing. I began to look at my own personal history and how I could learn from this about integrating cultural inclusivity in my teaching and in my learner's learning, especially in relation to children's culture that takes place inside and outside the classroom environment. In the course of my research, I aimed to enhance my own learning and my teaching. I wanted to become a developed teacher who is informed about my learners' interests.

In the preceding chapter, Chapter Two, I gave reasons for the methodological approach of my self-study research. I explained my perception of self-study research methodology. Subsequently I outlined the environment in which the research took place and the selection of my research participants. This was followed by details of my critical friends and how they influenced and contributed towards my research. Moreover, I acknowledged and gave a clear explanation of each research practice that I used to generate data and elucidated how I used collage making as a creative analytic practice. Lastly I discussed how I addressed ethical issues and trustworthiness, as well as the challenges that affected my study.

Chapter Three attends to my first research question: *What can I learn about cultural inclusivity and children's culture from my personal history?* Samaras, Hicks and Berger (2004) explained that engaging in personal history self-study is for self-knowing and for the development of teachers' professional learning. In this chapter, I briefly describe the research strategies that allowed me to awaken and make visible my childhood and adolescent memories. To follow, I narrate stories and descriptions of my remembered childhood and adolescent experiences. (I focus in more detail on my childhood years because these are most closely related to my current

practice as a grade 4 teacher.) I then show how I represented my personal history narrative in a form of a collage that I produced. I describe how I presented the collage to my research supervisor and my critical friends and got responses from them, which I audio recorded and transcribed. I reveal how creating, presenting and discussing the collage assisted me to consolidate and reconsider my learning from my personal history.

### **Personal history self-study research strategies**

Through using a variety of personal history research strategies I erupted memories of cultural inclusivity and children's culture during my primary and high school days. As explained in Chapter Two, these research strategies were artefact retrieval, taking photographs and narrative writing in my journal. Cole (2011) explained that memory plays an inevitable function in any study that needs participants' reflection on the past. Using these research strategies helped me to recall and reflect on my past experiences as a learner in primary and high school.

As explained by Mitchell and Weber (1999), artefacts are objects with a personal meaning that can be used to help remember childhood memories. Artefacts can evoke thoughts and feeling and lessen feelings of anxiety about the process of remembering (Evans, Ka'opua & Freese, 2015). According to Mitchell, Weber, and Pithouse (2009), "photographs act as powerful memory prompts" (p. 127). They elaborated that choosing which photographs to take can "[spark] ideas and [lead] to insight into what images might be the most useful for [a] self-study" (Mitchell et al., 2009, p. 127). I took photographs of significant artefacts to help provoke ideas, thoughts and feelings about my past experiences. I also took photographs of places and spaces that helped me to put my past experiences into context. As stated by Mitchell and Weber (1999), "recounting memories in a social context may contribute to constructing these memories in particular way" (p. 12). I was inspired by this statement to see how I could unfold and express my own lived experiences in a sociocultural context as I recalled my childhood memories of places and spaces that were full of diversity and a number of things that were foreign to me, as well as intriguing.

In consolidating and making sense of my lived experiences I made use of collage making. Collage making involved me in cutting and pasting magazine and newspaper images and thinking of significant words to make sense of the images. Creating a collage helped me to

express myself better and to communicate through cutting and pasting pictures and words that were meaningful to my first research question. In this way, I was able to portray, review and reconsider my memories. As Butler-Kisber (2008) highlighted, “the ambiguity that remains present in collage provides a way of expressing the said and the unsaid, and allows for multiple avenues of interpretation and greater accessibility” (p. 268).

### **My personal history related to cultural inclusivity and children’s culture**

#### **My first year of school: A whole new world**

After the first democratic elections in 1994, South Africa began heading towards a new, post-apartheid system that was supposed to support all races, genders and sexual orientations. The new government adopted a constitution where discrimination on the basis of race or any other basis was no longer allowed (Seekings, 2008).

I do not have a vivid memory of my first day in grade 1 in 1996. I just recall waking up in the early hours of the morning. The sound of the rooster and the hens cackling always prepared me for my mornings. Some days were assertively cold. I could not even feel my hands or nose.

At that time we lived in a township<sup>3</sup> called Umlazi. However, my parents had enrolled me in a school that was situated in the formerly Indian area<sup>4</sup> of Merebank because they thought that it would offer me a better education than the nearby township schools<sup>5</sup>. If my memory serves me well, Merebank was almost an hour away from our home and so I used the *Malume* system to get to school. *Malume* is a transport system that collects learners from the same neighbourhood that go to the same schools or schools situated around the same area. Parents pay the *Malume* on a monthly basis. *Malume* means “uncle” in IsiZulu. This transport system is still called *Malume* by our learners and our school community. I must say it was always comforting to have a big bowl of warm porridge just before *Malume* arrived.

---

<sup>3</sup> In South Africa, a township refers to a suburb or city of mainly black occupation, formerly and officially designated for black occupation during the apartheid era. (Township, n.d.)

<sup>4</sup> In 1950, the apartheid government passed the Group Areas Act. This Act enforced the segregation of races by zoning them to specific, separate residential areas. This legislation was repealed in 1991. (Clarke & Worger, 2016)

<sup>5</sup> During apartheid (1948-1994), South African schools were segregated and inequitably funded according to race, with black schools receiving the least funding and resources. Much of this inequality remains in post-apartheid South Africa (Clarke & Worger, 2016).

When I started grade 1, it was probably the first time that I was introduced to people of other races who spoke English. My home language is isiZulu and I remember spending most of the time frantically trying to speak and understand English. We always did our daily news every Monday and I struggled to express myself since I could not speak English fluently.

I still remember my white school uniform and the navy belt that was never a perfect fit. My knees and elbows were always dry, especially during winter. My parents had probably invested a lot of money buying pencils, shoes and belts that were frequently getting lost. As usual I would fail dismally to trace these or explain how I had lost my belongings.

My eyes were drawn to pictures and colours. I remember seeing different colours, numbers, books and alphabets around the classroom. I recall sitting on the carpet during reading or storytelling. Most of our readers rhymed. Through reading I was introduced to fairytales, myths, goblins and I was always anxious to hear the ending of the story. Of course I loved happy endings. I remember that some of the stories correlated with my daily experience, such as waking up in the morning and getting ready for school. Story time stimulated our imaginations as we would try to sequence the story line and speculate on how the story would end. I remember connecting some of these stories to cartoons and programmes we watched on the television at home such *Cinderella*, *Little Red Riding hood*, *Pinocchio*, *Goldilocks*, and *The Three Little Pigs*. Reflecting back on these moments made me realise that we were taught moral values at a very young age. For example, in the *Three Little Pigs* we learnt that we must always work with dedication and to be prepared for anything, as well as to think cautiously and critically. I also became interested in learning English through these stories. My father would speak English with me and help me with reading.

This was the year that I was introduced to number operations. I remember having a hard time understanding subtraction and pronouncing some mathematical terms. My mother assisted me with Numeracy. I remember using an abacus (see Figure 3.1) with much confusion and tension. Nevertheless, I desired to please my parents.



*Figure 3.1. My grade 1 Abacus.*

I was also introduced to Santa Claus and Hindu gods at this school. Looking back, I can see that this created confusion since I could not find my cultural identity. My family went to church on a regular basis, but Santa Claus was quite taboo in my house. My parents were never exposed to Christmas and the idea of Christmas. They just believed it was Jesus's birthday. It had never before crossed my mind that different beliefs and religions existed outside my own cultural heritage and my family's religion. This was a peculiar discovery.

### **Life time treasures**

In 1997 my parents informed us that we would be moving to Newlands West, a formerly Indian area. They described our prospective home as spacious and with a lovely yard. I was excited about having my own room. I imagined how I would decorate my room and I visualised playing in an open yard, with flowers, a guava tree and, of course, a juicy mango tree. I imagined the smell of the lemon trees, the Indian curries and the sounds of eastern mosaic music. My grandparents could not help but boast about us moving to an area that had other races, predominantly Indian people. I had never identified myself as belonging to any race until my family discussed it with us.

However, my thoughts attempted to conspire against me. While I was aroused by excitement, I was also subdued by apprehension. Mutely I convinced myself that I could change their minds.

How was it possible that we were moving from Umlazi to Newlands West? There was so much good that was happening in Umlazi. And I had just adapted to the school in Merebank. It finally felt like I was making progress academically and socially. Looking back, I can see that I did not apprehend that I was imprisoning myself with my own emotions and lack of interest to try new avenues. Fearfully I gave in; I could not comprehend the depth of my agony since I was leaving my friends and a few family members behind.

My mother explained how beneficial it was for our family to move. My father painted my imagination and managed to describe everything he felt I could fall in love with at our new home. My parents explained that they were concerned about our safety and security in Umlazi. They were certain that this new home offered these two qualities, not to mention that it had good neighbouring schools. This meant longer hours of sleep with only a short distance to travel to school.

I was 7 years old approaching 8 when we moved to Newlands West, where I soon made new friends. I recall the games we played inside and outside and the television shows we were drawn to. These were inspired by my neighbours, who later matured to being lifetime friends. We enjoyed watching *Denis the Menace*, *Karate Kid*, *Power Rangers*, *Ninja Turtles*, *Aladdin* with his magic carpet and *Pocahontas*. I was also introduced to board games such as scrabble, monopoly and playing cards. I never knew before that staying indoors could have an element of entertainment.

Our fun knew no weather conditions and had no boundaries. I remember how we spent our rainy days dancing and singing in the rain and chanting to the rain gods. We fed our emotions with happiness daily. Our parents never understood why we were amused by playing in the rain, hounding caterpillars and grasshoppers, as well as running away from the wild monkeys waltzing into the house. The monkeys were always up to no good, messing up my mother's garden and eating from the dustbin as they also wrestled for mangoes and guavas. If we were not chaotic, then the monkeys were causing havoc. Because of the monkeys, the yard was never clean and my mom rarely reaped her vegetables.



On adventurous days we did not mind getting our hands grimy by visiting the nearest dam in our neighbourhood. We would make glorious sounds accompanied by horror as we would alarm our parents that the boys had frogs, crabs or insects and they are scaring us. Even though we were petrified, we enjoyed the ecstasy of evading and telling tales.

I recall religious celebrations in our neighbourhood, such as Diwali. Diwali is a Hindu festival of lights that takes place in the period of October to November. It is chiefly associated with Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity. Hindu people give expression of happiness through bursting fireworks and inviting close friends and family to feast on delicious food. Hindus also light lamps as a way to pay obeisance to the gods for the success of health, wealth, knowledge and peace. The night of Diwali would be filled with bright colours. I never knew what the festival stood for but I knew that my parents would not approve if we ate anything that had been prayed for by Hindus. I never really understood or questioned. This was simply because as children we were not allowed to argue with or question adults.

My friends and I enjoyed long conversations about our future endeavours. We would share tales and myths told by our great grandparents. We would look deep into the dark blue evening sky filled with stars, waiting for a shooting star so we could make a wish just like in the movies. We would imagine that a family lived in the moon and that they controlled the night and the galaxy. It was phenomenal. I can say it made me forget about most of my troubles. Through back looking at my childhood experiences, I have come to realise that as children we had our own culture.

### **Moving to another new school: Mixed feelings**

“You are moving to a multi-racial school!” said my parents with enthusiasm. Anticipating my first day at a new school which had been reserved for white children during apartheid, I began to think of how I would learn or feel being around the white community that had taken part in the past transgressions of our country.

I had mixed feelings associated with my first day in grade 5 at this new school. The thought of my dad letting go of my hand prompted feelings of anxiety, fear and doubt; but at the same time

I felt an eagerness to learn and to explore this new environment. Even so, feelings of fear and doubt amplified and began to knock as soon as I stepped into this big school that had absolutely no resemblance to my previous school. I recall seeing the very beautiful garden and monumental buildings when I arrived at my new school. I must admit that the school's buildings were quite daunting to me. I began to lock my eyes onto these monumental buildings, capturing every single detail, from what was displayed on the notice boards, to the school badge, to artwork, to some pieces of work written by some of the learners and photographs of diverse racial and religious groups. You could clearly see that this school carried a lot of history. It had lived through the apartheid era to democracy.

I waited patiently for my register class teacher to invite me into the classroom. As I walked in I could not spot a friendly face. Everyone seemed preoccupied. The classroom was absolutely silent and felt tense. You could hear a needle drop. I recall seeing a number of strange faces that later became my friends. I also recall seeing sight words that were pasted at the back of the classroom blue board, a news corner accompanied by classroom rules and our classroom timetable.

***Mr. B. hardly smiled with us***

You can refer to the classroom as a room that describes a teacher's personality and characteristics. Regrettably, in my grade 5 year, that was not the case in my experience. The classroom might have been warm in temperature but I never sensed any warmth from my teacher, Mr. B. He hardly smiled with us and did not show a sense of humour. It seemed like we had to echo and repeat everything he taught us. We did not participate in classroom discussions or share our feelings and ideas. It seemed to be assumed that we all learnt in the same way. To a certain degree, I felt as if this impaired my ability or my desire to work at my level best. I often felt confused and blank. Half the time I was in my own world and had little concern for my schoolwork. Although the classroom was warm and looked inviting and the learning resources and environment cultivated learning, somehow I felt as if our teacher had little enthusiasm and seemed preoccupied and frustrated, especially when we misbehaved.

Even when other learners were recruited for leadership roles, I did not feel recognised or acknowledged. Maybe I had imprisoned myself into believing I was not good enough or that I was simply ignorant. At times, I knew no one would resurrect any confidence in me except for myself. Evidently, this was revealed in my academic work. I had a beautiful handwriting but my work was judged as below average and lacking in consistency. I felt like that jeopardised my chances of being recognised as a "star child".

I remember the smell of crayons, the dusty floor, paper, erasers and glue. I also remember the sound of the chalkboard, the echoing sound of children walking down the corridor, and the teacher applying discipline through threats. Of course, how could I forget the news corner? The classroom had displays that mirrored the social context and looked into current affairs. Well, at that tender age I could hardly keep up. There was also a wall where "good work" was displayed.

I also feel we had too many activities or school traditions that disrupted our learning. Our grade 5 teacher focused a lot of time on school events such as celebrating our school birthday, which allowed us to reflect on the past challenges, shortcomings and achievements. Our school also hosted an annual reading and quiz night. This is where we interacted with our peers and our parents and teachers socialised. This night encouraged reading, general knowledge and the

culture of learning through listening skills, drawing daily routines and experiences into reading. We also hosted talent shows, plays, raffles and cake sales. Even though this had a positive impact on our school's financing and learning to a certain degree, unfortunately it also demanded a lot of time and organising. In my view, we stole some time from learning and placed too much weight on fundraising. I felt like the time invested in these events robbed me from knowing my teacher, from building a relationship. It feels like this influenced my teacher's attitude towards teaching and worked against giving us his undivided attention. It seems to me that the aim of teaching and learning was not valued or given enough time to blossom.

### ***The school's monumental buildings***



***Figure 3.2. Memories entrenched in this old building***

The photograph that I took recently of the school's monumental buildings (Figure 3.2) evokes some joyful and heart-breaking memories. I recall Arbour Day being celebrated and a new tree being planted and learning about being environmentally friendly, not to mention cautious. I remember the school's badge and our South African flag. I also remember singing our national anthem and our school's song. The flag revealed and initiated a sense of responsibility and being nationally aware of our identity as South Africans; it highlighted the values of a rainbow nation.

In looking back at this time, I searched apprehensively for children's inclusivity but could find anything that encouraged us to share our opinions or ideas about our school and our country. I longed for a strong sense of belonging. The new school introduced more diversity in terms of cultural beliefs and race. But I remember that being around a multiracial and diverse religious group was also intimidating. I found myself constantly questioning my identity.

Nevertheless, some of our teachers also encouraged us to think positively and focus on our strengths. I was also introduced to some exciting new activities such as swimming and Creative Arts. I cannot forget the splatter of blue paint on my school shoes during art.

I also enjoyed Sports Day. When Sports Day was approaching, the school's atmosphere would change; it was filled with excitement and colourful with our houses' displays: Eland: (blue), Impala: (green) and Kudu: (red). My favourite colour was red; there is no secret about which house I belonged to! When sports day was finally hosted, crowds would come. Parents would come to support us, and we would sing our lungs out and sing our war cries with passion. This was the only time when our school was divided in this way and then we were united again when we sang our school song and national anthem.

#### ***Assembly: My escape from destruction***

In grade 5, my difficulty in grasping Mathematics, especially long division and word problems, was disheartening and to some degree depressing. I felt destructed by my father's sickness. I wanted to run away from the classroom. So, I looked forward to assembly, when the school would gather in the hall.

During assembly my thoughts would escape from destruction to a joyful hour of nothing but rhythmic sounds, listening to hundreds of voices singing along with the backing track while our music teacher tapped his feet. Music played an enormous role in my life. Influenced by my music teacher's role of practicing and promoting critical thinking through music, I learnt to be disciplined, to be compassionate, sympathetic and to be open minded. Since music exposed me to different historical events and cultural traditions, I learnt to be respectful and tolerant of differences. I recall listening to songs such as the national anthem and popular songs by Michael

Jackson, Mariah Carey, Miriam Makeba, as well as song called *Jabulani* (translated in English as “happiness”). These songs celebrated our country’s diversity and history. It seemed like we could all identify with these songs. We also listened to the Backstreet Boys, which was popular with our age group.

### ***Unforgettable moments in the garden***

The smell of wet paint always reminds me of long summer days, when the sun was blazing over the school pool, competing with my shadow. I remember admiring the school garden complimented by peaceful melodies and sounds coming from the birds. Drawing inspiration during our brainstorming sessions outside in the garden, my classmates and I would sit against the wall or fences.

Recently, I took a photograph of the school garden (Figure 3.3). Looking at this photograph reminds me of many unforgettable moments I experienced as a learner in the garden, such as running and delicately trying to catch a butterfly, and spotting brightly coloured and very hairy caterpillars. I would adore the squeaky sound of birds, the cooing pigeons and the stinging buzzing bees, while the birds flew around cheerfully and took pleasure in cooling themselves off or playing in the garden pond. You could describe the garden as a place that truly exalted nature. I could not help but admire the beautiful flowers, the plants and the old trees that only became stronger with age. I remember how we enjoyed completing a number of activities under the maduna trees, even though that was done fearfully and cautiously, simply because we were worried that the purple maduna berries might fall on us and stain our uniforms. This outdoor environment was completely peaceful and undisturbed. These are just some of the feelings I experienced as a learner in the garden.



***Figure 3.3. The School garden: Where I found my sanity***

Looking back, I see that the garden taught me to be environmentally aware and to learn creatively. I think that the garden taught us to appreciate the beauty of nature and to broaden our imagination. I felt content and rejuvenated when I worked in the garden. I felt stimulated; maybe it was because I had more space compared to the classroom and there was no formal setting. This allowed us as children to have some form of liberty and interest in working in groups and individually, especially if we were preparing for oral presentations or dialogues. I also found that this environment lightened up my grade 5 teacher. He was more relaxed and he could more easily make us work in groups without seeming overwhelmed. In the garden, I felt emancipated and inspired.

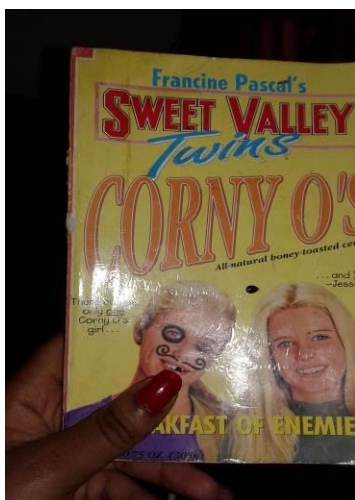
Even when we were inside on rainy days, the musty smell of soil and the echoing sound of raindrops made me love nature even more. I desperately wanted to express myself in writing, such as writing in my parents' old diary and to spend more time in reading even the simplest books or comprehensions or doing little drawings. The little raindrops on the school roof made me eager to listen attentively, wanting to acknowledge my surroundings, to feel a sense of comfort. In recalling this, I am hoping that I can plant new ideas and learn from my learners as well, so that we can take pleasure from nature and be aware of our surroundings. I hope we can learn how to preserve and conserve our natural settings so that they serve as memories in the future.

### ***The media centre: A place of complete serenity***

Most of my cold winter days were invested in the media centre. The media centre also reminded me of my grandparent's rural home, which was a place of serenity. I remember the smell of new books and of the heavy, laminated pages, which unfortunately did not have a pleasing fragrance but smelled like glued paper. When opened, these books released a sharp chemical tang coupled with an inexplicable stench of boiled cabbage. A number of these books carried the history of the school, reflected by the school stamp and referenced defining years of knowledge consumed by past learners.

Reading quietly in the media centre defined serenity for me; it saved me from the humiliation of reading aloud in front of other learners. It offered warmth and comfort, especially on aggressively cold winter days. I could emancipate myself in reading. I felt safe and secure and undisturbed by evil laughs or giggles. In class, I always felt as if my peers were laughing at me and looking forward to seeing me struggle in reading and pronunciation or to omit a word while I was reading. I found that very disheartening and it stripped my courage to attempt to read.

When I look at the book, "*Sweet Valley Twins: Breakfast Enemies*" by Francine Pascal (Figure 3.4), I notice that it has an old creased cover and stained pages that reflect hundreds of hands that have taken pleasure in holding it. It explodes quite a few childhood memories and my lived experiences as a primary school learner. It reminds me of my relationships with my peers, teacher and family, as well as my relationship with myself.



**Figure 3.4. *Sweet Valley High: Reconnecting the dots; visiting my timeline***



*Sweet Valley High* was one of my favourite book series during my primary school days, especially when I started approaching puberty and adolescence. I could easily relate to the two main characters, Jessica and Elizabeth, despite the fact I was not an academic person or popular. Somehow reading this book introduced a whole new perspective on what life could be like as a teenage girl, particularly if there was a new crush in sight. Just looking at the book evokes some really pleasant and unpleasant memories for me.

Finding this artefact of the book allowed me to reflect on my past. I found this book in my mother's storeroom. It exposed my vulnerability and feelings and erupted quite a few intimate thoughts that questioned my learning and teaching practices. I recalled how, being around an aggressive peer group, which was not only physically but also emotionally aggressive, I often felt like an island. This new learning environment was not as warm or inviting as I had anticipated. The school had bigger buildings than what I was used to; these were different architectural buildings that somehow reflected the years and the history of the school. The school also enrolled almost 1000 learners. I constantly felt distant from myself, teachers and classmates. At the time it felt as if my thoughts attempted to conspire against me since I had a negative orientation towards myself. These feelings echoed in my poor reading, comprehension skills and writing skills.

I sensed that I had countless shortcomings and received little assistance. No attention was given to my educational background from my grade 5 class teacher. He was always preoccupied and seemed too frustrated to repeat himself. I do not recall participating in any classroom discussions, sharing my ideas or opinions that year. I watched myself turn into a stranger every time I stepped into the school's premises. The feeling escalated during the break times.

In disbelief at what I was experiencing, I sat back and became aroused by reading. Reading was my safeguard, even though at times I would feel subdued by new words introduced during my reading. Silently, I would read where no one could see or listen to my reading, convincing myself that I was capable of grasping new found concepts and learning areas. Looking back, I can see how reading was transforming my negative and defenceless mind-set into a positive one. Reading provided a feeling of liberty and eroded anxiety; it also helped with expanding my

vocabulary and my creative writing skills. I could easily step into a fictional world that was almost tangible.

I can relate to the saying by Marcel Proust: “There are perhaps no days of our childhood we lived as fully as those we spent with a favourite book”. I understand and really feel that reading added a positive value in my life. In my imagination I was able to travel and to eat things I had never seen with a naked eye. I could explore different cultures and expand my critical thinking as well as my imagination. I was never alone when I spent my time in reading.



**Figure 3.5. Grade 6 media centre monitors: Cheerful and excited**

The photograph above (Figure 3.5) was taken in 2002, when I was repeating grade 6. The atmosphere in this photograph looks peaceful and gracious. In looking at the photograph I can recall how I was cheerful and excited about finally participating and enjoying my duties as a media centre monitor, clearing books and encyclopaedias that were busy collecting dust. I remember that I was enchanted and really comfortable with myself and my fellow media centre monitors. I felt inspired to read and to collect magazines and books on a daily basis. I also loved reading about our school’s history and admired old portraits, photographs, posters trophies and school magazines. I felt secure as, in the media centre, my privacy was never invaded. I had enough time to invest and empower myself.

### ***Name badges provided a sense of belonging and identity***

Growing up in primary school, name badges somehow provided a sense of belonging and identity. This is how I learnt everyone's name easily and quickly. Each grade had a different colour name badge.

However, everyone knowing your name was quite scary when you had been naughty or playing in "out of bounds" areas. The teacher on duty did not waste any time putting your name down for a black mark or, in the worst case scenario, detention. Our discipline system was black marks that led to a red card and consequently serving detention on Friday afternoons. I also remember being given lines to write or write the code of conduct for unacceptable behaviour. We were also excluded from certain privileges as punishment. But there were also "diligence badges" that were used to encourage good behaviour and consistent good work.

I do not remember being a troublesome learner or a pest. However, there was one vivid incident I will never forget. Our school was preparing to host a beauty pageant; I was quite amused and intrigued by this idea. Of course I did not have the courage to enter. A friend of mine and I decided to sneak in and watch other learners during their rehearsals. Mrs. T, our Head of Department, came storming behind us with her loud and roaring voice. I stood there in disbelief and felt terrified. I knew I was in trouble and I would not be able to escape or be rescued. She expressed disappointment in our behaviour and looked at our name badges and demanded that we follow her to her office.

I silently hoped and prayed that I would just receive a black mark and lose my break times. Unfortunately, after I had pleaded and explained myself a million times and over, I was defeated and sent home with a red card to serve detention the following week. The horror of explaining myself at home was haunting me every second of every minute. I could not think of one creative lie. I knew I was going to get in trouble physically and verbally. I had victimised myself by choosing to be disobedient to our school's rule. I had to serve my sentence. Even the look of a red card screamed danger. That when I learnt the importance of self-discipline and being aware of all my surroundings, not to mention being patient.

In looking back, I also discovered that name badges served as an identification token, for everyone to acknowledge you and everyone to know you. Funnily enough, you might not even have known someone on a personal level, but you knew their name and surname from their name badge. I suppose name badges also created an invisible relationship between teachers, learners and parents who stepped into the schools' premises. You became interested in learning more about the girl or boy who was sitting next to you; you could easily spot who shared the same surname and name as you. That would be a conversation starter and hopefully could help you to build and brew friendships and relationships that could stand the test of time. I remember that through the use of name badges I could easily recall incidents that had taken place during break time or in the classroom and associate them with someone's face.

### ***I wish my teachers knew...***

I wish my teachers knew and understood that the phrase that says "*looks can be deceiving*" is quite true. My facial expression did not always tell a story; I looked like every other child, but inside I was fighting a battle that was sometimes too much to carry. I had hidden feelings of anxiety, stress and a bleeding heart.

I recall walking slowly down the stairs. I had had a hectic morning that day; I had forgotten my lunch because I had woken up late for school. My parents had been preoccupied and puzzled. They did not pay any attention to my homework or newsletter I brought home. My dad's recovery was the main priority.

My dad spent most of his days in a hospital bed and being on dialysis. This left him incredibly exhausted at times. I longed for my dad's presence in my life, our long conversations and unplanned movie sessions; he was with me physically but not spiritually. His illness had taken its toll on him and the family. I used to pray he would come back home alive when he was admitted to the hospital. There were times I would go to his room to check if he was still breathing. I would be relieved just to hear the sound of his pulse.

That year in grade 6 I made a mistake of signing my brother's homework/message book. I had adopted fraudulent ways to stay out of trouble and help my siblings. I am the eldest amongst the three of us and so I felt responsible for protecting and defending my siblings to some measure, even if it meant throwing a punch to someone who was twice my size. As the day escalated, it was soon revealed that I had forged my dad's signature. My heart was pounding in fear, I was a walking wreck and I stuttered through the whole interrogation. I had a million questions, mutely building a legible and defensible excuse.

I denied the accusations stated by my brother's teacher, not realising I was digging my own grave since my brother had already confessed and told his teacher I had signed his message book. She took one look at my name badge and handed me a black mark. I felt misunderstood and that no one had bothered to investigate or to find out what had caused me to sign my 8 year old brother's book. I wish my teachers knew that we were fighting bigger battles than dodging black marks and being detained. We were searching for hope in every angle but failed dismally to find it.

My dad's passing on 10<sup>th</sup> of June 2001 was influencing my thoughts and daily routine in grade 6. I began to withdraw from extra-mural activities and started being responsible for my younger siblings. I had control, helping them with their homework and certain concepts, obviously taking on being authoritative and being the more knowledgeable one. It was almost like playing school. I felt compelled to abandon my childhood and help my mom where I could. My academics were deteriorating; my phobia for Mathematics and Afrikaans heightened.

Another incident from 2001 that is still very vivid in my mind is the 9/11 tragedy that left the world wounded and traumatised. I remember how we children sympathised with families and friends that had lost their loved ones in this tragic incident. We also felt very helpless; this is when I realised that animosity, conflict and war existed in relation to religions. I discovered that we are not born with hatred but that hatred and violence are deadly diseases. We were introduced to words such as "terrorism" and "sacrifice". I began to wonder, "What is regarded as godly and immoral?" As a school we prayed and had a silent moment for United States of America. Our hearts were pierced and we did not feel secure for some time. I think this was the only time we

were drawn to reading newspaper articles and listening to the news. I felt as if we were included because our teacher asked us to write an essay about this misfortune.

### ***A different approach to teaching***

Fortunately, my grade 7 teacher, Mrs M., had a different approach to teaching. She encouraged critical thinking, individual thoughts, and group work and used different resources and teaching aids that kept us motivated and intrigued. She was an inspirational being. Our confidence and abilities grew from learning through dramatization and using puppets, music, and using photos and using various media to tell our life stories related to our life experiences.

I settled in and found my true self in senior primary school in grade 7 (my final year of primary school) where I was blessed enough to have an optimistic teacher, who always managed to show us respect, courage and strength. Looking back, I can see that I inherited from Mrs M. her positive values that embraced emotional intelligence, such as respect, honesty, and having an optimistic mind-set.

Passing the foyer I would fix my eyes to the pin boards thoroughly looking for my name on the “hall of fame”. I would also kill time by reading stories and poems written by my fellow learners and displayed on the boards. I would tell myself that I would work with dedication all the time; I would also look at the academic board, photographs, and at photographs of past pupils, teachers and principals.

### **Memories of my high school days**

My primary school years had flown by so fast that soon I was applying and preparing for high school. I desperately wanted to go to an all girls' high school. I looked forward to my first day in high school. I hoped that I would not be enrolled with anyone from my primary school; I wanted to start on a clean slate. Sadly, I was rejected from the all girls' high school that I wanted to go to and so another, smaller, co-educational school was recommended to my mother. I realised that I could either live my high school life in misery or make the most of it by focusing on my God given gifts. I was prepared to start anew and begin a new chapter of my life, which I hoped would be fruitful and make a positive impact on me and on my school community.

My mom was overflowing with exhilaration and joy. She could not believe that I was finally entering high school. I remember how she used to say that her children's accomplishments were her accomplishments. She was proud of me.

The high school was situated in an urban area and we were obligated to pay school fees, since the buildings, electricity, water, photocopying and textbook required money. The school received little financial assistance from the Department of Education. There was even one building that was slowly falling apart.

I remember how I began my first day of high school walking up and down the stairs of my new school feeling apprehensive and desperately looking for my register class. I held onto my receipt for dear life as proof of payment which also had my registration number. My mom had pulled my ears telling me that the receipt would secure my enrolment. In case I encountered any problem regarding my enrolment or registration I had to produce my proof of payment.

It felt just a bit daunting. I was incredibly excited and nervous at the same time. I was in my full uniform; it was mid-summer and the sun was blazing and scorching hot. I regretted wearing my royal blue blazer (see Figure 3.6). Nevertheless, when my mother and I had read the code of conduct it stated that every learner must be in their full school uniform. I did not want to run the risk of being in trouble on the first day of school and I also wanted to impress my mother. And so, I endured the heat with a smile. My bag was dreadfully heavy; I felt as if I had dislocated my

shoulder. By the end of the day, my arm was numb. I had taken all my stationery and books to school since I did not have my timetable yet. This was purely because I did not want to get into trouble for not having the correct books.



**Figure 3.6. My high school blazer: The good old days.**

My new school had a vast building that resembled a castle, but there was only a little garden and minimal facilities. Our school did not have an open sports field, playground, computer room, library or swimming pool. The school also offered very few extra-curricular activities. We had basketball, volleyball, soccer, a debating team and the choir. Even so, most of these activities were driven by learners. I am told the school was a finishing school in the olden days and therefore had very little academic or sporting history or tradition.

As learners we had to initiate our own traditions and come up with activities that reflected our interests, such as talent shows, choir and our debating clubs. These were activities we had experienced during our primary school days. We were thirsty to be active learners despite our school's shortcomings. Some learners tried playing soccer even though our field was very small.



However, the school did strive for academic excellence and strived to shape us into young ladies and gentlemen.

I recall my deep love of writing and reading. I longed to be journalist. My best friend and I kept diaries and journals, discovering and unfolding every scandal we could find in the school. We were quite informed about the ins and outs of the school. We would invest our time investigating stories and trying to find patterns in rumours. At some point, my best friend and I even planned to draft a magazine. The magazine was inspired by women, especially single mothers. We focused on hair, beauty and make up, as well as challenges faced by women on a daily basis. I had the most adventurous and unpredictable moments in high school. Of course we became popular for being aspiring journalists. I remember that we even worked at the Independent Newspapers during the holidays. We also drove around with our journalist mentors at the Independent Newspapers to interview people on their stories; my mentor dealt with the education department. We would sit and listen to the radio and anticipate the next headline. We would draft possible questions and seek for facts.

Something that I recall vividly is how we hosted traditional shows for Heritage Day. We could show case our cultural traditions and share our histories with one another as the school was diverse with different cultural heritage groups. We would also have different performances, such dancing, singing, drama and poetry. I now understand this as part of cultivating cultural inclusivity and allowing us as learners to take part and have an impact on our learning. I would also like to think that youth culture reigned during these small but noteworthy occasions. Our voices reverberated in the school's premises and we were delighted. I strongly believe that this occasion united us not only as South Africans, but as Africans.

My friends and I decided that we needed to have library sessions on a weekly basis at a local library. We decided to open a book club where we would visit the library and learn a few computer skills at the library. We also volunteered to work at the library during the holidays. We packed books and returned them to their shelves according to their references. It was a learning curve and gave birth to maturity and nurtured our love for reading.

Tragically, Mathematics was still one of my greatest fears and struggles. I was still terrified of Mathematics lessons. To make matters worse, our mathematics teacher did not really have a passionate approach. This happened throughout my whole high school life. She would teach while sitting most of the time and we would not participate or contribute to solving mathematical problems or questions. Everything was straight from the textbook. On a good week we would get a worksheet. I found mathematics very tedious. I do not recall learning methodically or keenly in that class. We spent a large amount of our lessons listening to how our teacher was studying to leave the Department of Education before the age of 40. She would also warn us about the escalating rate of teenage pregnancy. She was always clued up about the most recent scandal and encouraged purity and virginity. She emphasised the importance of waiting for your husband. This alerted and amplified my knowledge of social issues such as teenage pregnancy and juicy gossip.

Fortunately, we learners had joined forces as friends and as a class and decided to share each other's knowledge and understandings of mathematical concepts. I was more comfortable with working outside the classroom with peers. We also started attending classes during weekends at a local university of technology. The extra classes proved to be productive and heartening. We were eager to learn more and to deliver better results every term. We also attended classes in our own communities, especially during exams. This was organised by us as learners; we built learning communities and helped each other in learning. We would share and discuss ways to understand new concepts and looked for simple methods. I was inspired by my peers who created opportunities and strongholds.

Soon, I was in the final year of high school, grade 12. The pressure and level of stress was augmented. I was determined to work even harder. My positive attitude had an influence; I was elected by my teachers to be a prefect that year. My History and Geography teachers had spoken for me and identified my strengths. My teachers felt that I was not easily influenced or defenceless and that I portrayed a good example of what the school stood for. I was excited to be part of the school's growth as I was always brutally honest and opinionated, which did earn me quite a number of enemies during my high school years. At this time and point, my soul and spirit were rooting for me. I echoed silences of complete freedom and immense possibilities.

### **Experiences of a more traditional society**

At home, I was never really exposed to gender discrimination, as girls and boys were treated equally in my household. My father was not really into the whole patriarchal theory or method of raising children or building a stable relationship. My parents made joint decisions on finances and academics, as well as socially.

My first experiences of gender discrimination took place during my visits to my grandparents in a rural area. A patriarchal society was revealed to me during traditional Zulu ceremonies and rituals where men would usually slaughter animals and burn incense for a gravestone or thanksgiving and seeking for ancestral guidance. At these ceremonies men had to be served first; women were not allowed to go into the kraal (where livestock is kept) and only the boys were allowed to milk the cows.

Men were regarded as more important and valuable than women and children. I could clearly see the difference when most men were more educated than women; they were also seen as heads of households, responsible for finances and of disciplining their children. Most children in this community feared their fathers; they could not approach them, share their views, perspectives or emotions with them. Evidently, men played a dominant role that could not be questioned.

Since females were controlled and seen as individuals who were empty vessels, information was just transferred to us. We had to accept certain things. In my view, we were also to some extent our own victims since we chose to collude and remain hostages of our husbands, fathers, brothers, uncles and grandfathers. We accepted oppression, being disciplined when we questioned what was known as authority; we were constantly reminded of our place in society, our roles and duties by other women and men. For instance, I remember how, when I was 10 years old, my mom mentioned that she could not go home to my grandparents' house wearing trousers as it was a sign of disrespect and that people would think she thought she was superior to men since she was an educated woman. She also shared one of her traumatic experiences that she had had with her father when she mentioned to my grandfather that she supported her family financially. She said, "I feed the family". My granddad was offended by this statement; he was

filled with rage and anger. From this, I realised that violence was frequently used to control women who are seen as powerful socially and financially to remind them of their place in society.

Masculinity had its advantages and disadvantages; being male was associated with supremacy, fierceness and violent behaviour. In some instances, men were also their own victims. If a man failed to live his life the way society understood it or saw fit then he was seen as his wife's puppet and not man enough. In my understanding, men experienced internalised domination because they were forced to and pressured by culture, tradition and religion to be man "enough".

As children we were socialised by adults to acknowledge men as heads of households, breadwinners and as "owners" of their wives and children. As females we were socialised to collude, in other words to accept male domination, control, being faithful, loving and submissive, not to mention never to question authority. These beliefs, attitudes and perceptions influenced the nature of relationships between females and males, as well as the future generations.

Such things looked and sounded so foreign to my eyes and ears. Especially when I questioned certain things, I would receive negative comments and looks from other young women or be called to order by elders. The comments that I received indicated automatic respect and superiority for men as well as their importance in all levels and parts of life. They knew better and understood better. Therefore they were permitted to do anything and were superior. Children's agency had no place in this traditional society; we were simply not considered or regarded as people with thoughts and views.

## Collage Making



*Figure 3.7. My personal history collage*

My collage ( see Figure 3.7) offers a visual representation of my personal history narrative. The pictures of women in traditional Zulu dress demonstrate how women were viewed in the more traditional community I experienced while I was growing up when I visited my grandparents' home in a rural area. The images of rural areas remind me that men were seen as superior. In this community, we girls were expected to be submissive, to nurturing and to be subordinate. We were supposed to know that men were superior in their homes and households. The phrase "Show your man you appreciate him" reminds me of how men are seen as superior compared to women. This reminded me of Du Preez and Roux (2010), who cautioned "that there is a need to have dialogues on values in our different contexts as a way of assisting us to transcend our comfort zones" (p. 24). I recognised that I needed to look searchingly at my own teaching to

contemplate how I could find a way to help learners negotiate their way between traditional cultural values that they are exposed to and the human rights values that are enshrined in our South African constitution.

In looking at these images I am also reminded of the diverse beliefs that I was exposed to, such as traditional Zulu cultural beliefs and Christianity. My family drew their strength from and practised both these sets of beliefs. This created a lot of confusion for me. Even now I find that we have to do both Christian and traditional practices. Therefore, in my teaching I should aim to encourage my learners to celebrate their cultural diversity and not try to fit them into one cultural heritage or another. I realise the importance of creating a learning environment that understands and respects differences.

The images of people in traditional Hindu dress remind me of relocating from Umlazi to Newlands West and living in a community with people who practised a different religion. I recall how we watched my neighbours chant, burn incense and light candles. They also fed their gods or idols. This was all new and intriguing for me and different from what I knew.

While making my collage I realised that there were differences in beliefs between what I practised at home and what I practised at school, especially when we moved to Newlands West. I found that I had a very hard time identifying with a certain religion. At home, we believed in Christianity and Zulu traditions. It was surprising to me to find out that Indians also burned incense even though when they burn incense it is more about communicating with their gods and we burnt incense when we called on ancestors (as shown the different pictures of weddings and a *sangoma* or Zulu traditional healer). At school we celebrated Diwali, but we also celebrated Christmas. We would receive Christmas presents from our teachers and we would also have Santa Claus. When I went home I would ask my parents about Santa Claus and they were clueless about this and so this created a lot of confusion for me. So I had a very hard time trying to adapt and trying to figure out where I belonged. I also remember stepping into a multiracial, multicultural school and struggling to find my identity. I longed for a sense of belonging and acceptance.

The phrase “Explosion of colours” reminds me of the Diwali festival, and also of Sports Day at primary school and Heritage Day celebrations at high school. At the festival of Diwali, I recall seeing vibrant colours and lights, and I appreciated the sound of fireworks, as well as the aroma of ethnic food. I also related the explosion of colours to primary school when we had Sports Day. This is when we would paint ourselves in our house colours. Heritage Day celebrations at high school were where I got a chance to get out of my shell. We would dress up in our traditional attire and host concerts. This is where learners got a platform to showcase their talents that did not come to light in the classroom. Learners would perform poetry, dancing, singing and rapping. In narrating my personal history, I relived the exciting colours, scents and tastes of the time I spent playing with my childhood and teenage friends. I was inspired by Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2002) who reminded me that engaging with our memories can remind us as teachers about the importance of childhood play and engagement with children’s popular culture. As Nkopodi and Mosimege (2009) advised, “this enjoyment of the game can be used to enhance the learners’ interest” in the classroom (p. 389).

The image of children working in garden evokes the fruitful lessons we had in the school garden at primary school. I was always comfortable with working outside the classroom. Reading UNESCO (2004) reminded me that a teacher is any person that can thoroughly guide and aid a child’s learning within a specific formal or non-formal learning atmosphere. It put emphasis on giving learners opportunities to contribute in their own learning using dynamic approaches to learning and a variety of resources. From recalling my primary school days, I can see how outdoor lessons can offer a less formal and more dynamic learning atmosphere that can make space for children’s culture.

The picture of a doctor and the image of the light are reminiscent of my Grade 7 teacher who had an optimistic approach to teaching and who was very supportive. She believed in me and gave me a chance to share my opinions and she taught me to believe in myself. I relate words such as “love”, “give”, “be compassionate” and “be creative” with her. I feel that this instilled emotional intelligence and moulded me into adopting a positive mind set. I became more outspoken and my grade 7 teacher did not focus much on my weakness, for example’ Mathematics. The words “read well” and “success” reminds me of how I struggled with Mathematics and feared reading

in front of the class or my peers. But I was able to believe in myself after I had been taught by my Grade 7 teacher. In recalling her example, I was encouraged to adopt a professional learning attitude and to be a lifelong learner (Easton, 2008). I felt eager to engage with my critical friends to question and analyse my approach to teaching. I am willing to listen and to search for new learning possibilities and opportunities (Samaras, 2011).

The word “duty” reminds me of how, due to my father’s illness, I felt compelled to abandon my childhood, to be authoritative and to grow up quickly. It was my duty to ensure that my family was okay, supported and secure. I wanted to be compassionate. I felt like it was my duty to make sure that everyone was okay, including my mother. I felt like I had to be supportive. This is also symbolised by the picture of a mother and a baby. From this, I understand that we as teacher need to be willing to address such sensitive issues as the illness and death of family members with learners in a supportive manner (Mitchell, De Lange, & Nguyen-Thi, 2008).

Words such as “victory” and “speak” remind me of high school; this is where I became more outspoken, and started to take pleasure in oral presentations. In my high school we did not have a lot of facilities. For example, we did not have a library, a playground or a computer room. However, we got a chance to share our ideas and voice our opinions. Even though the school had a lack of resources I was exposed to things that actually built me.

When I got to high school I found a best friend. She wanted us to have our magazine; our magazine was essentially influenced by women, which is why I have included words such as “single women” and images of women working hard and being successful. My friend and I were inspired by the fact that we were raised by single mothers. Remembering my high school experiences reminded me of how my friends and I worked together. As McMurtry (2015) elucidated, a socio-cultural perspective on learning draws attention to the value of such collaborative activities. From this, I comprehend that socio-cultural learning theory transpires when we cultivate a community within and outside of the classroom and endorse social interaction among learners.



### **My collage transcript**

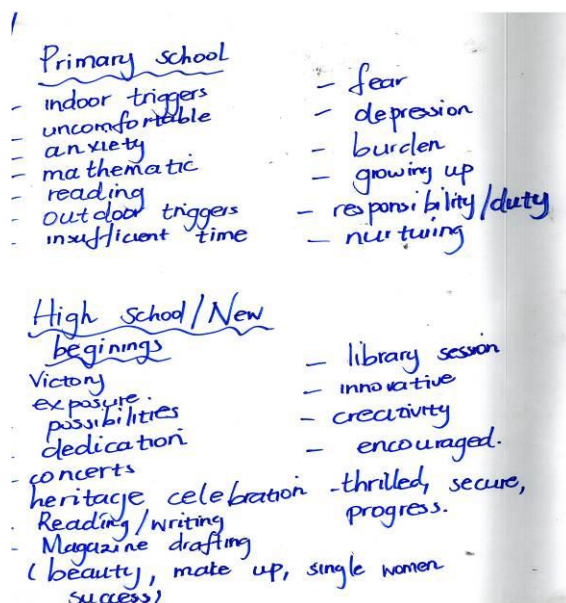
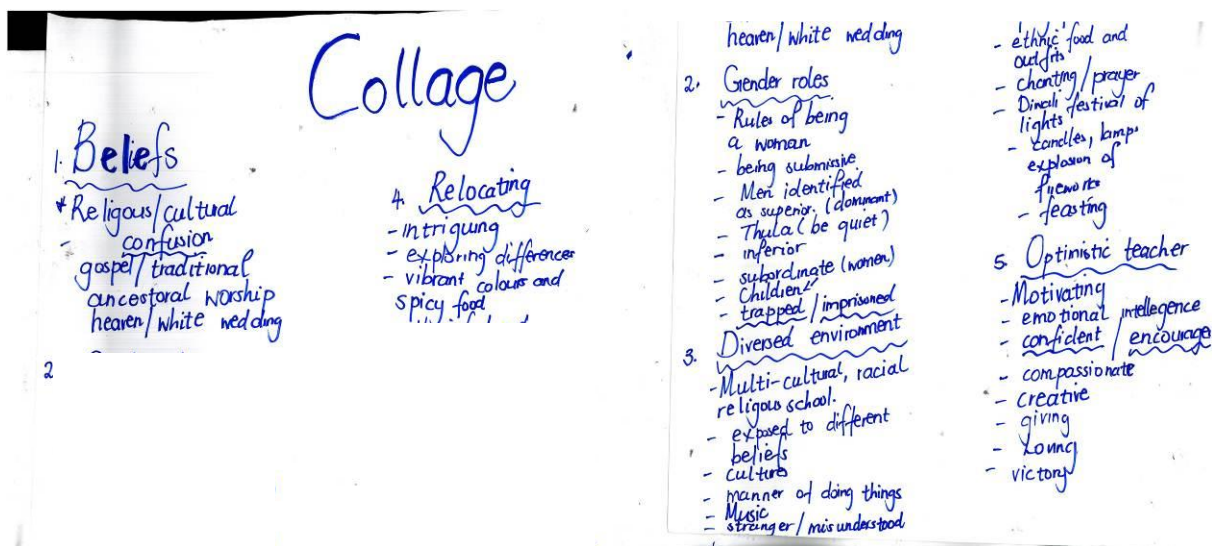
I followed the advice of Van Schalkwyk (2010) and created a collage transcript (Figure 3.8.) to catalogue key ideas, thoughts and feelings evoked by my personal history collage. I presented the collage and the transcript to one my critical friends (Nontuthuko) and my research supervisor (Dr Kathleen); this was followed by an audio recorded discussion that I transcribed. An edited version of this discussion is presented below in dialogue form to show how my learning was enhanced through conversation with my critical friend and research supervisor.

**Dr Kathleen:** *Please tell us about your collage transcript.*

**Ntokozo:** *With me I felt like I had to spot pictures that were related to the same theme. For example I have:*

- 1. Beliefs*
- 2. Gender roles*
- 3. Diverse environment*
- 4. Relocating*
- 5. Optimistic teacher*
- 6. Primary School*
- 7. High School/New beginnings*

*Along with the themes or groups I tried to write down how I felt about each. For example, for “beliefs” I felt confused, for “gender roles” I felt trapped, for “diverse” I felt like a stranger and misunderstood at home. I found “relocating” intriguing and then, for the “optimistic teacher” I felt confident and encouraged. In “primary school” I felt uncomfortable, and I had anxiety, fear, depression and a burden. I felt like I had to be responsible, to grow up fast and I had to be nurturing. In “high school” I felt thrilled, secure and like I was progressing.*



**Figure 3.8. My personal history collage transcript**

**Dr Kathleen:** So, let's look at Ntokozo's collage and transcript. With the primary school, it's interesting that it had the resources but you didn't feel at home.

**Ntokozo:** Yes, the primary school had resources.

**Dr Kathleen:** And in the high school that had fewer resources, you felt more confident.

**Ntokozo:** *And only when I was doing my collage and when I was presenting to you, I realised that I actually gained more in high school compared to primary school. Even though there were so many things that I could take part in at primary school, but I feel that it didn't aid me at all.*

**Dr Kathleen:** *I think that is a very important realisation. So what do you think stopped you from taking part in or advantage of those activities in primary school?*

**Ntokozo:** *I think I was always afraid; I was worried that I was not doing the right thing anyway. I felt like it was pointless for me to try. I remember when we had to read in front of the class everyone would actually wait for you to make a mistake, to pronounce a word wrong or to omit a word. That discouraged me and at the same time I did not get support; I didn't have a teacher that who was supportive. Only in grade 7, that was when I was exposed to someone who had more of a positive approach towards learning.*

**Dr Kathleen:** *Is that the optimistic teacher?*

**Ntokozo:** *Yes, that is the optimistic teacher; those are the values that I actually carried to high school.*

**Dr Kathleen:** *So in terms of your own teaching now and the way you want you want to integrate inclusivity and take into account and understand children's culture. What do you think your own personal narrative has taught you?*

**Ntokozo:** *I think it is to try to accommodate; you said that the other day, that we shouldn't try to box children because they are different. I want to acknowledge their strengths instead of focusing on their weaknesses and bring a bit of fun in the classroom.*

**Dr Kathleen:** *Your story also shows the importance of helping children to feel at home. We should make them feel like the school is a place for them. But I think it also points to the importance of being aware of what happening in their lives beyond school and things that they're grappling with. You as a teacher can't change those things, but you can provide them with a supportive space where they are able to maybe feel good about themselves despite what's going on at home or where they feel they can come and talk to you.*

**Dr Kathleen:** *Nontuthuko, in looking at Ntokozo's collage transcript, what do you see that you can be able to take away for your own self-study on supportive teacher-learner relationships?*

**Nontuthuko:** *I think it's theme number 5 on the optimistic teacher. I want to be able to motivate learners and give my children confidence. I remember as a learner I was always shy. So, I want to make my learners feel like school is their home. For example, in my school, many learners*

*come from a background where they don't have parents; they are orphans. Or their parents leave early in the morning and come back late in the afternoon. So it is very important that we teachers play the role of being parents, taking care of them. And also, in our primary school most of the children are new to the idea of school because they've never been to grade R or pre-school. I teach grade 1; so some of them have never attended school, which means that school is a new environment for them. So they still have that fear that it is their first year at school; they are not sure what to do. I think I've mentioned that I need to make more activities that will make them more comfortable and calm. I think most of these children feel like Ntokozo felt in her primary school: fearful, depressed and uncomfortable.*

**Dr Kathleen:** *Ntokozo, is there anything that you weren't really conscious of or you weren't really aware of before you did this process of creating the collage and then the transcript?*

**Ntokozo:** *To be quite honest with you, I did not realise that high school had had such a positive influence, because I've always felt as if I had access to so many things in primary school. That is why my parents took me to that school; they wanted me to be exposed to new things. But at the same time I don't think that they even knew that it actually trapped me. When I was doing my collage I realised that I had a pretty good time in high school. In high school I was really concerned about being progressive and taking part in different things. I wanted to be mature; I wanted to go to the library, to do an internship at the Independent Newspapers. Those are things that I didn't even have to ask my mom about. She would be surprised that I was actually doing certain things on my own. So I feel like it actually did give me room to grow. Another thing is that I didn't realise that I was exposed to such diverse environments at the different primary schools I went to until I listened to the other presentations by my critical friends and heard about their primary school experiences, which were so different to mine.*

**Dr Kathleen:** *Doing the collage in pictures and words, how was that different from writing your personal history narrative?*

**Ntokozo:** *I think it was more relaxing, finding pictures that actually remind you of your childhood memories.*

## Conclusion

In this chapter, Chapter Three, I attended to my first research question: *What can I learn about cultural inclusivity and children's culture from my personal history?* The narrative presented in this chapter is a reflection of my personal history that has moulded me in so many ways, allowing me to overcome certain challenges. I will forever treasure it in my heart and share it with my children. It reflects my experiences and what I have experienced during my childhood. As Allender and Allender (2006) explained, our philosophies of teaching have grown out of the wounds we experienced as children. Fortunately, I am not a victim of my past schooling experiences. Writing a personal history narrative about my experiences as a learner has inspired me to be a positive influence and role model for my learners. In writing this chapter, I found the courage to revisit my own childhood memories in hope that this would facilitate my learning and enrich my teaching. I was able to find my roots and to acknowledge my childhood and adolescent experiences as priceless learning experiences.

In the subsequent chapter, Chapter Four, I respond to my second research question: *What can I learn about cultural inclusivity and children's culture from my grade 4 learners?* I present an in depth account of and reflection on the lessons that I planned and taught for the purposes of my self-study research.

## CHAPTER FOUR: REAPING CHILDREN'S CULTURE

### Introduction

Through my self-study research, I intended to discover what I could learn about cultural inclusivity and children's culture. In the previous chapter, Chapter Three, I addressed my first research question: *What can I learn about cultural inclusivity and children's culture from my personal history?* I narrated my personal history with respect to cultural inclusivity and children's culture and showed how making, presenting and discussing a collage assisted me to consolidate and reconsider my learning from my personal history. In retracing my personal history and creating my collage, I became more aware of the importance of accommodating and acknowledging the uniqueness of all children in my class. I realised that I wanted to recognise their strengths rather than focus on their weaknesses and also to bring more colour, fun and play into the classroom. Because I remembered how being outdoors in nature and also reading novels allowed me to feel more creative and comfortable as a learner, I realised that I wanted to share my love of nature and of reading with my learners. In addition, I became more conscious of the importance of being aware of what is happening in learners' lives inside and outside of school and providing a supportive space where they can share their opinions and feelings and can feel at home.

In this chapter, Chapter Four, I offer a detailed account of and reflection on the lessons that I planned and taught for the purposes of my self-study research. I describe my daily teaching and learning experiences with my 37 grade 4 learners. In so doing, I respond to my second research question: *What can I learn about cultural inclusivity and children's culture from my grade 4 learners?* To answer this fundamental question, I drew on my daily journal in which I reflected on my lessons, and on my learners' written and drawing activities, as their well as oral presentations. For the purposes of my research, I planned and studied lessons where learners were working with journal writing and collage making and lessons where I addressed issues of cultural inclusivity and children's culture through English, Mathematics, Natural Science and Life Skills lessons.

The lessons were conducted in English, as it is the school medium of instruction, and the content of all lessons was aligned with the prescribed national curriculum for grade 4 (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Audio recording was used to record learners' discussions and my teaching. In describing how these lessons progressed, I give examples of learners' classwork. I have also used excerpts from my reflective journal to show my views and state of mind and to show how my learning evolved. To ensure confidentiality, learners' classwork has been presented without their names and all names of learners have been changed when mentioning particular learners.

### **Lesson 1. English: Folktales and myths (22 April 2016)**

The lesson commenced with an ice breaker called the "*World's greatest sandwich*", which I had read about on the internet. The learners seemed a bit unenthusiastic and sceptical at first; they did not respond to some of my questions. However, they soon warmed up to the lesson. They participated in the ice breaker and evidently enjoyed adding their favourite ingredient into the "*World's greatest sandwich*."

For this game to be played, the learners sat in a circle. One would begin by saying his or her name and then give ingredients to go on the sandwich. For example, Anande said, "*My name is Anande and the world's greatest sandwich has cheese.*" The next person in the circle announced his or her name and gave Siboniso's ingredient as well as his or her own: "*Hi, my name is Carla, and the world's greatest sandwich has cheese and cucumber.*"

The lesson took place outside underneath a tree that is situated in our school playground. I aimed to set a relaxed mood that would help evoke learners' memories. I wanted to set a mood that exalted companionship and echoed harmony amongst my learners. I wanted my learners to draw from their own daily experiences.

After the ice breaker, I asked my learners what they learnt from folktales and myths. Messi responded by saying, "*It [folktales] teaches us to help one another.*" Carla related folktales to fairy tales. She shared a story about Cinderella.

*Once upon a time there was a girl who lived with her stepmother and two step sisters who bossed her around all day long. One day the Prince's duke came with a letter that invited all the girls to the ball. Her stepmother and step sisters were full of joy because the prince wanted a bride. The step sisters both started fighting over the prince because they wanted to be princesses. Cinderella asked if she could also attend the ball and her stepmother said "No! Why?" "Okay you can come when you finish all the house work," said the stepmom. Cinderella had made a dress but it got torn by her evil step sisters. She burst into tears. She saw a bright light, it was her fairy godmother. "Now Cinderella let me change your dress and let's organise some horses and a coachman to take you to the ball, the spell will at 12:00 midnight." She went to the ball and danced with the prince. She was so ecstatic that she lost track of time. She rushed off just before midnight. She lost her shoe; the prince could not stop thinking about her. He looked all over the village for a girl who lost her shoe and finally he found Cinderella and they lived happily ever after. The moral of the story is never be bossy and be positive.*

**Figure 4.1. An extract of Cinderella shared by Carla**

Lulu then stated, *"We must never tell a lie"*. Agreeing with Lilly, Amanda said, *"We should always tell the truth."* Dumi articulated that *"We must treat people the way we want to be treated."* Thuso concluded by saying, *"We should love each other"*. Lulu gave us examples of fairy tales she had read before such as *The Frog and the Princess*.

Through listening to the audio recording of the lesson, I became conscious that my learners related folktales to fairy tales they had read or cartoons they had watched or enjoyed. For example, they talked about the adventures of *Tom and Jerry*. Sicelo explained *"Tom and Jerry always fight but still remain friends."*

The lesson was going well apart from having uncalled for, mischievous wild monkeys roaming around. These wild monkeys are a common sight in our school grounds. The wild monkeys can be a pest because they open and eat from our dustbins; they are also bold enough to snatch our



learners' lunch. This results in utter chaos and of course entertainment for our learners, since they laugh and enjoy being chased by monkeys.

We began to read the story of the "*The Boy who Cried Wolf*". I was impressed that my learners had an idea of the story and could relate this story to their own favourite stories or myths shared with them by their grandparents or parents.

*Later that night, the people in the village wondered why the shepherd boy had not returned with the sheep. They went to look for him and found him weeping and alone. "There really was a wolf! He ate some sheep and the others have run away! I called for help! Why didn't you come?" he sobbed. One of the old villagers tried to comfort the boy as they walked back to the village. "We'll help you find the lost sheep in the morning," he said, putting his arm around the boy. "But now you must learn that if you always tell a lie, nobody will believe you...even when you tell the truth!"*

**Figure 4.2. An extract from the "*The Boy Who Cried Wolf*"<sup>6</sup>**

In the story, we were able to find new words such as "sobbed", "weeping", "honesty" and we looked at the difference between myths and folktales and did dictionary skills.

I decided to ask the following questions to help me understand what else my learners had gained from reading "*The boy Who Cried Wolf*" I asked:

1. *Why did the shepherd boy cry wolf?*
2. *Why did the villagers not come when he called for help?*
3. *What is the moral of the story?*

---

<sup>6</sup> From Heese et al. (2012).

These are examples of answers I received from my learners:

**Anande:**

- 1. He was bored and wanted to attract attention.*
- 2. They thought he was lying again.*
- 3. If you tell a lie, no one will believe you even when you are truthful.*

**Carla:**

- 1. He cried because he wanted to amuse himself.*
- 2. They thought it was a trick again.*
- 3. Don't tell a lie to other people.*

**Lulu:**

- 1. He was bored and wanted attention*
- 2. They thought he was lying*
- 3. Never lie because people will not believe you when you are telling the truth.*

My learners were quite intrigued and interested in discussing about folktales. They could relate their daily experiences to how folktales had influenced their learning. We also looked at and questioned how folktales can play a fundamental role in teaching us lifetime values that are passed down from generation to generation. My learners and I discussed examples of these values, such as respect, being disciplined, kindness and friendship. We realised that these stories can have a positive impact on our lives. As a class we discovered that folktales are common across different cultural and religious groups. We also found common values in folktales, such as treating people equally, being helpful, showing love and always being honest. Therefore, we could see how our diverse beliefs and cultures were unified through shared positive values.

I began to question what my learners understood and identified in learning about myths and folktales. I asked myself: *“Do they understand Fairy tales compared to myths? Do they believe in myths and practice them? How does it influence their children's culture?”*

We went on to read the folktale of “*The Girl Who Broke her Promises*” as an addition to the lesson, because I wanted my learners to understand the meanings that can come with folktales. I realised that we needed another example that could teach us about moral values. I wanted my learners to see the significance of learning to be truthful, honest and valuing friendship. I felt that this story would do justice to these lessons.

*Maryam had a friend named Latifah. Latifah never kept her promises. Any time she promised to do something, she didn't do it. One time, Maryam told Latifah a secret, and Latifah promised not to tell anyone. The next day, everyone knew Maryam's secret. Latifah had broken her promise and Maryam never trusted her again. Latifah didn't keep her friends for long, because she broke her promises. Even when she would swear by Allah nobody believed her. Soon Latifah was very lonely.*

**Figure 4.3.** An extract from “*The Girl Who Broke her Promises*”.<sup>7</sup>

I sensed a lot of excitement and eagerness to participate in our folktale discussions. Learners' faces were filled with smiles. They began to share with the rest of the class about cartoons and fairy tales they had read in the past. They shared stories they had read or had been told by their parents or grandparents. The lesson escalated to finding life lessons and moral values we had adopted from folktales and myths. We identified life lessons and moral values by comparing the two stories we had read; we reflected on the events that took place and began to brainstorm some of the life lessons and moral values (as shown in Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1.**

***Lesson identified in folktales***

Being honest,
Treating each other with respect
The importance of knowing what is wrong and right
Treating each other fairly
Kindness
Consequences of our actions

<sup>7</sup> From Heese et al. (2012).

Each learner then designed a poster that portrayed folktale values and lessons and drew pictures that illustrated and explained the importance of folktales (see Figure 4.4).

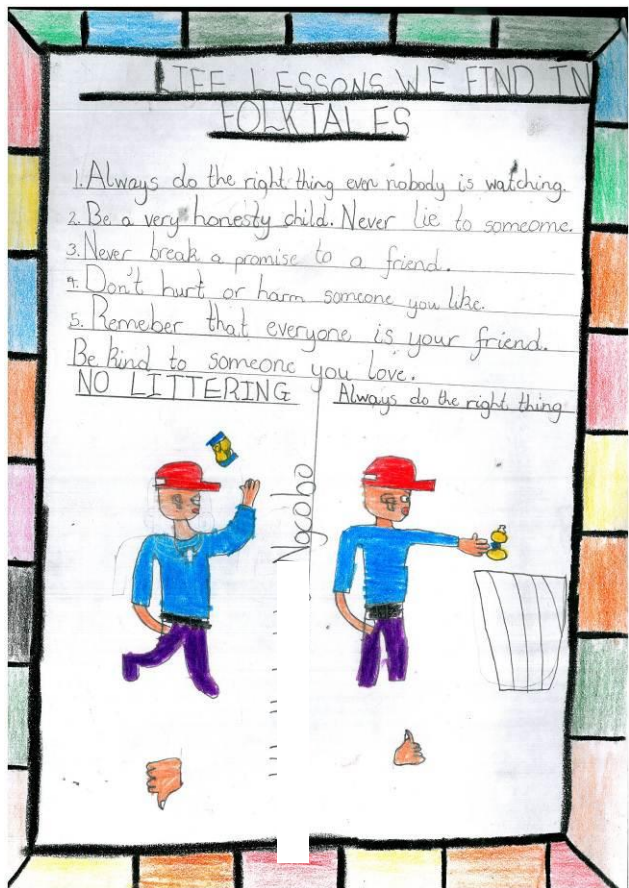


Figure 4.4. Examples of posters related to life lessons

All in all, learning about folktales seemed to instil both a sense of unity and a respect for differences. We discussed storytelling and writing through folktales, and by doing so we were able to expand our imaginations. During the course of our reflections on the folktales, we were able to identify the consequences of not doing what is morally right. I was astounded by my learners' enthusiasm and willingness to share their stories that had been passed down from generation to generation. They were spontaneous in expressing their feelings as well as in their writings and drawings in the posters. I embraced the beauty and the significance of their children's culture unfolding in their activities. I saw this through their use of bright colours, patterns and drawings that illustrated moral values they discovered in folktales, as well as myths that they identified as having played a vital role in shaping us as a society. It was pleasing to see how they were able to express that folktales play an important part in acknowledging moral values. However, in my journal I reflected on my concerns as to whether I was finding answers to my second research question.

***Journal entry (24 April 2016)***

*Fiercely I waited impatiently for the unknown. At first, I was frustrated because it seemed like I was not finding what I was looking for. I kept finding quite a few loose ends in my lesson. I felt like the term "children's culture" might have been a bit too ambitious. At times it felt like I was never going to find their culture. I want to grasp their interest and draw them into their learning. It seems like I constantly have to search deeper. In my lesson I realised that there were some gaps. These gaps made it difficult for me to grasp children's culture. When I started to reflect on my lesson I was convinced to search deeper and more intensely on children's culture. When planning my lesson I had thought that having a lesson under the tree would be successful. It was but it did not mature to the kind of lesson which was more engaging with my learners and helping me have a peek into their brains. In other words, how and what do they think about?*

## **Lesson 2. Life Skills: Menus from different cultures in South Africa (28 April 2016)**

The lesson started by learners striking a pose that represented their personalities. I got this idea as an ice breaker from a friend of mine and I was intrigued to give it a try. I gave examples of poses just to give learners some kind of direction. I saw that they were ecstatic since their faces and eyes were filled with smiles. I could hear their enthusiasm from their cheerful voices too. They could not wait to share or strike a pose and for the class to guess their personality. We wanted to know from their pose what they were or what kind of person they were. I encouraged them that it had to be related to their most important moral values. Gessie stood and did a dance move; my learners raised their hands and were guessing: “*Thuso or Sicelo Mam*”. Lihle disagreed and exclaimed, “*Sam, Miss Mkhize. She loves dancing; she even calls herself Babes Wodumo!*” Babes Wodumo is a popular Kwaito artist who is well known for her flexible dance moves. Kwaito is a style of popular music similar to hip hop, featuring vocals narrated over an instrumental backing with strong bass line.

I explained that we are all diverse and come from different cultural heritages. We discussed our different cultural heritages and where we come from. I realised that learners had different meanings and understandings of “culture”. Even though some of my learners appeared to me to belong to African cultural heritages, they said that they felt as if their culture was more European. For example, Nandi mentioned that, “*Mam my culture is English*”. My learners had to identify or name outward signs of culture and these were some of the answers I received: Messi expressed her view regarding outward signs of tradition as “*Mam like traditional clothes, married women wear isidwaba in the IsiZulu culture*” (*isidwaba* is made out of cow hide is wrapped around like a skirt). Nandi who is a Muslim, mentioned, “*We wear a scarf around our heads and a long dress or skirt.*” “*Yes Mam they even wearing jewellery such as colourful beads,*” Amanda agreed, nodding her head. In the midst of the discussion I asked Carla, “*What do Hindus wear?*” She replied, “*In the Hindu tradition we wear a sari or a Punjabi*”. I continued to question my class until Sam mentioned dancing as an outward sign of culture she explained “*like ukusina*” (which is a Zulu traditional dance). “*Are there any Hindu dances Carla?*” I asked. She replied, “*Yes, but may I please ask Miss N [a teacher assistant] to write the name down for me?*” I replied “*Of course*”. This is what Miss N wrote down for us: “*We have the Kathak which is a dance of love and the Bharatanatyam used to express Hindu religious*

*stories.*” We also looked at food as an outward sign of culture. Puleng mentioned, “Idombolo [*dumplings*] or ujeqe [*steamed bread*]”. These are dishes, which are usually prepared in Zulu homes, especially for special occasions or ceremonies.

“*Sounds interesting*”, I responded to their answers. To my delight, the lesson turned out to be mesmerising, pleasurable and filled with a lot of fascinating facts. This is when we discussed how we can be united through sharing food. We discussed an example of a menu and gave examples of different restaurants and why we need a menu. We talked about how menus help us in restaurants.

We discussed how there are many outward signs of culture. I reminded the learners that one of the most common outward signs is the food that we eat. I explained that because we have different cultural heritage groups living in South Africa, we have different traditional meals. I explained to the learners that there are many different outward signs of cultural traditions; one of the most common signs is the food we eat because we have so many different traditional meals. I asked them to look at a menu which contained some mouth-watering traditional South African dishes (Figure 4.5). I asked my learners, “*What is the title of the Menu?*” Then I said, “*Imagine that you have visitors coming to your home for supper. They want to experience a South African cuisine. Put together a menu that showcases South Africa’s diverse food.*”

My learners were engaged in the lesson; they seemed stimulated and motivated to design their own menus. I told them that their menus could contain any food they enjoyed eating and they should not restrict themselves. They responded by screaming “*Yah!*” and did not want me to discontinue the lesson.

Their menus displayed the kind of food they enjoyed eating and seemed to be influenced by food they are exposed to at home or in their neighbourhood. Most of their menus had junk food, such as burgers and fries. It was obvious to me that this was influenced by restaurants they usually visit. They also included some traditional food such as *ujeqe*, dumplings and samoosas. They used bright colours and had some drawings for their menus. I was pleased to see some beverages and dessert in their menus. They used words such as “*delicious*” “*mmmm yummy!*” and

“refreshing” I found this very descriptive and the drawings were attractive. To some degree I discovered that awareness of having a cultural heritage or something they believed was unique to them sowed a sense of belonging. They wanted to share what food they loved; this was communicated through their examples of outward signs of culture.

<b>MAMA AFRICA’S KITCHEN</b>
<b>Cape Malay <i>bobotie</i></b> - spicy mince and fruit curry served with yellow rice
<b><i>Potjiekos</i></b> - traditional Afrikaner stew cooked in tripod pot over open coals
<b>Roast leg of pork</b> – traditional British recipe served with roast potatoes
<b>Bunny chow</b> - half a loaf of bread hallowed out and filled with Indian curry
<b><i>Putupap and boerewors</i></b> – a stiff Zulu porridge served with special Afrikaner sausage
<b><i>Masonja or dhovi</i></b> - a Venda dish of <i>mopane</i> worms and ground peanuts
<b>Vegetarian dishes</b>
<b><i>Umnqusho</i></b> – traditional Xhosa dish of samp and beans
<b><i>Morogo</i></b> – a Sotho meal of wild herbs cooked with maize meal
<b><i>Putupap and Chakalaka</i></b> – a stiff Zulu porridge served with spicy tomatoes gravy.
<b>Stirfry</b> – a combination of fresh, crisp vegetables shallow fried in the Chinese tradition.
<b>Drinks and desserts</b>
<b><i>Koeksisters</i></b> : traditional Afrikaner dough twisted, fried in oil and soaked in syrup
<b><i>Dithotse</i></b> - a Tswana pumpkin seed snack
<b><i>Umqombothi</i></b> - a traditional Zulu homemade beer.

**Figure 4.5. Menu for Mama Africa’s Kitchen**



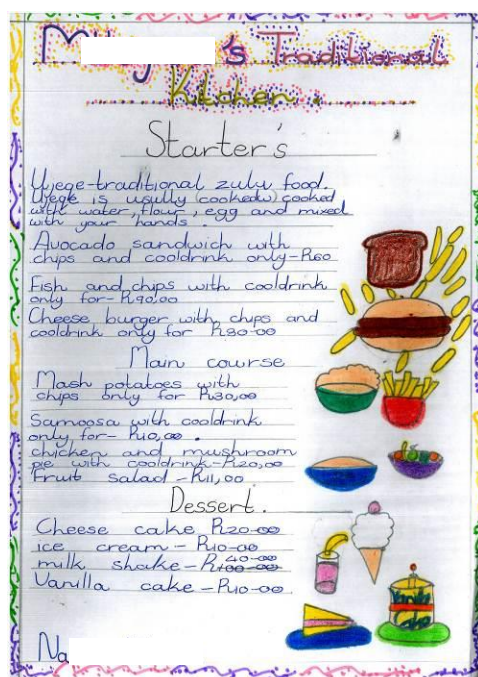
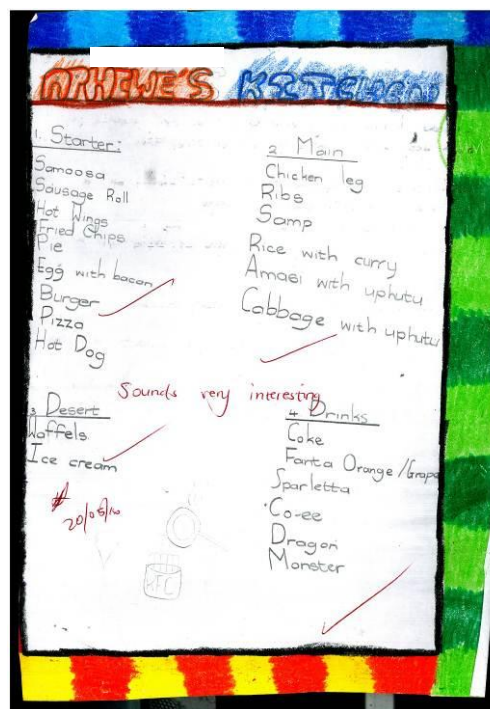


Figure 4.6. Examples of menus made by my learners

### Lesson 3. Life Skills: Collage making (23 May 2016)

I began the lesson by showing my learners some pictures from magazines and newspapers that I felt represented my personality, as well as those that reflected my study. I told them that I was embarking on a new journey that would help me understand their interests and hopefully aid their learning. I encouraged them to looking for their pictures that would display their personalities and character. I then moved on to showing them my collage (see Figure 4.7) and explained what each picture represented and why I chose that particular picture or text. They were amused and quite intrigued.



*Figure 4.7. My collage: A new perspective on learning*

My collage displayed and

portrayed a bag of emotions related to children's culture. I wanted to resound my learners' ideas of learning and teaching. I planned to re-discover my teaching approach, shift my focus from the content and to teach in a way that was related to inclusivity, including my learners' interests and how they understood and defined children's culture. I wanted to focus on what they found intriguing and stimulating. I also aimed to introduce their ideas and thoughts into the classroom to integrate their ideas about inclusivity and their culture, particularly children's culture.

My collage is a symbol of new beginnings. It shows that I am excited for the unknown. It also reveals what I have observed in my teaching regarding children's culture. It reveals their desire to have an independent spirit. I also see a lot of objects that portray their interests in social media and networks. I see a teacher who is undergoing rebirth and finding poetry through learning.

The picture of the puzzle/word search and the words that say "*Kiddies games*" illustrates my desire to approach to teaching and learning in a way that is fun and entertaining. I recognise that my learners learn through playing. The colours I used also reveal their vibrant attitudes; the words such as "*help*" echoes how I would like to assist my learners to reach their level best through playing and learning. The South African flag echoes my interests in accommodating diversity in my classroom and teaching my learners to embrace each other. I also want to celebrate old traditions and blend them with my learners' interests.

I found a sense of myself as I was taken back to reflect on my past experiences as a learner (as described in Chapter Three). You could say that my collage echoed my personal history narrative journey and allowed me to embark on a new found passion. I desired to transform teaching in a positive manner. I was reminded of my own primary school sessions in the media centre, my love for the school garden and my favourite books as a child (see Chapter Three).

My learners thought my collage was beautiful. Lungelo said, "*Mam it is beautiful and educational*". I asked him what was educational about it. He replied, "*The puzzle/word search Mam*". Moses nodded and smiled explaining, "*It is colourful*". Carla exclaimed, "*It is inspiring*" and Charity mentioned, "*It looks interesting*".

Then my learners demanded clear instructions of how they were supposed to design or complete their collages. I asked them to each make a collage that represented their personality and that would also allow us to identify what they found intriguing and what they valued.

They made individual collages. They constantly questioned if it was correct or incorrect; they were concerned about having minimal pictures as well as not finding pictures and words that highlighted their personalities. They were also concerned about the orientation of the paper. They asked, “*Should it be a portrait or landscape?*” They did not fully understand the essence of making a collage until I explained to them that it should reveal their personality and their interests. I realised that they were not used to having the autonomy and the power to do as they pleased.

In looking at the learners’ collages (for example, see Figure 4.8), I became conscious that my learners have an interest in art and colour. They were also interested in trends such as the latest clothes, shoes and jewellery. I feel like they believe in heroes and are also heroes themselves since they have the courage to find new ways of learning through playing every day. I was inspired by their optimistic mind-set to have fun, show love and strive for happiness. This is what I see when I look at these collages: fun, glitz and glam and living in colour. Their collages were colourful, attractive and echoed their feelings through pictures and texts.

My learners’ collages revealed their favourite characters, cartoons, choice of music, clothing, pictures, toys and what that exists within their digital world, which was active beyond comprehension. I also discovered that my learners are interested in listening to the most popular music such as Hip hop, House and Kwaito, as well as talk shows and fashion. They also explained that they take pleasure in outdoor activities as they are more fun and relaxing.





Figure 4.8. Examples of my learners' collages

In my learners' collages I was able to identify their interests and it was evident that they all have different personalities and interests. Their collages also uncovered dynamic relationships and the thrill of playing games. My learners were also longing for an independent spirit. They longed to be adults and to undergo adventures, as shown by pictures of mountains. I think collage making expanded their imagination and allowed them to travel to different continents and countries around the world. Some of them were drawn to pictures that showed secluded places that exalted pure serenity. I discovered that my learners were interested in ancient objects and took pleasure in nature.

Learners also displayed the kind of food or restaurants they enjoy visiting. They imagined themselves in wedding dresses; girls had images that reflected beauty, such as make up, jewellery and high heels. They also acknowledged that everyday heroes still exist. They treasured friendship and family. They ached for happiness. Their collages showed that they believe in dreaming and being spiritually free.

Each learner also gave an oral presentation of her or his collage. Nandi expressed that she liked certain things because she desired to in follow her father's footsteps. She would like to play soccer and be a goalkeeper, but her father does not approve. Nandi also pointed out that she uses the word "*show time*" to help her to relax before her performances or acts at the circus. For example, she blows balloons. Another learner, Carla, explained, *I am an adventurous person who likes exciting trips. It is fun going on journeys because you meet new people, learn new things and discover interesting stories about other people.*" Lulu was also able to express herself; she said:

*I'm a person who likes fashion. I am a big fan of music. I am very shy around people but when I am around my family, I have a lot of drama. The bright side of me is that I focus at school and pass. I like playing games on phones and I also like going outside. I like going to the beach. The reason I like all these things is that they make me relax. I have fun doing them.*

I appreciated the opportunity to learn about children's culture through collage making. I felt that it also emancipated my learners' feelings as they could lay their desires and aspirations on

paper. Collage making also allowed my learners to express themselves without holding back in the sense that they were given the liberty to use or do whatever they found intriguing for their collages. Collage making opened up their creativity and their love of colour. It laid a foundation for me of understanding children's culture. Collage making cultivated my learning about my learners' interests. My learners shared their opinions and expressed their feelings through their collages. I realised that my learners are walking resources for me as a teacher.

***Journal entry (24 May 2016)***

*I appreciated that my learners were able to be creative; they cultivated learning through finding pictures and texts that represent and displayed who they are. I was pleased with their optimistic attitude. In looking at their collages, I discovered that my learners chose pictures that had phones, cars, and laptops. They were also able to work collaboratively and shared their magazines amongst themselves. They were also interested in knowing what their partner or fellow classmate was trying to say through their collage. Collage making was heartening to hollow profoundly into children's culture. Evidently my learners were also interested in trends, fashion and Creative Arts. They also had their favourite celebrities or musicians.*

The collage making lesson was also accompanied by an ice breaker that helped my learners to share their feelings. We played a game called, “*I wish my teacher knew*”. This ice breaker happened at the end of the lesson. I got this idea on Facebook and I thought it would be conducive to my study regarding children's culture. I also felt it would help me understand my learners' daily challenges and emotions. My learners had to write down at least four things that they wished I knew about them. I was interested in knowing my learners' thoughts and feelings towards adults and teachers in particular. I wanted to know if we had a negative or a positive influence in the way that we were responding to the questions or problems they encountered.

As we discussed this ice breaker, I realised that my learners were relentlessly trying to please me. For example, most of them seemed to tell me positive things about themselves or they would give me compliments. So then I figured it would be more comfortable if they wrote their feelings down and I asked my learners to write down their responses.

***Journal entry (24 May 2016)***

*I felt their true feelings were trapped into what they felt was an adequate answer for me. In that I also realised that children are constantly trying to please adults and seek for their approval. I questioned how I would help emancipate my learners to reveal their true feelings.*

As the activity heightened, these were some of their written responses I received from my learners:

Moses mentioned, *"I wish you knew that I am good."* This made me reflect on my teaching and the ways in which my learners want me to view them. I realised that a part of growing and being a child means longing for an adult's approval and making them proud. Lethu wanted me to see him beyond the exterior and to explore his invisible side.

Asande responded, *"I wish you knew that I don't always lose my crayons."* I apprehended that having crayons was important for my learners and that losing them was frustrating for them. Losing their stationery also meant trouble at home. This was one of their worst nightmares. I also realised that our children want us as teachers to believe in them.

Luthando stated, *"I wish you knew that I am shy. That's why I do not like standing in front of the class"*. This taught me to be aware of my learners' feelings and to pay special attention to my introverted learners. At the same time I realised that I should give them a chance to participate in classroom discussions voluntarily, maybe through written work instead of orally until they feel confident and comfortable.

Buhle wrote, *"I wish you knew that I come from an IsiZulu school and that is why I am struggling academically."* I reflected on the kind of learning and teaching styles we have to accommodate second language speakers. I wondered if I was doing enough. I questioned if exploring children's culture would benefit learning and teaching of such learners whose home language is not English.

Overall I acknowledged that this exercise had exposed my learners' feelings and concerns related to school and adults. This activity opened my eyes to my learners' feelings and what they desired



the most. I realised their emotional needs instead of focusing only on their academic abilities or their behaviour in class. With this understanding, I aimed to be more sensitive in my teaching approach as I became aware of differences and the challenges my learners encounter.

#### **Lesson 4. Natural Science: Indigenous musical instruments (10 August 2016)**

The lesson started off by me asking “*What comes to your mind when I say music?*” My learners were standing due their exhilaration. Their eyes were full of curiosity. I resonated with their feelings and facial expressions as I waited in anticipation for their responses. After minutes of trying to calm the buzzing sounds and piercing voices of names of artist being yelled out, I was able to bring some form of order. Clearly I had managed to captivate their attention. I realised that my learners yearned for learning that exhilarated their interests, such as popular music. I took pleasure in watching some of my learners dance just by hearing someone else shout out the names of their favourite musicians. I felt that companionship and a culture of unity were celebrated when learners agreed in sounds and sang together. I noticed that my introverted learners were slowly coming out their shells.

Most of my learners are exposed to Digital Satellite Television (DSTV). They gave examples of music channels and programmes found in *DSTV*. They also gave examples of types of music. Siyafana raised his hand with fervour, screaming, “*Beat!*” Lungelo shouted “*Dance!*” In between that Sicelo stood up along with Thuto and started dancing. The classroom was throbbing with exhilaration as the rest of the class was pleased to be entertained by these two. They were busy banging on their tables and stomping their feet on the floor. I attempted to settle them, but I found myself compelled and thirsty to see more of their dance moves. I was also worried I might be called in by my principal as some people would think my class was chaotic and that I was lost in the wilderness, not to mention failing dismally to maintain discipline.

However, I became conscious that learning should be fun and that I should let my learners live in the moment and so should I. I did not feel the need to crucify them for enjoying the lesson. Instead I chose to have fun with them. The lesson was full of excitement. Learners could not wait to share their favourite genres of music. They agreed with some genres mentioned by other

learners. HIP hop was clearly popular and brought a lot of voices even from my shy and silent learners. I was surprised to learn that some of my learners take pleasure in listening to old songs from the 1980s and 1990s. They were also interested in different musicians. They mentioned Casper Nyovest, AKA, Babes Wodumo and Chris Brown.

The lesson developed to reading about the San people and how their way of life was influenced by music and how it originated (see Figure 4.9). We looked at different materials the San people used to design and make musical instruments. We were also able to identify new words together such as “indigenous” and “nomadic”. We tried to link the San people to our modern day lives. My learners were also able to think of musical instruments they had *seen* or played during ceremonies or celebrations at home. An example of this instrument was *isigubhu*, which means drum in isiZulu.

*The San people were the first people to live in Southern Africa. They were hunter-gatherers and had a nomadic lifestyle. Many of the indigenous instruments of the San are no longer played or used by them. San people used natural materials to make their musical instruments. They tied cocoons filled with seeds around their ankles, which rattled when they danced. The men used these dancing rattles to add rhythm to their evening dances around the fire. The long bow was called the gorah and the short bow the khou. Both of these were played by blowing on the string of the bow while tapping it lightly with a stick. The shorter khou bow made a louder and clearer than the gorah bow.*

**Figure 4.9. An extract from our reading on indigenous musical instruments<sup>8</sup>.**

We then moved to a lighter side of learning and did an ice breaker before I could introduce the homework activity to my learners. For the ice breaker my learners wrote several facts about themselves without writing their names. I had read about this ice breaker on the internet. I instructed them to crumple their paper and they got to have a “controlled” paper ball fight for a few minutes. When I said “*Time is up*”, they grabbed the closest paper ball and took turns to read and tried to guess who the paper belonged to. These are some of the written facts that were also

---

<sup>8</sup> From Bezuidenhout et al. (2012)

read aloud for the class to speculate on: “*I like playing soccer*,” “*I enjoy singing and dancing*,” “*I love oral presentation*” and “*I enjoy drawing*”.

To wrap up the lesson, my learners were sent home with a project that required them to make a musical instrument that they would enjoy playing. They were encouraged to use recycled materials. They had to make sure that their instrument had effective sounds and show some creativity, and to tell us about the history of their instrument and what they found interesting about their musical instrument. They had to bring in their musical instrument in two weeks’ time. Two weeks later, my learners were eager to show me their musical instruments; they were high in spirit and were also amazed by their peers’ instruments. Sadly, some of these instruments had no sound, however the learners still pretended as if there were a sound coming out and made musical sounds accompanied by Nandi’s soothing voice and of course Sam’s dance move. It was at this moment when I became cognisant of the element of fun and finding happiness even in adversity. I was also pleased that most of them managed to use recyclable materials. This meant that they understood the importance of preserving and saving planet earth.

***Journal entry (10 August 2016)***

*I was stunned by this lesson as it took a path I did not envision. It was prosperous from the beginning to the end. It was so unpredictable and most of all we all had fun. This was an imperative element in children’s culture. There was so much I learnt through listening to my learners. For example, I did not know some artist or channels. It was interesting to know that they listen to some mature music as they gave different examples of genres such the 80s vs. the 90s. I realised that this is greatly influenced by their parents or older siblings.*

*Through observing my learners, I was relieved to see them joyful and intrigued by the lesson. It was almost like watching flowers blossom in spring. I just knew this was a term for new beginnings. I looked forward to seeing their favourite musical instrument. I considered utilising free time in my class to allow my learners to explore learning through playing; I figured that this would aid my learners that desperately need remedial work. This would also help with reinforcing discipline in the classroom.*

## **Lesson 5. Mathematics: The day we played (16 August 2016)**

### ***Journal entry: 16 August 2016***

*It was a beautiful morning filled with a lot of deadlines. I had procrastinated about indulging in a Mathematics lesson that involved toys. I imagined it would cause utter chaos in my classroom and it would be time consuming. I could not close my eyes to the vitality of this lesson. I cautiously began to explain the rules of the ice breaker. In doing so I realised that my journey towards unfolding children's culture has been a daunting one. It was like looking through fog; I could not see clearly. I had doubts. At times I question the significance of children's culture. How do my lessons and curriculum nurture the possibility of learning through this culture?*

To begin this lesson, we repeated the ice breaker we had done in Lesson 4. My learners wrote several facts about themselves without writing their name. I instructed them to crumple their paper and they got to have a “controlled” paper ball fight for a few minutes. When I said “*Time is up*”, they grabbed the closest paper ball and took turns to read and tried to guess who the paper belonged to. The ice breaker certainly stirred up some interest and thrills in the classroom. I was astonished that they knew each other’s’ interests so well. Although I have to say some of their handwriting was a dead giveaway.

I saw my learner’s animation mounting each time they had to speculate whose crumbled paper they had in their hands. I gazed at them as they smiled their fears and anxiety away. They portrayed pleasure and seemed to be amused. I could firmly say my learners were thirsty for a classroom lesson that was not nerve-wracking but that was purely based on heartfelt fun and authentic stories shared through games.

The heart of the lesson had finally arrived and I was rather apprehensive. The day before this lesson I had asked my learners to bring their favourite toy or game to school. I told them the day before so they would be prepared to use their toy. The suspense was written all over their faces as they silently hollered “*Yes!*” They could not wait to find out what they were going to do with their games and toys. One of my learners could not stop asking why they had to bring their toys. Sicelo asked, “*Why Mam? “Mam what are we going to do?”*

We discussed different types of games we play and toys we have. The class shouted “*Scrabble*” Messi screamed, “*Monopoly!*” as the rest of the class shouted “*cards!*” Some of them even named their video games. The lesson spiralled to relating our toys and games to Mathematics. Messi explained, “*I love my game Monopoly. Monopoly teaches me how to solve problems. For example: counting forward and counting backwards. Monopoly has 4 sides. It has a side view, top view, front and back view. Monopoly is involved in Maths, solving money and selling properties.*” I found this motivating to employ more games in my teaching and learning.

We looked at viewing objects in Mathematics and shapes. We were able to identify examples of different objects and views around the classroom, such as; the classroom door, table, and the cupboard. I felt a bit clumsy in my explanations and questions at times. At times it felt like trying to answer my research question was a stumbling block. It was almost like I possessed a sack of nerves. I was dreadfully aware of probing for perfection in my lessons. I reassured myself that I would make it my mission to look at children’s ways as a possibility to learn. We began to look at different objects in the classroom.

The purpose of the lesson was to view objects. We were working with viewing objects that week so it was important that my learners were able to identify objects from all angles such as the top, front, side and view. I asked my learners who were sitting in different areas of the classroom: “*What view do you see of the cupboard?*”. With conviction they raised their hands and jumped anxiously waiting, for me shouting, “*Me me me Mam!*” as a way to captivate my attention so they could give them a chance to answer. Some said, “*Side view*”; my middle row exclaimed “*Front view!*” I created an analogy for my learners and asked if they had to climb a ladder then what view would they see of the cupboard. They screamed, “*Top view!*” The lesson heightened to discussing the meaning of viewing. We looked at Lwandile's toy car. As I stood in the middle of the classroom, I asked my learners what view of the car they could see. Different groups saw different views.

The lesson ended with looking items or things the learners see on a daily basis. We used the *Viva Mathematics* textbook (Austin, Jones, Hechter, & Marchant, 2012). This had an illustration and activity where my learners had to state different views, such as top view, side view and front

view. To excavate more of children's culture, I requested my learners to write about their favourite toy or game and to enlighten me on how it supported learning and how it helped them to understand certain Mathematical concepts.

Messi stated, *"We learn about different cities, towns and provinces in Monopoly"*. Anande explained, *"We buy and sell property and we also need money for bail when you go to jail"*. Most of my learners raised their hands and agreed with Messi and Anande. I supported them by telling them that we can relate Monopoly to word problems. A lot of them were amazed that they were playing and learning without knowing.

I became attentive to the kind of culture that erupted during the lesson, particularly when my learners were given an opportunity to play with their toys or games. I noticed that my learners were building relationships; they cooperated and were patient with one another. They were interested in each other's games; they were keen to learn and participate in different games. Essentially bringing games and toys into learning also brought a sense of humour and courtesy.

I thought it would be a good idea and a dynamic contributing to children's culture to ask my learners to write a journal entry regarding their favourite toys, games or cartoons. I encouraged them to tell me how these aid learning and what they find interesting in their games.

#### ***Learner's Journal entries: 17 August 2016***

##### ***Anande***

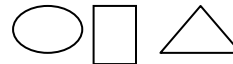
*My favourite toy is snakes and ladders. Snakes and ladders help you with Math. It also helps with counting. I like snakes and ladders it is the best game. My second game is Monopoly. Monopoly also helps with Math. How do you play monopoly? The banker will give you money; you take a dice and roll the dice. You can buy a site, houses and hotels. My third game is cards. Cards help with counting. There are different types of games that you can play. Like top 10, Crazy 8 and Casino.*

**Charity:**

*I have a laptop. It is pink, I bought it at Game. It cost a lot of money. I play with it every day. I like it because it has Math and that one of my favourite subjects. Every day soon as I am done with homework I start playing with it. I learn a lot from it. It is now two years old. I learn rounding off to the nearest 10, 100 and 1000, addition and subtraction. In English I learn adjectives, verbs, nouns and a lot more. I love my laptop because I have fun while playing it now it going to my cousin I feel sad. But I will play with her.*

**Sicelo:**

*My favourite game is playing cards because it helps with Math. You have to think before you put your cards down. Snake and ladders help you with Math too, because it has numbers. The play station controller has X. It helps me to learn my shapes.*



*We also play a game called fill the bottle; we run a lot in that game.*

I learnt that my learners can learn through playing and that they are intrigued by games. I was also surprised that they could come to school with games and toys that facilitate and make learning an adventurous journey for them. I realised that my learners were also into the latest games and technology. This opened my eyes to approach teaching and learning in a pleasurable manner.

**Lesson 6. English: Magical myths (18 August 2016)**

The lesson started off with an ice breaker, in which my learners had to listen to animal sounds that were played from an iPad. This was my idea because I wanted to incorporate the use of technology in my lesson. The learners had to guess which animals made each sound. We also thought about where and when we would find these animals. We began to think of different sounds of animals we might hear during the day and night. Thuso mentioned, “A wolf”. I said “Yes”, agreeing with a howling wolf as I continued to encourage my learners to think comprehensively. I asked, “What else?” Charity shouted, “An owl”. The classroom vibrated with different sounds of different animals. Some of the learners were desperately rising and walking towards me to get attention. I said, “Now let's think of sounds of animals we are most likely to

hear during the day or in the morning.” Messi, cheerfully raising her hand exclaimed, “*Birds Mam! Like pigeons and sparrows.*” Fred “*Mam chickens!*” I responded, “*Of course like a roaster or a hen!*” I was pleased that they could relate these sounds to different times of the day. “*Crickets*” shouted Anande, frantically scuffling through his bag to show me a picture of a cricket. Those who witnessed it smiled amused and said, “*I also have it Mam*”. “*Yes,*” I responded, “*The chirping crickets*”. We also talked about describing people and places, such as looking at landmarks, colour and the smell. This was to help season creative writing.

The ice breaker aided my learners to be optimistic about the lesson since most of my learners do not seem to take pleasure in writing or creative writing. The sun rays were licking our faces as we headed outside to the playing field. I was prepared to discover more points related to children's culture. I recall seeing my children puzzled and in some instances intrigued.

Outside, we read a story about a magic water pot (see Figure 4.10).

*Mzanyawa was the owner of a magic clay water-pot, or ingcazi. It turned water into beer or the sweetest milk at his wish. There was no one Mzanyawa could trust with it. His first-born daughter, Vuyile, hadn't touched it before, but always wanted to test the magic of the pot. Her chance came one day when her parents went to a dance at a neighbouring village. "Fetch the water for me to cook tonight, Vuyile," said her mother. "Also, take care of your sister while we're gone." "Do not touch my ingcazi," reminded Mzanyawa. "Now's my chance!" said Vuyile to herself. "Who's going to stop me? I'll discover what the magic the ingcazi holds for me!"*

**Figure 4.10. An extract from “The Magic Water Pot”<sup>9</sup>**

We were able to associate the story with some of the folk stories and myths we had heard before. We moved on to figuring out which cultural heritage Mzanywa belonged to. Learners had to reflect on what happened in the story; they also shared their feelings and thoughts regarding the story. Learners were asked to relate the story to their own lives.

---

<sup>9</sup> From Heese et al. (2012).



I asked my learners if they had heard of any myths before; they raised their hands hysterically jumping up and down. Musa said, *“Yes Mam. When a hearse or undertaker drives past we were told to hold or pull our hair so no one would die in our family”*. While Musa was explaining, Fred leaped into the conversation and said *“Yes!”* concurring with Musa while holding his hair. I cherished this moment and realised that this also possessed some kind of emotion such as being sympathetic and maintained hope to preserve their family values. I also took the liberty to share my own myth that I was told growing up, *“You know boys and girls I was told that if my hands are itchy I am most likely to get money soon.”* They laughed in delight to know that I also believed in myths. Messi responded by uttering *“Really?”* shaking her head. *“Mam but how’s that true?”* It was remarkable to see that my learners both questioned and agreed with these myths. It showed me that they were perceptive. I then moved on to explaining that myths are much like folktales as they are passed down from generation. This is why they change over the time, but the moral of the story remains. The lesson escalated to finding words that are associated with myths. Carla said *“mysterious”* and Lulu mentioned *“magic and making a wish”*.

Learners were then encouraged to plan to write an ending to a folk story of *“The Magic Water Pot”*. They had to use story structure frame, use a variety of vocabulary, and use appropriate grammar, spelling, punctuation and spaces between paragraphs. This required a lot of creativity and thought from my learners. I realised that they lacked expression and experience with using figures of speech in their writing. I hoped that encouraging them to read on a daily basis would compensate for this. My learners were constantly seeking for my approval. Their writing about imagining themselves in Mzanywa’s shoes was accompanied by mysterious magic endings and a world that thrived beyond their comprehension. We considered how my learners would feel if they were in Mzanyawa's shoes.

*I tiptoed towards the pot and rubbed it gently. All of sudden the ground started moving. For 3 minutes and then I prayed that it would stop. It was a mess. As I looked outside the window. I saw mum outside the window. She was approaching the door with dad. I could see she was angry, her face was red! Dad took the ingcazi (magic pot) he asked me “Who touched the ingcazi?” My sister and I kept quiet. Then he said “When I find out who touched my magic pot, there will be trouble!” I confessed and my parents started shouting at me. My hand started*

*changing and it was getting bigger and bigger. I was so frightened and imagined that I would lose my hand. My dad put some muthi (medicine) on my hand and it soon went back to normal. He told me that I had been disobedient. The moral of the story is never break rules and always be obedient.*

**Figure 4.11. An example of a learner's ending for "The Magic Water Pot"**

**Journal entry: 20 August 2016**

*In reflecting on magical myths, I was pleased that my learners were able to expand their creativity and related it to stories or cartoon characters that had a relationship with superheroes. It also revealed the kind of myths and folktales they've heard. I found their ideas quite seasoned and magical. I was exposed to their imagination and interests.*

**My collage representation of what I learnt from my learners**

I created a collage as a way to display and reflect on what I had learnt about cultural inclusivity and children's culture through engaging my learners during these lessons (see Figure 4.12). I presented the collage to my critical friends (Nontuthuko and Khulekani) and my research supervisor (Dr Kathleen); this was accompanied by an audio recorded discussion that I transcribed. An edited version of my presentation and our discussion is presented below in dialogue form to illustrate how my learning was heightened through conversation with my critical friends and research supervisor.



***(Pointing at the word “Oops!”)*** This means that I accepted my mistakes and I also accepted their mistakes. I learnt to take each day as it comes. So, it was not like mistakes were a learning curve not only for me, but for my learners too. I became conscious that my learners were more passionate and engaged compared to me.

***(Pointing at the words “All about you!”)*** I also feel like these lessons allowed me to listen to my learners’ voices because I was so used to hearing my own voice. I remember when started transcribing I heard my voice more instead of my learners’ voices. This forced me to reflect on my lessons and find out what I had missed. I saw more of my work instead of their work.

***(Pointing at the words “new” and “discover”)*** I was pleased to know that they could share their ideas and thoughts. We had a lesson, a Mathematics lesson regarding 3-D shapes. They could bring their toys and learn about different shapes such as; cube, rectangular prism, cylinder, square based pyramid using their toys. This introduced some fun to learning to a point where my learners initiated bringing their toys towards the end of the term or playing with their toys during free time. This also gave me an opportunity to discover games that help us learn, such as Scrabble, Monopoly and playing cards. When I was growing I did not realise that I was learning through playing games. When we brainstormed some of the games that we played my learners related Monopoly to word problems; this was a pleasant surprise and was an exciting journey for me.

***[Pointing at the word “Heroes”]*** I realised that the learners are everyday heroes; they face new challenges and have the will to always try, to try something new, learn new concepts/topics. The learners want to try, to raise their hands, to participate and try their best. They want you as the teacher to listen to their ideas or whatever answer they have, whether it is right or wrong.

***(Pointing at the word “Welcome”)*** This alerted me of your research, Nontuthuko. Our learners want to feel welcome. I think ice breakers helped them to feel welcome.

**Dr Kathleen:** Any questions or comments for Ntokozo?

**Nontuthuko:** *I think when she was doing her collage, she was able to relate to what she was learning. She learnt from her learners, which I think we all did. She mentioned learning through games and also realised that learners learn through playing. Learners enjoy games and while they are enjoying playing they are still learning something. There is a value in playing games for learners.*

**Khululekani:** *I was jotting down some things during her presentation. She says that she had already had pre-planned the answers that the learners would give. I think it is a bit frustrating when your plan does not go accordingly because your learners are not giving you the answers that you want. An article that I read says that we can never fully plan a lesson because learners will take to another direction that you might feel jeopardised your lesson.*

**Ntokozo:** *You know sometimes it is not really about the lesson, it is the setting itself. For instance, I would try to have an outside lesson and then I would have monkeys wandering around or I would have another grade coming for their break, or the intercom would be buzzing on and off. At the end you feel like you need to redo the lesson. You cannot really plan such things, they are just random moments in learning.*

**Dr Kathleen:** *I think that it's really important that we learn that we have to have flexible planning, which in my opinion is a mark of a good teacher. We need to plan because we need to be prepared and to have our materials, but then like you said they are always problems such as the monkeys and the intercom. We always have to be responsive. This is not always easy and can be very frustrating. So, in those moments where things that don't go according to plan, we need to react and to respond. To me, that was a key lesson that you learnt from and with your learners. At times, the flow of the lesson depended on them even though you were still the adult and was in charge. That was when your learning happened; when they were relaxed, they offered their ideas.*

**Dr Kathleen:** *So, Ntokozo, you spoke about quite a number of things that you learnt. What are some of the most important things that you learnt about cultural inclusivity and children's culture from them?*

**Ntokozo:** *I think that they are a family and they back each other up; they protect each other. They are able to support each other. I also learnt to go with the flow. And, I learnt not to attach my emotions too much.*

**Dr Kathleen:** *To your planning?*

**Ntokozo:** *To my planning and to whatever it is I might be experiencing the time because the learners also go through certain things and they still have that will where they want to participate and interact in classroom discussions. They get their work done and they will actually participate in an ice breaker that is asking them to dance even though they are in a foul mood. They know how to create their own world; they keep secrets. They really believe in folktales, myths and magic. Their imagination has no boundaries and allows them to explore. And I think, working outside the classroom, sometimes like you feel like it might be chaotic. I found that my learners looked forward to working outside in the garden more than our normal lessons in the classroom. Those are the key things I learnt from them.*

**Dr Kathleen:** *So you learnt some important things about children's culture: that they like to play games, to learn through games and imagination. They don't have the same boundaries, expectations and fears that adults have.*

**Ntokozo:** *They have hope and faith; there's always hope; which quite interesting.*

**Dr Kathleen:** *Is there anything else anyone would like to add?*

**Nontuthuko:** *I am looking at your collage and it links to mine. I am looking at that word "discover" in your collage. I think that you discovered something new about your learners and so did I.*

**Khululekani:** *What is interesting is that Ntokozo was also happy that her learners had a voice more than her in the activities that they were doing in class. The learners were doing things on their own and sharing ideas. I was wondering if we could also do that as teachers -- come together and share our ideas. Maybe we could end up with some innovative ways of doing our lesson plans. When I was listening to what Ntokozo was doing, her lessons where innovative and some ideas came from her learners. I am just wondering, if she was not studying, would she be able to come up with all these lessons or would she just follow the curriculum itself?*

**Dr Kathleen:** *So we are coming back to the concept of teacher learning. Teacher learning can come from learning from learners, but it can also happen from learning from your colleagues. Sometimes as teachers we are so isolated in our classrooms we are afraid to let anybody see what is going on because they might criticise us. If we were open to opening our classrooms we might be able to share our ideas to each other, just like children do.*

**Dr Kathleen:** *Ntokozo on your topic in terms of children's culture, what have you learnt about through remembering your own experiences?*

**Ntokozo:** *I think for me an interesting part is, for example when I had the menu from different cultures across South Africa; this exposed the learners to those different cultures. This let them know that there are differences, but it does not mean that we should treat each other any differently.*

**Dr Kathleen:** *Your personal history showed us that you were exposed to different cultures as a child; this shows that there are many different cultural influences. Also I think that we should not force children to identify with a certain culture.*

**Ntokozo:** *You are right, we shouldn't box them. Remember, I told you that when we were talking about culture and which culture we belonged to, some of my black learners from African countries said their culture is English. The rest of my class responded in a surprised way to that.*

## Conclusion

In this chapter, Chapter Four I responded to my second research question: *What can I learn about cultural inclusivity and children's culture from my grade 4 learners?* To answer this question, I prepared and studied lessons where learners were working with journal writing and collage making and where we engaged with issues of cultural inclusivity and children's culture through English, Mathematics, Natural Science and Life Skills lessons. I also produced a collage to make visible my learning from teaching these lessons and I deepened my learning in discussion with my critical friends and research supervisor.

Inclusive education is an educational method and philosophy that accommodates all learners with community membership and greater opportunities for academic and social accomplishment (Department of Education, 2001). Through being inclusive in my teaching, I was amazed at my learners' optimistic attitudes towards learning. They were hands on and desired and adored learning. The ice-breakers allowed them to share their feelings and ideas. They seemed keen to participate in classroom discussions. UNESCO (2004) enlightened me on how we as teachers can create a welcoming and favourable classroom that commemorates inclusivity. According to my understanding and what I explored, this is a world where children's culture is refined by creating safety and security and allowing them to finding their own identity.

I also learnt that we need to emancipate and not cage our learners' thoughts and ideas. As Kelly (2006) explained, according to a socio-cultural perspective on learning, learners bring conceptual resources to the classroom. I appreciated the feedback I received from my learners, as well as their participation, activities and games. I also discovered that in children's culture there are daily adventures and challenges that stimulate heroic moments for them (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh, 2002). I now appreciate that children are able to relate their learning to games and stories they share in the playground or in their communities. They created their own learning resources through toys, games and lived passionately through laughter, questions, smiles, curiosity and uncertainties. Teaching and learning was not predictable. Mitchell and Reid-Walsh (2002) emphasised that children are experts of their own popular culture. I realised that children's culture is all about creativity, innovation, keeping things fresh and exciting. As revealed by John-Steiner and Mahn (1996), I saw how learners can learn through participation, in playing with



their friends, and in having conversations with their peers and teachers. This process involves communication, interaction and relationships in the classroom.

As Kelly (2010) advised, taking a socio-cultural perspective on teacher learning means that reflecting on our own teaching and learning is critical. I discovered that as a teacher I make mistakes and so I need to constantly question and reflect on my teaching methods and lessons.

In the subsequent chapter, Chapter Five, I conclude my self-study by offering a review of each chapter. In addition, I present my reflections regarding my methodological learning and my learning about cultural inclusivity and children's culture. Moreover, I discuss what and how I plan to apply what I have learnt.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: A PLACE OF DELIGHT– THE GARDEN**

### **Introduction**

The main purpose of this study was to learn about integrating cultural inclusivity and children's culture in my teaching. I was encouraged to explore how I could include and take into account all my learners' needs and interests. As an aspiring inclusive practitioner, I wanted to discover and what I could learn from my own personal history and from my learners.

In the previous chapter, Chapter Four, I presented a comprehensive account of and reflected on my lessons related to cultural inclusivity and children's culture. I responded to the research question: *What can I learn about cultural inclusivity and children's culture from my grade 4 learners?* To answer this fundamental question, I drew on my daily journal in which I reflected on my lessons, and my learners' written and drawing activities, as well as their oral presentations.

In this final chapter, Chapter Five, I end this dissertation by reflecting on how and what I have learnt through my self-study research.

### **A review of the dissertation**

In Chapter One, I revealed what inspired me to conduct my self-study research. This was followed by some background information and a brief explanation of my choice of methodological approach. I then clarified the research questions that underpinned my research. I also described the socio-cultural theoretical perspective and the key concepts that informed my thinking and learning.

In Chapter Two, I offered a detailed account of my research process. I discussed the location of the study, the research participants, as well as the importance of having critical friends and how they helped me. Furthermore, I illustrated my data generation practices and explained how I used collage making to conceptualise responses to my research questions. I discussed the ethical issues and validity, as well as my research challenges and how I tackled those challenges.

Looking back at Chapter Two, I am reminded of the important lessons I gained from applying self-study methodology. I realised that we are constantly learning from our teaching practices

through inquiry, rediscovering ourselves and cooperating with others (Samaras, 2011). Self-study research also made me more aware that teaching is not an individual task, but that it requires a community and continuous collaborative reflection (Easton, 2008). Through including my learners as research participants, I cultivated learning and recognised that my learners were active resources that also introduced a critical element in my learning (Mitchell & Reid-Walsh). In addition, I learnt about the imperative involvement of critical friends (Samaras & Roberts, 2011). Their participation assisted me to find unconventional ways to make sense of my research and enhance my teaching practice.

In Chapter Three, I attended to my first research question: *What can I learn about cultural inclusivity and children's culture from my personal history?* In this chapter, I expressed the development of recalling memories concerning cultural inclusivity and children's culture. This was followed by a brief overview of the research strategies that supported me to stimulate and make sense of my childhood and adolescent memories. To follow, I recounted stories of my childhood and adolescent experiences in relation to cultural inclusivity and children's culture. In narrating my personal history, I realised that both pleasant and unpleasant experiences in my educational encounters nurtured the teacher I am today. Similarly, Vilakazi (2013) explained that she "learnt that revisiting such memories can be a way of healing" (p.85). Through engaging in personal history self-study, I became conscious of how the events that took place in my life affected my learning and growth. This healed old emotional wounds that had been haunting me over the years.

In Chapter Four, I offered a detailed account of and reflection on my lessons regarding children's culture and cultural inclusivity. I responded to my second research question: *What can I learn about cultural inclusivity and children's culture from my grade 4 learners?* In Chapter Four, I related how I became more aware of my learners' needs and thoughts. I was surprised at my learners' optimistic mind set towards learning, their genuine acts of kindness and blissful moments. The ice-breakers I introduced permitted my learners to share their feelings and ideas. They seemed eager to participate in classroom discussions. I discovered that we need to release and not confine our learners' thoughts and ideas. I treasured their feedback, their participation, activities and games. I also discovered that in children's culture there are daily ventures and

disputes that stimulate heroic moments. We were able to relate learning to games and stories that my learners shared in the playground or in their communities. They created their own learning resources through toys, games and lived passionately through laughter, questions, smiles, curiosity and doubts. I was able to discern that my teaching and learning is evolving. It is directed by creativity and innovation and enriched by collaboration with my learners.

### **Personal-professional learning**

At the beginning of the study, I was very confused and I felt overwhelmed. I needed to revisit my research questions. However, I came to accept that blundering is also a way of learning and that not all lessons will be graceful. From time to time, you need a little bit of chaos to find new answers.

The teaching process took place from both ends, since I adopted my learners' enthusiastic approach to learning about topics, games, music, movies, cartoon characters they found fascinating. I realised that allowing them to share their creativity, ideas and answers freely and passionately permitted my study to be colourful and sincere. It also proved to be a useful aid in maintaining discipline and getting my learners to participate in classroom discussions through playing games, sharing their favourite games, myths and folktales. Integrating children's culture cultivated learning and motivated me to teach to the best of my ability. I realised that we need to find ways to teach in a way that intrigues our learners and that is by drawing in their interests and letting them be themselves. I have applied children's culture as a fundamental resource in my teaching and learning development. Moving forward, I plan to introduce even more of an element of entertainment and fun in teaching through games, toys, puzzles and in taking into account my learners' daily experiences. I will attempt to design and discuss possible classroom ice breakers and activities with my learners. I would also like to be more innovative and work jointly with my colleagues in expanding the culture of learning through children's culture.

The importance of teamwork and collaborative learning was also a significant lesson. I observed my learners as they helped each other in completing and simplifying activities discussed in class. I feel it is pivotal for us as teachers to also adopt such acts of kindness and working in unity. I now know that I need to invest more time in involving my learners more and trusting their

judgement. I became alert to their talents and gifts for learning. I watched my learners as they supported each other and participated fervently in classroom discussions and that planted a seed of joy and comfort.

I have acquired so many valuable lessons through this self-study research. I now treasure spontaneity and flexibility as tools to learn and to explore the spirit of children's culture. I am now conscious of children's voices and thoughts and view them as an incomparable resource in teaching and learning. I have also observed amazing gifts that were introduced during our lessons, such as the love of music, fashion, dancing and reading or sharing stories of magical myths. Furthermore, I was introduced to new art forms, as my learners celebrated their culture through their curiosity, games, toys, drawing and colour. These were the sound of melodies that brought such tranquility.

I learnt that learning was enriched by having fun and drawing ideas from my learners' interests and what they found captivating and engaging. I felt that they were free to be themselves and to work unapologetically. Their sense of humour and love encouraged me to take on an optimistic mind set towards teaching.

### **Methodological learning**

I have learnt that self-study research allows us to re-evaluate our teaching and the way we address certain issues. As Newberry (2013) stated, "it is crucial for teachers to be given opportunities to reflect so that the decisions that lead to relationships [with learners] are based on accurate information rather than quick impressions" (p. 16). In the course of questioning my own teaching practice and reflecting on my past experiences regarding inclusivity and children's culture, I was able to make amendments that enhanced my teaching and my relationships with my learners. I learnt that it is pivotal for us to tap into our learners' needs and concerns and to be conscientious. I also realised that contextual factors are present and influence teacher-learner relationships throughout the year.

According to O'Connor, "we need to acknowledge lived experiences as an important facet of learning by incorporating personal narratives and self-study methodologies in the educational system" (p.55). As a teacher, self-study gave me an opportunity to learn from my past

experiences and from my learners, to reflect and constantly inquire and criticise myself in order for me to grow and improve teaching and learning. The importance of self-study is to reflect, fill in gaps we find in our teaching practice, to interact with our learners, colleagues and critical friends.

My research was disrupted by the school's calendar, student teachers that needed mentoring, the absence of learners due to unfriendly weather conditions and mischievous monkeys that visited us during our lessons in the playground. I realised that pre-planning responses in my mind was frustrating and led to discontent and that I did not gain anything from it. I learnt that it was acceptable to make mistakes and to learn from those mistakes and be flexible.

I wished I knew when I began my self-study research that I did not have to have all the answers and that I was not alone but that I had a supportive team, comprising my supervisor, my critical friends and my learner participants. I would advise other students interested in self-study research to be insightful, to be prepared to be criticised and to criticise yourself, to search beyond your research questions and know that there is always room for improvement.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, Chapter Five, I have reviewed my dissertation. In addition I presented my reflections regarding integrating inclusivity and children's culture. Moreover, I have discussed what I have learnt personally, professionally and methodologically through my self-study research.

Teaching is about discovering new things, evolving, creativity and performing. I have realised that my past experiences added value in my life and taught me the importance of encountering adversity and being able to be victorious through it all. Retracing my personal history has inspired me to be a positive influence and optimistic role model for my learners.

In engaging my learners as research participants, I have become more conscious of the importance of making room for and recognising the distinctiveness of all children in my class. I want to play to their strengths and also to bring more colour, fun and liveliness into the classroom. I also want to take learning outdoors so that children can feel more comfortable and

free. I have become more conscious of the importance of being aware of what is happening in learners' lives inside and outside of school and providing a supportive space where they can share their opinions and feelings and can feel at home. I want to bring in adventure and enlivening moments in my teaching and create evocative memories that my learners will reflect on in their adult life.

My most imperative lesson from this self-study research was I that discovered that as a teacher I make mistakes and so I need to constantly question and reflect on my teaching. I can constantly learn from my own practices through introspection, dialogue and accommodating differences.

## REFERENCES

- Allender,J., & Allender,D.(2006). *How did our early education determine who we are as teachers?* In L.M. Fitzgerald, M.L. Heston& D.L. Tidwell (Eds.), *Collaboration and community: Pushing boundaries through self-study. Proceedings of the sixth international conference on self-study of teacher education practices*, Herstmonceux Castle, East Sussex,England,July 30-August 3 (pp.14-17). Cedar Falls,IA: University of Northern Iowa.
- Austin,P.,Jones,Z.,Hechter,J.& Marchant,J.( 2012). *Viva Mathematics learner's grade 4 book*. Cape Town : Vilvia Publishers & Booksellers.
- Bezuidenhout,W.,Bosch,D.,Engelbrecht,R., Marchant,J.,Scott,A.& Volker, A.(2012).*Natural Science & Technology Learner's grade 4 book*. (2012). Gauteng: Macmillian South Africa.
- Babbie, E. (2008). *Introduction to Social research*. Fifth edition. Belmont : Wadsworth Cengage learning.
- Banks,J.A., Cookson,P., Gay,G. Hawley, W.D., Irvine, J.J., Neito,S., et al. ( 2001). Diversity within unity: Essential principles for teaching and learning in a multicultural society. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 83 (3), 196-203
- Butler-Kisber,L.M.(2008). Collage as inquiry. In J.G. Knowles& A.L. Cole (Eds.), *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research* (pp.265-276). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Butler-Kisber,L. (2005). Inquiry through poetry: The genesis of self-study. In C. Mitchell,S. Weber & O'Reilly –Scanlon ( Eds.), *Just who do we think we are? Methodologies for autobiography and self-study teaching* (pp.95-110). London and New York : RoutledgeFalmer.
- Dencombe. M. (2010). *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects( fourth edition)*. Berkshire: Open University Press
- Denscombe M. (2002).*Ground rules for good research : A 10 point guide for social researchers*. Berkshire: Open University Press



Cole,A. (2011). Object-memory,embodiment, and teacher formation: A methodological exploration. In C.Mitchell,T.Strong-Wilson,K.Pithouse&S.Alnutt(Eds.), *Memory and pedagogy* (pp.223-238). New York: Routledge.

Cartens,M.,Coeztee ,T.,Glover,J., Vercueil,P.,Wolmarans,A.& Zorich,C. ( 2012). *Spot on Life Skills Learner's book grade 4*. (2012). Gauteng: Heinemann Publishers

Clarke, N. L., & Worger, W. H. (2016). *South Africa: The rise and fall of apartheid* (3rd ed.). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Chiu-Ching,R.T.,& Y.E,(2009). Teaching and learning through narrative inquiry. In D.Tidwell,M. Heston & L. Fitzgerald ( Eds.), *Research methods for the self-study of practice* (pp.17-33) New York: Springer.

De Jager,T. (2013). Guidelines to assist the implementation of differentiated learning activities in South African secondary school. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 17(1), 80-94

Department of Education (2008).*My country South Africa Celebrating our national symbols and heritage second edition*. Pretoria: Government Press.

Department of Basic Education.(2010). *Guidelines for inclusive teaching and learners*. Pretoria: Government Press.

Department of Education (2008).*My country South Arica celebrating our national symbols and heritage second edition*. Pretoria: Government Press.

Du Preez,P.,& Roux,C.( 2010). Human rights values or cultural values to maintain positive values to maintain positive discipline in Multicultural schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 30(1), 13-26.

Retrieved from <http://www.journalofeducation.co.za/index.php/saje/article/view/313/190>

Easton,L.B.( 2008). From professional development to professional learning. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 89(10), 755-761

Easton, L. B. (2012). Principles of design energize learning communities. *Journal of Staff Development*, 33(4), 49-54.

Ellis, C. (2007). Telling secrets, revealing lives: Relational ethics in research with intimate others. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(1), 3-29.

Engelbrecht, A.,& Swanepoel, H.(Eds.). (2013). *Embracing diversity through multi-level teaching for Foundation, Intermediate and Senior Phase*. Cape Town : Juta and Company Ltd.

Evans,D.P.,Ka`opua,H.,&Freese,.A.R.(2015). Work gloves and green sea turtle: Collaborating in a dialogic process of professional learning. In K.Pithouse-Morgan&A.P. Samaras,(Eds.),*Polyvocal professional learning through learning through self-study research* (pp.21-37). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Gerhard, G., & Mayer-Smith, J. (2008). Casting a wider net: Deepening scholarship by changing theories. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning*, 2(1), 1-11.

Gorski, P.,& Covert, B. (2010). Defining multicultural education. Retrieved from <http://itari.in/categories/multiculturalism/DefiningMulticulturalEducation.pdf>

Graham, A., Powell, M.A., & Taylor, N. (2015). Ethical research involving children: Encouraging reflexive engagement in research with children and young people. *Children & Society*, 29(5), 331-343

Heese, S., Hill, A., Middleton Horn, J., Omar, N. & Swanepoel. (2012). *Platinum English Home textbook grade 4 learner's book*. Cape Town : Maskew Longman .

hooks. (1985). Writing autobiography. In M.Blair, J.Holland & S. Sheldon (Eds.), *Identity and diversity: Gender and the experience of education* (pp.3-7). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Hamilton, M.L., Smith, L., & Worthington, K. (2008). Fitting the methodology with the research: An exploration of narrative, self-study and auto-ethnography. *Studying Teacher education*, 4(1), 17-28.

Hunt, F. (2011) Schooling citizens: policy in practice in South Africa, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 41:1, 43-58, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2010.510685>

John-Steiner, & Mahn, H. (1996). Sociocultural approaches to learning and development: A Vygotskian framework. *Educational Psychologist*, 31(3-4), 191-206

Jurasite-Harbison, E., & Rex, L.A. (2010). School cultures as contexts for informal teacher learning. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 26(2), 267-277.

research: Lessons learnt across Atlantic. *Teaching and teacher education*, 27(5), 841-850.

Kelly, P.(2006). What is teacher learning? A socio cultural perspective. *Oxford Review of Education*, 32(4), 505-519.

**Kline, "The Making of Children's Culture," in *The Children's Culture Reader*, ed. Henry Jenkins (NY:NYU Press. 1998). 95-109.**

LaBoskey, V. K. (2004). The methodology of self-study and its theoretical underpinnings. In J. J. Loughran, M. L. Hamilton, V. K. LaBoskey & T. Russell (Eds.), *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices* (Vol. 2, pp. 817-869). Dordrecht; Boston; London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Lunenburg, M., & Samaras, A.P. (2011). Developing a pedagogy for teaching self-study

Masinga,L.(2012). Journeys to self-knowledge:Methodological reflections on using memory -work in a participatory study of teachers as sexuality educators. *Journal Education*, 54,121-137.

Mitchell,C., & Reid-Walsh,J. (2002). *Researching children's popular culture: the cultural spaces of childhood*. London: New York : Routledge

Mitchell, C., Weber, S., & Pithouse, K. (2009). Facing the public: Using photography for self-study and social action. In D. Tidwell, M. Heston & L. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *Research methods for the self-study of practice* (pp. 119-134). New York: Springer.

Morrow,V.,& Richards,M.(1996). The ethics of social research with children: An overview. *Children & Society*, 10(2), 90-105

Murchison, J.M, (2010) *Ethnography Essentials Designing, conducting, and presenting your research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

O'Connor, K. B. (2009). Finding my story and place in researching Indigenous Education: The foundation of a narrative identity. In K. Pithouse, C. Mitchell & R. Moletsane (Eds.), *Making connections: Self-study & social action* (pp. 43-57). New York: Peter Lang.

Newberry, M. (2013). Reconsidering differential behaviours: Reflection and teacher judgment when forming classroom relationships. *Teacher Development*, 17(2), 195-213

Pithouse,K.,Mitchell,C.,& Masinga,L. (2009). Living and lifelong learning. In C.Mitchell & K.Pithouse ( Eds.),*Teaching and HIV & AIDS* (pp.237-246). Johannesburg: Macmillan.

Pithouse,K., Mitchell,C.,& Weber,S.( 2009). Self-study in teaching and teacher development: A call to action. *Educational Action Research*, 17(1), 43-62.

Nieuwenhuis,J.( 2010). Analysing qualitative data. In K. Maree( Ed.), *First steps in research* (pp 98-122) Pretoria : Van Schaik Publishers.

Masinga, L. (2012). Journeys to self-knowledge: Methodological reflections on using memory -work in a participatory study of teachers as sexuality educators. *Journal Education*, 54,121-137.

McMurtry, A. (2015). Liked your textbook...But I'll never use it in the courses I teach. *Teachers College Record*, ID Number: 18058. Retrieved from <http://www.tcrecord.org/ContentID=18058>

Mitchell, C., de Lange, N., & Nguyen-Thi, T. (2008). "Let's not leave this problem": Exploring inclusive education in rural South Africa. *Prospects*, 38(1), 99-112.

Mitchell,C.,& Weber,S.( 1998). The usable past: Teachers (re) playing school. *Changing English*, 5(1), 45-

56

Nkopodi, N., & Mosimege, M. (2009). Incorporating the indigenous game of *morabaraba* in the learning of mathematics. *South African Journal of Education*, 29(3), 377-392. Retrieved from <http://www.sajournalofeducation.co.za/index.php/saje/article/view/273/158>

Pithouse, K., Mitchell, C., & Masinga, L. (2009). Living and lifelong learning. In C. Mitchell & K. Pithouse (Eds.), *Teaching and HIV & AIDS* (pp. 237-246). Johannesburg: Macmillan.

Pithouse, K., Mitchell, C., & Weber, S. (2009). Self-study in teaching and teacher development: A call to action. *Educational Action Research*, 17(1), 43-62.

Seekings, J. (2008). The continuing salience of race: Discrimination and diversity in South Africa, *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 26:1, 1-25, DOI: [10.1080/02589000701782612](https://doi.org/10.1080/02589000701782612)

UNESCO. (2004). Embracing diversity : Toolkit for creating inclusive, learning friendly environments. Retrieved from <http://unesco.org/images/0013/001375/137522e.pdf>.

Weeks, F. H. (2012). The quest for a culture of learning: A South African schools perspective. *South African Journal of Education*, 32, 1-14. Retrieved from <http://www.sajournalofeducation.co.za/index.php/saje/article/view/565/278>

Samaras, A. and Roberts, L. (2011). Flying solo: Teachers take charge of their learning through self-study research, *Learning Forward*, 32 (5) 42-45.

Samaras, A. P. (2011). *Self-study teacher research: Improving your practice through collaborative inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

UNESCO. (2004). Embracing diversity: Toolkit for creating inclusive, learning friendly environments.

Retrieved from <http://unesco.org/images/0013/001375/137522e.pdf>.

Township. (n.d.) In Oxforddictionaries.com. Retrieved from  
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/township>

Van Schalkwyk, G. J. (2010). Collage life story elicitation technique: A representational technique for scaffolding autobiographical memories. *Qualitative Report*, 15(3), 675-695.

## Appendix A

117 Grantdene Road

Riverdene Drive

Newlands West

Durban

4031

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Informed consent letter for grade 4 parents**

My name is Ntokozo Sibusisiwe Mkhize and I am a Master's student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa. I will be conducting a self-study regarding my personal history in inclusivity and instilling inclusivity with my grade four learners. The objectives of my research study are to learn about inclusivity from my personal history and to instil inclusivity in my classroom.

I will collect information for my study, I would like to work with my grade four learners to explore ways and resources I can use to instill inclusivity and embrace diversity. I will use a variety of tools to collect information.

**Data generation activities are:**

#### ***Collage making***

I will make my own collage that displays my definition and understanding of diversity, looking at my experiences as a learner regarding inclusivity and my experiences as novice teacher. I will ask my



learners to make a collage that defines who they are and how they feel about learning and our learning environment. What can we as teachers do to accommodate their different needs, they will use different images and words to express themselves.

### ***Poetry***

I will write a poem that describes and expresses my feelings related to my personal history, my experiences of inclusivity and how I can instill inclusivity in my grade four classroom. The poem will also reveal my thoughts about diversity, in culture, languages, ethnicity, race and religion.

### ***Journal writing***

I will use a journal to record or write about my daily experiences and lessons, this will allow me to reflect on my lessons. My learners will also get a chance to write a diary session based on their day and what values they learnt that instill diversity and embrace diversity. This diary entry will be done for a week.

### **Answering these questions:**

- Describe your learning experience
- Give an example of some of the values regarding inclusive education/ diversity that you have learned
- Which teaching experiences evoke positive/negative memories regarding inclusivity?
- My most influential teacher and why?

### ***Audio recording***

I will record my lessons with my grade four learners.

Collage making question:

Journal writing topics :

Poem:

Please rest assured knowing that your child's confidentiality will be guaranteed, meaning their names will not be revealed. Any tasks or activities will not be used against them or affect their academic

performance in any negative manner, and the data that will be collected will be used for research purposes only.

- Data will be stored in a secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- Your child will have the autonomy to participate or withdraw from the study and will not be penalised for making/taking such an action.
- Your child's involvement is merely for academic reasons only and therefore no financial benefits will be involved.
- I will share my findings with my learners, in a way that is suitable and understandable for their age group.

I can be contacted at: [ladyntoko@gmail.com](mailto:ladyntoko@gmail.com)

Tel : 071 081 1576

My supervisor is Dr Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan who is located in Education studies On Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu Natal. Email : [Pithousemorgan@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:Pithousemorgan@ukzn.ac.za); Tel: 031 260 3473

The contact person in the Research Office is Mr Premalal Mohun- Senior Administrative Officer.  
Contact

Email; [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

Tel: 031 260 4557

Thank you for your contribution, your support and contribution is highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully

Mkhize N.S ( Ntokozo)

## **Declaration**

I \_\_\_\_\_ parent of \_\_\_\_\_ ( full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the

research study, and I give consent for my son/daughter to participate in this research study: Instilling inclusivity in a grade 4 classroom.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw my child from the research study at any time, should I desire to do so.

I hereby provide consent to

Audio record lessons YES/NO

Used lessons/activities YES/NO

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN\_\_\_\_\_

DATE\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

Lesson and dates	Topic/Content	Teacher/Researcher Activity	Learner activity
Lesson 1	English: (Lesson 1)  <b>Fables/Myths and legends</b>	Learners were instructed to find new words from these stories and do dictionary skills, such as legend, myth, fable, culture and legend.  1. "The boy who cried wolf"  2. "The girl who never kept her promises"	Learners had to identify moral values related children's culture, what do they learn from these stories?  They had to use story structure frame, use a variety of vocabulary, use appropriate grammar, spelling, punctuation and spaces between paragraphs.  They had to do some drawings.
24 April 2016			
Lesson 2  17 August 2016	English: (Lesson 2 )  <b>Fables/Myths and legends</b>	Learners had to reflect on what happened in the story; they also had to share their feelings and thoughts regarding the story. Learners were asked to relate the story to their own lives. Learners were encouraged to plan, by writing an ending to a	Learners wrote their own fable regarding children's culture, what did they learn from these stories?  They had to use story structure frame, use a variety of vocabulary, use appropriate grammar,

		<p>folk story, <i>The magic water pot</i></p> <p>Plan</p> <p>Drafting and refining their stories</p>	<p>spelling, punctuation and spaces between paragraphs.</p>
<p>Lesson 3</p> <p><b>(Cluster meeting)</b></p>	<p>Mathematics</p> <p>( Lesson plan 1) <b>Data Handling/ conducting a survey.</b></p>	<p>Learners had to work with at least:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-One pie chart where the information is given in common fractions and not percentages.</li> <li>- One bar graph</li> </ul>	<p>When we ask people questions to collect data, we call this a survey. You are going to work on your own to carry out a survey amongst learners in your class. You are limited to a maximum of 10 learners had to participate in your survey. They needed to collect data. They then had to organise the data into a tally table and thereafter display the data in the form of a bar graph and a pictograph</p>
<p>Lesson 4</p> <p><b>30 June 2016</b></p>	<p>Mathematics( Lesson 2)</p> <p><b>Learning Mathematics through playing games.</b></p>	<p>Learners develop critical analysis skills by comparing graphs on the same topic but where data has been collected from different groups of people, at different times and different places.</p>	<p>Learners worked in groups and discuss games they play outside during break time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They had to state if they had any rule for keeping score.</li> <li>-Do they sing songs or use</li> </ul>

			<p>rhymes?</p> <p>-Do they count, numbers and shapes?</p>
<p>Lesson 5</p> <p><b>10 August 2016</b></p>	<p>Natural Science: Learning about <b>Indigenous Musical instruments.</b></p>	<p>We read about the musical instrument of the San people, we also looked at their background for example where they lived and they used music in their daily lives.</p> <p>Learners looked at different pictures of musical instruments used by indigenous people who lived in Southern Africa. For example: Rattle made from cocoons and seeds</p>	<p>Learners were encouraged to use recycled materials to make their own musical instrument. It had to have an effective sound, they had to be creative and tell us about the history of the instrument. ( assignment)</p>
<p>Lesson 6</p> <p><b>28 April 2016</b></p>	<p>Life Skills: (Lesson 1) <b>Menus from different cultural traditions in South Africa.</b></p>	<p>Learners had to look at a menu called Mama Africa's kitchen and choose what they would like to eat from the menu.</p>	<p>Imagine that you have visitors coming to your home for supper. They want experience Grade 4 learners' cuisine. Put together a menu that showcases your creativity and food you enjoy eating. You will have to draw up a menu.</p>

<b>1. CAPS Learning area : English (</b> lesson 1)		<b>Grade : 4M</b>	<b>Date :22 April 2016</b>
<b>Research question:</b> Integrating cultural inclusivity in a grade 4 classroom: A teacher's self-study			
Lesson 7	Life Skills(Personal	Myself	They needed to present
<b>Research aim/s for this lesson:</b>		<b>1. What can I learn about cultural inclusivity from my personal history?</b> <b>2. How can I integrate cultural inclusivity in my classroom?</b>	
<b>CAPS Topic Fables/myths/legends</b>		<b>CAPS content and concepts: English Home Language CAPS :</b> <b>Week 5-6page 43</b> Reading and viewing: -Reads fables/myths/legends.	Using pictures/photographs/drawings. They also needed presentation in a written form.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Identifies and gives reasons for actions of characters.</li> <li>-Pre-reading: predicts from title and pictures.</li> <li>- Understand vocabulary, identifies and discusses values in the next text.</li> </ul>		
<b>Questions to Ask</b>	<b>Learning activities (including content/process/product)</b>	<b>Materials and Resources</b>	<b>Time</b>



<p><b>Parts 1: Minds On</b></p>	<p>The learners will sit in a circle. One will begin by saying his/her name and then states what ingredients go on the sandwich. Example “My name is Ntokozo and the world’s greatest sandwich has cheese.” The next person in the circle announces their name and says Ntokozo’s ingredient as well as their own. “Hi my name is Aphiwe, and the world’s greatest sandwich and the world’s greatest sandwich has cheese and cucumber.”</p>	<p>We all raised in different families and backgrounds, we speak different languages, fortunately there are some important values we learn through storytelling, myths, fables and legends</p> <p>Learners will read about moral lessons found in narratives of different cultures. 1. <b><i>The boy who cried wolf</i></b></p> <p>2. <b><i>The girl who broke her promises.</i></b></p>	<p>Audio recorder</p>	<p>10 minutes</p>
---------------------------------	---	--	-----------------------	-------------------

<b>Part 2: Action</b>  Consoli date ,Debrief	Learners are encouraged to share a few stories that have been shared by their families or an elder about their culture. Learners will have to write a fable /myth that happens in their daily encounters , for example in the playgrounds, are they any myths or fables that exist when you together with your fellow classmates.	Learners are instructed to find new words from these stories and do dictionary skills, such as legend, myth, fable, culture and legend.	Read examples of myths :Grade 4 English Platinum textbook, Ipads , exercise book and chalkboard  Audio recorder	20 minutes
	<b>Question to Ask</b>	<b>Learning activities</b>	<b>Materials/Resources</b>	<b>Time :</b>

	Learners will be asked to discuss their views and experiences related to their cultures that exist in the playground or that they share when they are together.	Learners will write their own fable regarding children's culture, what do they learn from these stories?  They have to use story structure frame, use a variety of vocabulary, use appropriate grammar, spelling, punctuation and spaces between paragraphs.	Read examples of myths :Grade 4 English Platinum textbook, Ipads , exercise book and chalkboard  Audio recorder	30 minutes
	<b>Assessment activities ( diagnostic/formative/summative)</b>			
	<b>How will the next lesson build on this one?</b>			
	<b>Self Reflection / Class reflection</b>			
	<b>What went well?</b>	<b>What did not go well?</b>	<b>What did I learn?</b>	

<b>2. CAPS Learning area :</b> English ( Lesson 2)	<b>Grade :</b> 4M	<b>Date :</b> 28 April 2016
<b>Research question:</b> Integrating cultural inclusivity in a grade 4 classroom: A teacher's self-study		

<b>Research aim/s for this lesson: 1. What can I learn about cultural inclusivity from my personal history?</b>  <b>2. How can I integrate cultural inclusivity in my classroom?</b>				
<b>CAPS Topic Fables/myths/legends</b>		<b>CAPS content and concepts: English Home Language CAPS : Week 5-6bpage 43</b>  Reading and viewing:  -Reads fables/myths/legends.  -Identifies and gives reasons for actions of characters.  -Pre-reading: predicts from title and pictures.  - Understand vocabulary, identifies and discusses values in the next text.		
<b>Questions to Ask</b>		<b>Learning activities ( including content/process/product)</b>	<b>Materials and Resources</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>Parts 1: Minds On</b>	Each learner will announce their name while stepping forward and striking a pose that reflects their personality.  I will share some of my folk stories are grew up being told.	A folk story is short story that comes from the oral tradition. Folk stories have to do with everyday life and frequently feature wily peasants getting the better of their superiors. In many cases, the characters are animal characters with human characteristics.  Learners will read a folk story. 1. <i><b>The magic water pot.</b></i>	Audio recorder	10 minutes

Part 2: Action	<p>Learners are encouraged to plan, by writing an ending to a folk story, <i>The magic water pot</i></p> <p>What character are in the story?</p> <p>What likely and unlikely events will take place?</p> <p>What can we learn from your folk story?</p>	<p>Learners will have to reflect on what happened in the story, they will also share their feelings and thoughts regarding the story. Learners will be asked to relate the story to their own lives.</p> <p>Learners are encouraged to plan, by writing an ending to a folk story, <i>The magic water pot</i></p> <p>Plan</p> <p>Drafting and refining their stories</p>	<p>Read examples of myths :Grade 4 English Platinum textbook, Ipads , exercise book and chalkboard</p> <p>Audio recorder</p>	20 minutes
	<p><b>Question to Ask</b></p> <p>Learners will be asked to discuss their views and experiences related to their cultures that exist in the playground or that they share when they are together.</p>	<p><b>Learning activities</b></p> <p>Learners will write their own fable regarding children's culture, what do they learn from these stories?</p> <p>They have to use story structure frame, use a variety of vocabulary, use appropriate grammar, spelling, punctuation and spaces between paragraphs.</p>	<p><b>Materials/Resources</b></p> <p>Read examples of myths :Grade 4 English Platinum textbook, Ipads , exercise book and chalkboard</p> <p>Audio recorder</p>	30 minutes
Consolidate ,Debrief	<b>Assessment activities ( diagnostic/formative/summative)</b>			

	<b>How will the next lesson build on this one?</b>		
	<b>Self Reflection / Class reflection</b>		
	<b>What went well?</b>	<b>What did not go well?</b>	<b>What did I learn?</b>

<b>3.CAPS Learning area : Life Skills</b>		<b>Grade : 4M</b>	<b>Date :23 May 2016</b>
<b>Research question:</b> Integrating cultural inclusivity in a grade 4 classroom: A teacher's self-study			
<b>Research aim/s for this lesson:</b> 1. What can I learn about cultural inclusivity from my personal history?  2. How can I integrate cultural inclusivity in my classroom?			
<b>CAPS Topic:</b> Menus from different cultural traditions in South Africa		<b>CAPS content and concepts:</b>	
<b>Questions to Ask</b>	<b>Learning activities ( including content/process/product)</b>	<b>Materials and Resources</b>	<b>Time</b>

Consoli date , Debrief	<b>Parts 1: Minds On</b>	<p><b>Chubby bunny</b></p> <p>The goal of this game is to see how many marshmallows you can stuff in your mouth without chewing or swallowing any of them while saying “Chubby bunny”</p> <p>The learners take turns on at a time with others observing.</p>	<p>There are many different outward signs of culture, one of the most common signs is the food we eat. Because we have so many different traditional meals. Look at the following menu which contains some mouth watering South African dishes.</p>	Audio recorder	10 minutes
	<b>Part 2: Action</b>	<p>What are some of your favourite foods?</p> <p>If you had to make a menu, what kind of food must we expect/</p>	<p>Learners will look at a menu called Mama Africa’s kitchen and choose what they would like to eat from the menu.</p>	<p>Life Skills textbook</p> <p>Poster, exercise books and chalkboard.</p> <p>Audio recorder</p>	20 minutes
	<b>Question to Ask</b>	<b>Learning activities</b>	<b>Materials/Resources</b>	<b>Time :</b>	

	Learners will be asked to discuss their favourite food.	Imagine that you have visitors coming to your home for supper. They want experience Grade 4 learners' cuisine. Put together a menu that showcases your creativity and food you enjoy eating. You will have to draw up a menu.	Read examples of myths :Grade 4 English Platinum textbook, Ipads , exercise book and chalkboard  Audio recorder	30 minutes
	<b>Assessment activities ( diagnostic/formative/summative)</b>			
	<b>How will the next lesson build on this one?</b>			
	<b>Self Reflection / Class reflection</b>			
	<b>What went well?</b>	<b>What did not go well?</b>	<b>What did I learn?</b>	



<b>5.CAPS Learning area :</b> Mathematics( Lesson 1)	<b>Grade : 4M</b>	<b>Date : 16 August 2016</b>	
<b>Research question:</b> Integrating cultural inclusivity in a grade 4 classroom: A teacher’s self-study			
<b>Research aim/s for this lesson:</b> 1. What can I learn about cultural inclusivity from my personal history?  2. How can I integrate cultural inclusivity in my classroom?			
<b>CAPS Topic:</b> learning Mathematics through playing games.	<b>CAPS content and concepts:</b> <u>Developing critical analysis skills</u>  Learners develop critical analysis skills by comparing graphs on the same topic but where data has been collected from different groups of people, at different times and different places.		
<b>Questions to Ask</b>	<b>Learning activities ( including content/process/product)</b>	<b>Materials and Resources</b>  Exercise books , worksheets and chalkboard.  Audio recorder	<b>Time</b>

<b>Parts 1: Minds On</b>	<p>Each learner will announce their name while stepping forward and striking a pose that reflects their personality.</p> <p>I will share some of my folk stories are grew up being told.</p>	<p>Learners will work in groups and discuss games they play outside during break time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They will have to state if they have any rule for keeping score.</li> <li>-Do they sing songs or use rhymes?</li> <li>-Do you count, numbers and shapes?</li> </ul>	<p>Exercise books , worksheets and chalkboard.</p> <p>Audio recorder</p>	10 minutes
<b>Part 2: Action</b>	<p>Are there different games for girls and boys and why?</p>	<p>Learners will have to reflect on what happened in the story, they will also share their feelings and thoughts regarding the story. Learners will be asked to relate the story to their own lives.</p> <p>Learners are encouraged to plan, by writing an ending to a folk stroy, <i>The magic water pot</i></p> <p>Plan</p> <p>Drafting and refining their stories</p>	<p>Read examples of myths :Grade 4 English Platinum textbook, Ipads , exercise book and chalkboard</p> <p>Audio recorder</p>	20 minutes
Consolidate date ,Debrief	<b>Question to Ask</b>	<b>Learning activities</b>	<b>Materials/Resources</b>	<b>Time :</b>

	<p>Learners will be asked to discuss their different games and tell us which game they enjoy. They will have to tell us what numbers do you use odd/even numbers? Do they count in hundreds, tens or units?</p> <p>Are there shapes involved ?</p> <p>are there 2D or 3D shapes?</p>	<p>We going to develop of games from which other children can learn.</p> <p>-Choose a game that uses counting, numbers and shapes.</p> <p>-Give simple instructions.</p> <p>-Teach your game to the class.</p>	<p>Posters , exercise book and chalkboard</p> <p>Audio recorder</p>	30 minutes
	<b>Assessment activities ( diagnostic/formative/summative)</b>			
	<b>How will the next lesson build on this one?</b>			
	<b>Self Reflection / Class reflection</b>			
	<b>What went well?</b>	<b>What did not go well?</b>	<b>What did I learn?</b>	

6.CAPS Learning area : Natural Science	Grade : 4M	Date : 10 August 2016	
<b>Research question:</b> Integrating cultural inclusivity in a grade 4 classroom: A teacher’s self-study			
<b>Research aim/s for this lesson:</b> 1. What can I learn about cultural inclusivity from my personal history?  2. How can I integrate cultural inclusivity in my classroom?			
<b>CAPS Topic:</b> learning about Indigenous Musical instruments.	<b>CAPS content and concepts:</b> This unit shows learners that musical instruments are systems and how different systems work.  Such as blowing, beating, produce sound, input and output  Reading about indigenous instruments		
Questions to Ask	Learning activities ( including content/process/product)	Materials and Resources  Exercise books , worksheets and chalkboard.  Recycled materials  Audio recorder	Time

<b>Parts 1: Minds On</b>	Brainstorming different music, playing beats and drawing of names.	Learners will read about the musical instrument of the San people, they will also look at their background for example where they lived and they used music in their daily lives.	Exercise books , worksheets and chalkboard.  Audio recorder	10 minutes
<b>Part 2: Action</b>	Are there different games for girls and boys and why?	Learners will look at different pictures musical instruments used by indigenous people who lived in Southern Africa. For example: Rattle made from cocoons and seeds.	Poster , exercise book and chalkboard  Audio recorder	20 minutes
<b>Consolidate ,Debrief</b>	<b>Question to Ask</b>	<b>Learning activities</b>	<b>Materials/Resources</b>	<b>Time :</b>
	Learners will have to state and discuss which musical instrument you most likely find interesting?  Which musical instruments do you play with your friends during your break?	Learners will be encouraged to use recycled materials to make their own musical instrument. It must have an effective sound, they have to be creative and tell us about the history of the instrument. ( assignment)	Posters , exercise book and chalkboard  Recycled materials  Audio recorder	( a week)
	<b>Assessment activities ( diagnostic/formative/summative)</b>			

	<b>How will the next lesson build on this one?</b>		
	<b>Self Reflection / Class reflection</b>		
	<b>What went well?</b>	<b>What did not go well?</b>	<b>What did I learn?</b>

7.CAPS Learning area : Life Skills	Grade : 4M	Date : 28 April 2016	
Research question: Integrating cultural inclusivity in a grade 4 classroom: A teacher’s self-study			
Research aim/s for this lesson: 1. What can I learn about cultural inclusivity from my personal history?  2. How can I integrate cultural inclusivity in my classroom?			
CAPS Topic: Researching a cultural group from South Africa	CAPS content and concepts: Life Skills  Personal strengths: identify, explore and appreciate own strengths		
Questions to Ask	Learning activities (including content/process/product)	Materials and Resources  Exercise books , worksheets and chalkboard.  Audio recorder	Time

<b>Parts 1: Minds On</b>	<p>Learners will sit in a group, pick a question and each person will have to answer it in 15 seconds. No one should talk during someone else's time. The timer can read out the time if the person stops too early, otherwise we all remain silence.</p> <p>Examples of questions: What is your favourite holiday and why?</p> <p>Tell us about yourself</p> <p>What is your favourite animal?</p>	<p>Describing yourself through collage making, pictures and texts</p>	<p>Exercise books , worksheets and chalkboard.</p> <p>Internet/lpads</p> <p>Books/media</p> <p>Audio recorder</p>	<p>10 minutes</p>
--------------------------	---	---	---	-------------------



Part 2: Action	Present their collage	Making a collage .	Poster , exercise book and chalkboard  Audio recorder	20 minutes
Consolidate ,Debrief	<b>Question to Ask</b>	<b>Learning activities</b>	<b>Materials/Resources</b>	<b>Time :</b>
	What is your understanding of culture?	Learners will do dictionary skills on the meaning of culture and diversity.	Posters , exercise book and chalkboard  Dictionary  Audio recorder	( a week)
<b>Assessment activities ( diagnostic/formative/summative)</b>				
<b>How will the next lesson build on this one?</b>				
<b>Self Reflection / Class reflection</b>				
<b>What went well?</b>		<b>What did not go well?</b>	<b>What did I learn?</b>	

## Appendix C

Below is a table (Table 4.1) that illustrates the outline of my research learning plan regarding children's culture. The first column from the left hand side shows the number of research lessons from (lesson 1) to the last lesson (lesson 10). The second column from the left comprises the Topic/Content that was discussed in each lesson. The third column portrays my activities in each lesson as a teacher and a researcher. To conclude, the fourth column embodies my learners' activities.

Table 4.1	Summary of research learning programme
-----------	--

Natural Science, English, Mathematics and Life Skills lessons
---

Lesson 1-7
------------