

**CULTIVATING POSITIVE LEARNER
BEHAVIOUR IN MY TEACHING: A
SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER`S SELF
STUDY**

BY

Lindokuhle Mdletshe

Student Number: 216017755

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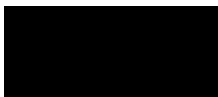
Supervisor: Dr. N.S Mkhize-Mthembu

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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this self-study research was to explore ways in which I can cultivate positive behaviour through my teaching, minimise misconduct during lessons, and develop a classroom culture grounded in virtuous values. Furthermore, the main intent of this study was to reflect purposively on contributing to my teacher-learning, thus improving my overall teaching practice. Employing my understanding of the sociocultural theory which posits that we learn through and from others who are more experienced than us, I acknowledged the importance of reflecting on my personal history, with the intention of understanding what my experiences were and how they had informed my perception of what behaviour is and how it ought to be achieved. Adopting this approach allowed me to acknowledge the different backgrounds of my learners and to respect the various tools each learner brought to the classroom due to their respective home and cultural environments. The theory was ideal for cultivating positive behaviour as it is grounded in social interactions as a means of learning. The approach enabled me to work with my learners to establish classroom rules, devise activities that promoted group work, and to use icebreaker activities that cultivated positive behaviour. Most importantly, it allowed my learners to learn from their peers and me. This study followed the self-study methodological approach as I was the leading participant as well as the teacher, albeit a novice one. When I conducted the study, I was teaching at a multiracial school in the heart of Greytown in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). My participants were my learners in grade 8F (consisting of 50 learners) and grade 8C (consisting of 40 learners). I was also supported in this study by critical friends, who included senior colleagues who assisted me in addressing issues about learner misbehaviour, other Master's degree students in the Teacher Development Studies discipline, as well as two supervisors whose role was to constructively guide, question, and critique my work. This study addressed two research questions. The first was: *What can I learn from my personal history about positive learner behaviour?* and I used memory-work and arts-based methods to generate data in response to this question. I reflected on my own schooling experiences as well as my encounters with community members and my family, and I sought to understand how these experiences had moulded my understanding of behaviour. The second questions was: *How can I cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching?* I used numerous arts-based methods such as photographs, collages, and memory drawings to answer this research question. Adopting the sociocultural theory, I developed lessons that promoted positive interactions and fostered respect while creating a positive learning space. I learnt that teaching and learning do not follow a straight path as there are many challenges along the way. However, there are numerous learning opportunities that allow one to grow. I also learned that positive teacher-learner

relationships, creating a positive learning environment, promoting learner autonomy, and nurturing social-emotional learning contribute to positive learner behaviour.

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ACRONYMS

CSTL	Care and Support of Teaching and Learning
TDS	Teacher Development Studies
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
SACE	South African Council of Educators
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
NS	Natural Sciences
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
SASAMS	South African Schools Administrative Management System

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CHAPTER ONE

THE GENESIS

1.1 Introduction

In this first chapter, I present the Haiku poem I composed to illustrate the focus and purpose of this research study. This is followed by a brief description of the background of the study and I then discuss the motive for my research. I also articulate the two research questions that guided the study and discuss Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural perspective which argues that knowledge is a socially mediated activity. I elucidate the key concept of the study, which is positive learner behaviour which I describe as learners taking charging of their learning and developing a positive culture. I discuss teacher-learning, which is a lifelong process that teachers engage in to adapt to a particular context and improve learning outcomes. Lastly, I present a brief description of my research methodology, and the chapter is then concluded.

To clarify the focus and purpose of this research endeavour, I composed a Haiku poem. A Haiku poem (Figure 1.1) is a traditional Japanese poem that is composed in three lines. Samaras (2011) explains that the first line has five syllables, the second has seven syllables, while the last line has five syllables. The Haiku poem helped me to reflect on the main purpose of this study, which was self-recognition. Self-recognition for me meant self-awareness and personal growth. I aimed to become more informed about my teaching practice and needed to identify my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher in order to improve my teaching practice. LaBoskey (2004) explains that, in self-study, personal history plays a vital role as one learns from one's past and improves through challenging previously held assumptions. The self-study research approach allowed me to take time to reflect on the effectiveness, or lack of effectiveness, of my teaching methods and assessment approaches, and to change them as required.

The second line of my Haiku poem expresses the need for positive reinforcement. A key focus of my study was to introduce an alternative to corporal punishment. This included cultivating positive learner behaviour through my teaching, ensuring quality education, and minimising barriers to my learners' education. I reflected on the need to change my attitude and perception towards my learners, to respect them, and to promote their dignity. I incorporated 'experiences' in my Haiku poem as the purpose of this study was to learn from my experiences of positive behaviour. I therefore reflected on how my past schooling experiences, both the positive and negative ones, had shaped the teacher I was.

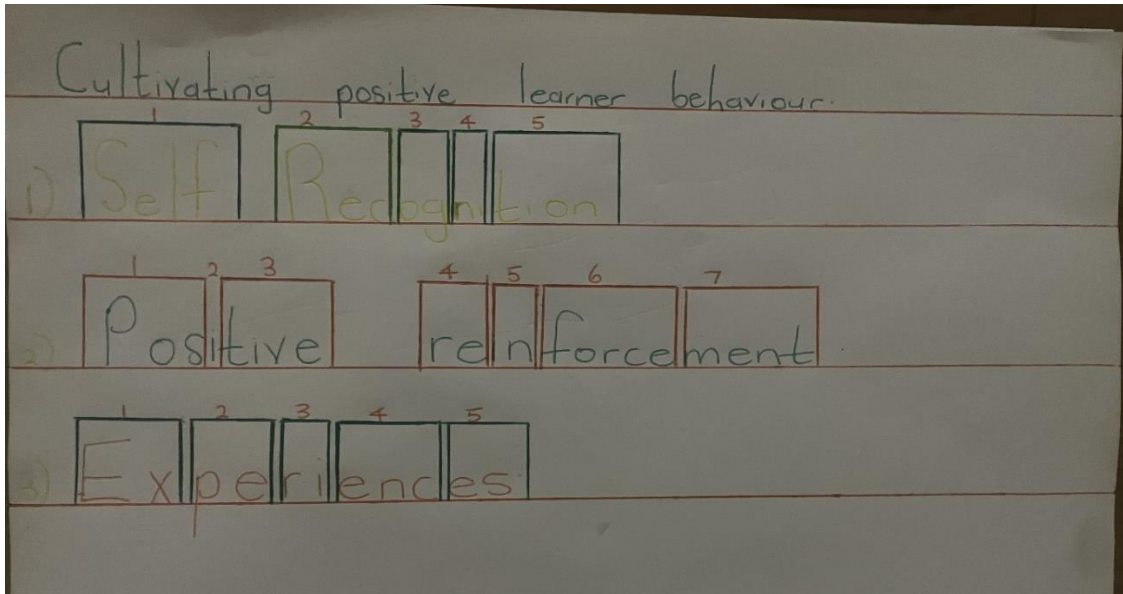


Figure 1.1: My Haiku poem consisting of three lines

I utilised the self-study methodology as it enabled me to reflect on my classroom practices and to improve my teaching. Mitchell et al., (2009) note that this research methodology is mainly used by teachers who study and examine their teaching practice. They argue that, in this process, teachers are assisted by colleagues and/or their learners. This study addressed two key questions: *What can I learn from my personal history about positive learner behaviour?* To address this question, I reflected on my own schooling experiences and considered how they had shaped the way I currently taught. The second questions was: *How can I cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching?* To address this question, I was assisted by my critical friends in my exploration various ways of cultivating a positive learning environment. These included constantly motivating my learners, displaying professionalism within and outside the classroom, showing respect for my learners, encouraging collaborative learning, and giving feedback to my learners all the time.

The main purpose of this study was to reflect on my past experiences to expose what I could learn from them so that I could improve my teaching practice. I wanted to create a positive learning environment that would prevent learner attrition and allow me to provide quality education for all my learners. As explained by Griffiths (2002, p. 166), self-study involves “critical reflection and evaluation of purposes and their practical realizations in everyday life”. Through this study, I was enabled to propose and implement alternative measures to corporal punishment and to embrace a teaching approach that encouraged positive relationships among my learners. To achieve this, I changed my and my learners’ attitudes towards teaching and

learning by cultivating and practising positive behaviour in my classroom. I sought to model positivity through my teaching such as sharing words of encouragement with my learners and boosting their self-confidence. I worked with the learners to establish an inviting, creative, and conducive learning environment where their dignity and humanity would always be protected. I learnt to respect their socio-cultural diversity, to promote their well-being, and to encourage collaboration among them. I addressed issues related to bullying, late coming, disruptions during lessons, vandalism of school property, low self-esteem, and lack of communication, as proposed by Luiselli et al. (2005), who argue that the converse of these create an unsafe learning environment that compromises learning and undermines authority.

One of the goals of the Southern African Development Community (2020) is to achieve care and support for teaching and learning in schools (CSTL). This body argues that the main goal of teachers should be to guide learners to become respectful of others despite their differences in all contexts such as the family, school, and community. Furthermore, learners who will one day be parents should learn the value of supporting the development of their children to their full potential. As a teacher, I understand the influence I have on my learners' lives and how my actions, whether positive or negative, will have a lasting effect on their future. This is why I set out to cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching. My purpose was to influence my learners positively so that they would, in turn, positively impact the wider community.

Having said all the above, I acknowledge that I envisaged that this study would contribute to my personal learning. As noted by Austin and Senese (2004), self-study encourages educators to cultivate a unique perspective while it also enhances their teaching methods, helps them to foster stronger relationships with members of the school community, and uncovers and enforces their capacity for instigating meaningful transformation. I hope that the outcomes of this study will bring change to the wider teaching community as my findings may encourage other teachers to adopt the positive approaches that I devised and enacted in my classroom.

1.2 Focus and Purpose of the Study

To explore positive learner behaviour in depth, I reflected on my childhood and adolescence by recalling memories of children's and learners' behaviour. This was important because it enabled me to reframe my thinking with the intent of enhancing the overall effectiveness of my teaching and assessment approaches. Through this study, I hoped to cultivate positive learner behaviour and establish a positive learning environment that would facilitate critical and positive learner engagements and contribute to positive learner outcomes. Furthermore, the establishment of a positive learning environment and the cultivation of positive learner behaviour may result in the eradication of absenteeism and school bunking and thus, the creation of positive teacher-learner relationships.

As articulated by King (2023), every child has the potential to amend their own lives as well as the lives of their families and communities. Manyukhina and Wyse (2019) further explain that every child possesses the ability to act responsibly and purposefully. However, such positive outcomes depend on how well learners have been motivated, empowered, and supported in their growth within the classroom. I thus hoped that this study would not only cultivate positive change and behaviour in my classroom, but that it would also empower my learners to become potential agents of change within their communities. According to Samaras et al. (2004, p. 5), "unexamined thinking leads to acts based in random or irrational beliefs or ideas", and I therefore engaged in deep self-reflection with the aim of understanding which experiences had informed my teaching and how any inappropriate actions could be changed so that I would cultivate a positive learning environment in my classroom. More specifically, I sought to instil a positive teaching and learning culture in my classroom by reflecting on my teaching practice. I made an attempt to become better acquainted with the reasons for my learners' behaviour and how to address issues related to learner misconduct.

LaBoskey (2004) notes that, in self-study, "we wish to transform ourselves first so that we might be better situated to help transform our students". I thus aimed to model positive behaviour through my teaching with the intention of developing mutual respect among my learners, establishing positive learner interactions, and encouraging constructive and effective learner engagements. As noted by Samaras (2002, p. 14), "self-study is more than an exploration of oneself" as, at its core, it is "the application of the knowledge one gains through this process to one's teaching practices". I also envisaged that the outcomes of this self-study would impact both my colleagues and the Department of Basic Education, particularly as

Hamilton (2002) notes that the impact of self-study endeavours should extend beyond individual classrooms to the broader teaching community. I thus shared, and will continue to share, my discoveries and knowledge with other educators at both school and District level. However, essentially the focus of this study was to enhance my personal learning as Russell (2002, p. 9) notes that, in self-study research, the 'self' "...is the focal point for studying the intersection of theory and practice".

1.3 Background Information

I am a novice teacher as I have been teaching for only three years in a multicultural secondary school situated in the heart of Greytown in the uMzinyathi District. The school is rich in diversity among both the learners and staff members. Diversity is evident in the various religions (mainly Christianity, Shembe, Islam, and Hinduism), races (mainly Indians and Africans), languages (mainly English, Afrikaans, and IsiZulu), and family status (low and middle-income families). The teacher-to-learner ratio was initially 1:30 but later changed to 1:50 in the junior grades and 1:40 in the senior grades as school enrolment increased. The school is a quintile 4 school, which means that it is a fee-paying school which receives minimal assistance from the Department of Basic Education. Like many South African schools in the former dispensation, the school has been subjected to both apartheid and democratic South African education policies. Besides being a teacher, I am currently a student enrolled in the Master's education program at a university in KwaZulu-Natal where I specialise in Teacher Development Studies.

Apartheid was a system that thrived on racial separation at all levels, including education. Hanyana (2005) states that apartheid had a policy of racial segregation and separate racial development and promoted white supremacy and black inferiority. However, currently the school accommodates learners from all cultural and socio-economic settings. It has a rich learner diversity in terms of race as Indian, White, and mostly Black African learners are enrolled. Over the years, learner racial diversity has declined and the majority of learners are now Black. The school has the highest number of grade 12 learners in the District but, unfortunately, it also has a high rate of learner misconduct as reported by teachers, grade mentors, and the School Management Team (SMT).

1.4 Rationale for the Study

I envisage that this study will contribute significantly to the field of teacher learning as I explored my personal and professional experiences and arrived at inimitable perspectives and understandings about learners' behaviour from the findings. Sieberer-Nagler (2016, p. 1) states that "to be successful in their teaching, teachers must be able to establish appropriate student behaviour in their classrooms to maximise time for learning". This means that effective classroom management is essential if learners are to achieve desirable academic results. Moreover, teachers need to gain a deep sense of who they are and what their roles are in the learning community. Therefore, this reflective self-study assisted me in cultivating positive learner behaviours in my classroom. I can say without fear of contradiction that my teaching has improved due to this study to the extent that my learners' behaviour has improved most satisfactorily.

The apartheid regime brought with it an ideology of an orderly society, and this was also seen within the schooling system as the approach was authoritarian (Mouton, 2012). However, the Department of Basic Education's (2017, p.3) human rights handbook states: "The end of apartheid brought with it the end of an authoritarian culture and a shift towards a culture of human rights". There has been a notable policy shift to change the authoritarian role of teachers as they now have to adopt a more learner-centred approach to allow critical learning and critical thinking as posited in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2017)

Section 10 of the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996) abolished corporal punishment in schools. This means that any teacher who imposes any form of corporal punishment on learners infringes their rights, and legal action could be taken against such a teacher. The South African Council of Educators (2008, p. 6) defines corporal punishment as "any deliberate act against a child that inflicts pain or physical discomfort to punish or contain him/her". Corporal punishment is therefore not merely the act of hitting a learner, but any act that causes discomfort to the learner.

When I reflected on my own schooling experiences, I recalled numerous incidences that had shaped my attitude and behaviour as a teacher. This reflection was part of an activity I did for my Honours degree when we had to create drawings and reflect on incidents during our schooling years. Mitchell and Weber (1999) posit that teacher-researchers can make learning

from themselves and others visible by using drawings. Pithouse-Morgan (2011, p. 38) also argues that memory drawing can be used “as a method for recollecting, representing and examining...memories”. Using stick drawings, I recorded an incident when a teacher had subjected me to corporal punishment using a cane. I also recalled the harsh words she had used on me and how those words were still alive in my memory. However, as a teacher there were times when I also wanted to enforce corporal punishment on some learners and when I uttered words that demeaned some of them. Recalling these incidences made me realise that I needed to change my attitude. Instead of demeaning them, I need to instil positivity in my learners and provide them with an education that is meaningful and impactful. Samaras and Robert (2011) outline that self-directed questioning can lead to improved teaching that will, in turn, impact learning positively. They also suggest that, to be impactful, teachers must understand their role in the learning space. This means that they must understand what works and what does not work in the classroom.

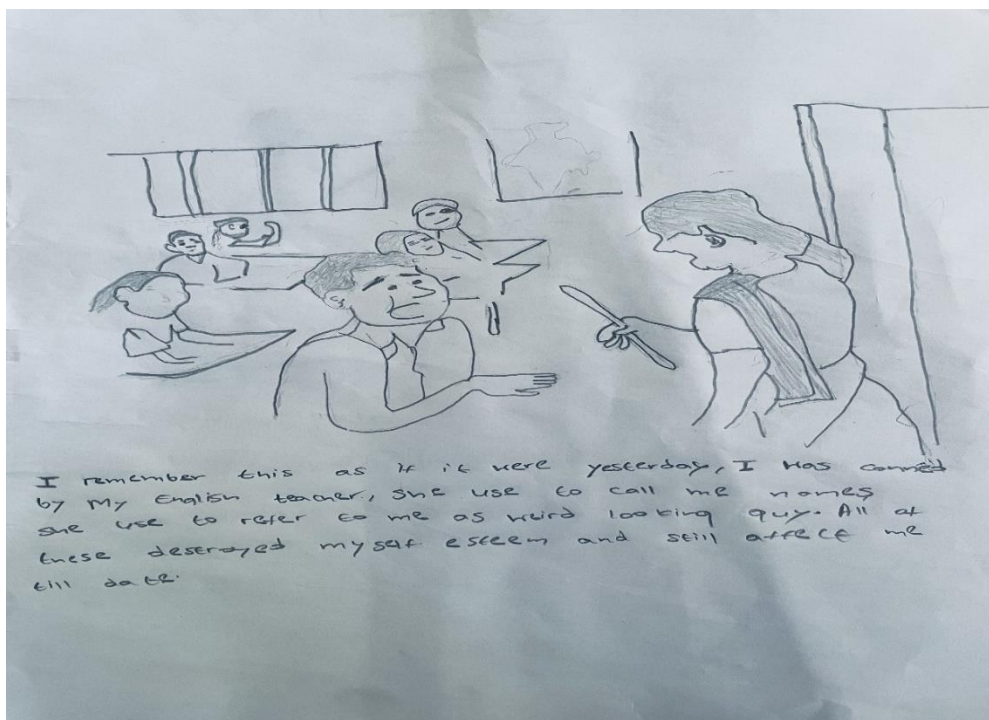


Figure 1.2: *Recalling a negative schooling experience*

When I entered the teaching profession, my concern was to find disciplinary measures and teaching strategies that could serve as an alternative to corporal punishment.

I was uncertain and overwhelmed in the classroom at first, but the option of conducting self-study research presented itself and I embraced this opportunity to improve my teaching practice. I knew I had to be better informed to improve myself as a professional and to engage in teacher learning. As outlined by LaBoskey (2004), self-study is self-initiated and focuses on ‘self’. Its goal is self-improvement and it thus “requires evidence of reframed thinking and transformed practice” (p. 859). Correspondingly, Samaras and Robert (2011) affirm that self-study research reconfirms the significance of reflecting on one’s practice and of actively seeking solutions and ideas. I therefore intended to learn from myself and from my colleagues and critical friends. Hamilton et al. (2008) further suggest that addressing the self can assist in understanding one’s teaching practice. I therefore engaged in self-examination of my personal experiences and also worked collaboratively with others in my efforts to understand how cultivating positive learner behaviour through my teaching could curb learners’ misbehaviour and improve my classroom management skills. I believed that this learning would ultimately contribute to improved learner achievement.

1.5 Objectives and Key Research Questions

1.5.1 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study were to:

- contribute towards my professional teacher learning and practice by reflecting purposively on my personal history, with the intention of learning about what informs me of what positive behaviour is.
- stimulate a positive learning culture through cultivating positive learner behaviour in my teaching.

1.5.2 Key research questions

The first question this study posed was: *What can I learn from my personal history about positive learner behaviour?* As leaders in the classroom, it is crucial that teachers reflect on their actions and engage in continuous learning. Naicker (2014, p. 3) notes that “an unexamined life is not worth living” and that it is important that we “constantly and vigilantly examine all aspects of life, using the powers of reason that we have available to us”. Self-study research enables students to achieve this. Samaras and Roberts (2011) note that, when teachers engage in self-study research, they critically examine their professional practices and the context in

which they work when their aim is to enhance their professional practice. To answer this research question, I reflected on my personal upbringing and pertinent encounters during my schooling years. Exploring my personal history allowed me to engage in a critical reflection process which led me to challenge my teaching and to adopt a more nuanced understanding of my professional learning. To answer this self-reflective research question, I made use of numerous self-study data sources such as memory drawings, collage inquiry, audio-recordings, journal writing, artefact retrieval, and memory box. All these aids assisted me in triggering and evoking memories of my past, recording and analysing them, and understanding the lessons learnt from them.

The second research question was: *How can I cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching?* Samaras and Robert (2011) note that the purpose of self-study is to improve teaching and learning. I therefore embarked on this study to examine my own beliefs and experiences in order to gain in-depth understanding of my teaching and professional practice. To answer this research question (see Chapter four), I used various teaching methods to cultivate positive learner behaviour in my classroom. I used self-study data sources namely collage inquiry, audio recordings, and journal writing as detailed in the methodology chapter. I also engaged with critical friends and expert colleagues to develop lessons that promoted inclusivity and stimulated a classroom culture that was grounded in positive values.

1.6 Literature Review

Knopf (2006) highlights that the function of a literature review is to provide a detailed account of the conceptual research framework which underpins the research study while it enables the researcher to discuss the key themes that are explored in the study. In this self-study research, the literature review chapter explores the sociocultural theory as presented by Vygotsky (1978). This theory focuses on how people learn in relation to their immediate environment and it emphasises that learners bring schemata into the classroom and that learning is socially embedded. Furthermore, in this part of the study I discuss key concepts such as positive learner behaviour which is when learners demonstrate virtuous values, have a sense of learner agency, and adhere to the school's Code of Conduct. I also discuss teacher learning, which is defined by Calvert (2016) as learning that is ongoing, is directly linked to the school's and District's goals, and occurs collaboratively.

1.6.1 The sociocultural theoretical framework

I adopted the sociocultural theory that was developed by Lev Vygotsky (1978). This theory emphasises the role of social interactions and cultural context in shaping learning and behaviour. Gee (2008, p. 81) explains that the sociocultural theory “looks at knowledge and learning in terms of a relationship between an individual with both a mind and a body and in an environment in which the individual thinks, feels, acts, and interacts”. This means that interaction plays a vital role in learning and that, in the context of cultivating positive learner behaviour, learning is a social activity. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) assert that this perspective underscores cooperative learning and joint discoveries as teachers work hand in hand with students to construct knowledge. This essentially means that students learn best through collaborative and interactive processes. Samaras et al. (2004) agree, arguing that learning by its very nature is an active and social process.

By employing the sociocultural perspective, I learnt that cultivating positive learner behaviour would occur if I worked collaboratively with my learners. Mkhize-Mthembu (2022) avers that learning requires a community where learners can share ideas and learn from one another. Kelly (2006) explains that, if participants engage in collaborative problem-solving, inquiry, and dialogue, the construction of knowledge is greatly increased. I therefore placed emphasis on my learners and myself as their teacher and insisted that we should work together as science subjects require learners to be problem solvers. I therefore used group work as one of the numerous benefits of this approach is that learners find creative ways of resolving problems together. Furthermore, learners had the task of preparing and creating collages related to topics completed in the classroom, this activity was one of the creative ways of problem solving. Easton (2012, p. 50) notes that “learning means that we work with many people, encouraging discoveries and learning from mistakes, helping everyone to find what works [sic].” This means that learning is not a process that occurs only when individuals work independently, but also when they work together with others.

The sociocultural perspective also argues that culture plays a crucial role in learning as the cultural background and values of the learner influence learning and behaviour. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) maintain that learners come from different environments and that these environments have influenced them in various ways. According to Kelly (2006), learners bring schemata with them to class that were adopted from their cultural backgrounds before attending school. Moreover, Northfield and Sherman (2004) affirm that what we think of ourselves and

how we treat others stem from the norms and standards of where we come from and from our relationships with others. The sociocultural perspective thus allowed me to recognise the importance of social interactions, which is a notion that Gerhard and Mayer Smith (2008) endorse as they argue that learning is a social phenomenon. The approach made me understand that it is not just school life that is important in learning, but that my learning was also entrenched in my interactions with my family, friends, and the community. Hence, to explore ways in which I could cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching, I also consulted members of the School Governing Body as they represented the community, and these interactions ensured that what my learners were taught would be endorsed by their families. Learning from people who were part of the school community enriched my teacher-learning as this ensured that I learnt about the norms and standards of the community. As noted by Vygotsky (1974), family and the community play an important role in the learning of a child.

Gee (2008.pg 76) claims “ensuring that all learners have had equal opportunities to learning is both an ethical prerequisite for fair assessment and a solid basis on which to think about educational reforms that will ensure that all children can succeed at school”. This means that as an educator my primary objective is to ensure that my learners are provided with the same learning opportunities. Gee (2008) further notes that learners who are exposed to the same content (information) do not necessarily have the same learning opportunities. The scholar further places emphasis on the relationship between learners and their learning environment. The use of resources in lessons thus ensures that all learners are afforded the same learning and assessment environment, and it enables them to visualise their learning. Vygotsky (1978) acknowledges that learners learn social beliefs through imitation. Therefore, with reference to the sociocultural theory, I modelled respect, clear communication, instructions, and the maintenance of a positive and conducive learning environment. I hoped that my learners would gain a sense of agency and see the need to learn from my behaviour and enact it within and outside the classroom. I further hoped that my fellow colleagues would also learn this and apply appropriate methodologies to enrich their teaching and learning. Using the sociocultural theory, I aimed to improve my learning as a teacher by also learning and enacting positive ways to contribute to my learners’ learning. By applying the tenets of the sociocultural theory, I also learnt from those teachers who modelled positive behaviour at school and from my own youthful lived experiences.

The sociocultural theory is essentially associated with what Vygotsky (1978) refers to as the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) defines the ZPD as follows:

“...It is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined through independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving, and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers”.

This means that learners learn best when challenged to reach beyond their current abilities, and this occurs through the guidance by more knowledgeable others. Vygotsky (1978) explains that the ZPD is reached through a process of scaffolding. I understand this 'scaffolding' as the temporary support and guidance that are necessary to help students develop new skills and understanding. The perspective emphasises the importance of guided participation. In a classroom context, this means that learners should work together during activities, while my duty is to provide them with clear guidance to ensure their understanding. When I conducted the study, I therefore ensured that I was readily available to explain concepts to my learners when necessary. Also, during practical work, I was there to provide clarity and support my learners. They were engaged in activities that provoked their interest and that challenged them, while I encouraged them to work with others to share and learn.

The Sociocultural theory of teaching and learning has its limitations. The theory assumes that all learners gain the same understanding through interactions, neglecting learners with learning disabilities and difficulties. Lui and Matthews (2005) maintain that sociocultural theory only applies to some social and cultural groups, further pointing out that social groups may not be equal, and all learners may be able to gain the same meaning from engagements. I anticipated that this limitation would be present in my classroom, as the school is fully inclusive and accommodates all learners with different learning abilities. This meant that in my classroom they will be learners who have been identified and classified as slow learning, suffering from anxiety, and depression. To counter this, I intended to use various teaching methods and teaching resources to aid my learner's learning. These would include collage-making, posters and other creative ways to induce learner understanding.

1.6.2 Positive learner behaviour

In the first three years that I taught at my school, I realised that learner misbehaviour had escalated each year. It was becoming harder to discipline learners due to numerous factors that

were both intrinsic and extrinsic. We had numerous cases of absenteeism, bullying among the juniors, sexual harassment, bunking of lessons, substance abuse in the form of smoking cannabis ('weed') and cigarettes, disruptions during lessons, and fighting. As the South African Council of Educators (SACE) has tightened and restricted ways of disciplining learners, many cases were referred to the SMT as teachers' hands were tied. However, this lengthy administrative process of disciplining learners often disturbed the teaching and learning process. Lewis (2001) argues that the way teachers are compelled to address misbehaviour often results in the disturbance of teaching and learning which affects positive learning outcomes. Scott (2001) argues that, when schools use positive behavioural support, they can minimise undesirable and disruptive behaviours. My growing concern regarding learners' behaviours thus prompted me to explore ways in which positive learner behaviours can be cultivated while maximising teaching and learning for better learner achievement.

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory posits that people's cognitive development is dependent on the interactions and relationships that they have with others. Scott and Palincsar (2013, p. 8) affirm that "learning occurs through interaction, negotiation, and collaboration". As humans, we learn from influence and emulate those in our immediate social environment such as our parents, family members, peers, and even our teachers. I remember that when I grew up, my sister hated vegetables, especially in stews. I also ended up hating vegetables for no reason at all other than the fact that my sister did. This shows that, because my sister was part of my immediate environment, some of her values were transferred to me. Moreover, when I took a critical look at my own classroom approaches, I realised that most of what I did had been learnt from my teachers during my primary and high school years. Learning is not merely dependent on restrictions but also on instructions (LaBoskey 1978). For example, one does not learn the rules of mathematics such as BODMAS through imitation, but through instruction. We also learn through collaborative activities when we do things with others.

1.6.3 Teacher-learner relationships

The sociocultural perspective sees behaviour as socially constructed and argues that how an individual acts is strongly influenced by their immediate environment. Saariaho et al. (2019) argue that behaviour is socially embedded as opposed to being an individual attribute. Positive learner behaviour is stimulated when learners actively share knowledge and participate in positive engagements with one another and the teacher in the classroom. These positive engagements are facilitated by the teacher, which means that teacher-learner interactions are

crucial in cultivating positive learner behaviour. Marzano and Marzano (2003) aver that ensuring positive teacher-learner relationships is crucial for communication and understanding that largely contribute to positive learner behaviour. Molefe (2021) argues that maintaining a supportive teacher-learner relationship is crucial as this encourages learners' academic involvement and accomplishments. In my study, I aimed to encourage supportive engagements and active participation create a positive learning environment. All these I hope would contribute to my learners interacting with me and one another, thus enhancing positive teacher-learner relationships.

1.6.4 Creating a positive learning environment and fostering autonomy

A teacher's actions may contribute to learners' behaviour; hence, it is essential to always ensure that one acts in a positive manner. Sieberer-Nagler (2016) avers that every action by the teacher has implications for classroom management. This applies to the way the teacher communicates with the learners, handles learner responses, and addresses learning barriers. These points suggest that positive learner behaviour is strongly dependent on the creation of a positive learning environment that allows learners' voices to be heard in the classroom. As noted by Luthuli (2021), a positive learning environment must encourage learner autonomy as they must be allowed to make mistakes and learn from them through positive feedback. Sieberer-Nagle (2016, p. 1) suggests the following: "For a productive learning environment, it is also important to generate noble will, respect, and cooperation". All these factors contribute to positive learner behaviour through the creation of positive engagements and positive experiences. To cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching I will ensure that I establish a positive learning environment, one that makes my learners feel safe, loved, valued, and protected.

1.6.4.1 Modelling positive behaviour

To cultivate positive learner behaviour in my classroom, I planned to model positive behaviour. As highlighted by Vygotsky (1978), learners learn by imitating those in their immediate environment. O'Brien (1998) supports this notion and states that behaviour is externally influenced, which means that it is provoked by people in one's immediate environment as well as members of the community and even the media. As a teacher, learners look up to me to be punctual daily and that can lead learners to imitate being on time for lessons, thereby solving the issue of late coming. I would also show respect towards learners, respecting their points of view and their respective differences. Naong (2007) explains that teachers should foster mutual respect among learners and between the learners and the teacher. This will cause learners to act

in a more respectful manner towards the teacher and their fellow classmates. Additionally, children should be provided with clear indications of what is considered misconduct and the consequences of such actions. Vygotsky (1978) explains that learners learn through instructions, and these instructions must be clear. Marais and Meier (2010) point out that the establishment of rules in the classroom is for learners to understand the kind of behaviour that is expected from them. For example, the teacher should explain to the learners that not doing their homework will be considered misconduct and that they will bear the consequences if they do not adhere to this instruction, such as sitting detention during recess.

1.6.4.2 Peer-to-peer learning and discussion

Collaboration is key to positive learner behaviour in the classroom (Vygotsky, 1978). This approach allows learners to work together and with their teacher in the process of knowledge construction and transmission. Being able to work supportively and cooperatively with others is crucial in the classroom context as this prepares learners for the world of work. Rohan (2017) explains that group activities enable learners to share their insights, thinking, and values. Through collaboration, learners take charge of their learning and contribute to collective success. Learning that is grounded in collaborative activities will develop positive and constructive conversations. Furthermore, collaborative activities allow for learning that is self-directed and self-empowering and they create opportunities for learners to own their learning. Lewis (2001) explains that learners should be allowed to take part in decision making and to exercise autonomy in their own learning. In my study, I planned to develop lessons that encouraged peer-to-peer learning by making use of group work and practical tasks to encourage my learners to work together (see Chapter four).

1.6.4.3 Learner recognition

Rafi et al. (2020, p. 177) state that the frequent use of praise and giving learners the opportunity to respond “decrease disruptive actions and promote appropriate behaviour in the classroom”. Learners who actively participate in classroom activities and who act respectfully towards others should also be recognised for such behaviour. Rafi et al. (2020) further argue that a teacher’s praise is a social reinforcement strategy and a positive behavioural intervention to motivate struggling learners to improve their self-efficacy. During lessons in my study, I intend to give praise to learners when due, for example when all activities and classwork has been done, I would write “Good, job, well done!” and “Keep up the good work!”, and this may excite my learners as their work will be valued.

1.6.4.4 Social and emotional well-being

Engaging with my learners during lessons made me realise that I needed to motivate them to improve their behaviour by acting generously and showing respect for others and their property. Valerio (2012) highlights the importance of motivating students to learn and develop. Mkhize-Mthembu (2020, p. 19) suggest that teachers should pay careful attention to learners' learning needs, arguing that they should always exude hope, patience, "and learn to be sensible and warm". I intended and planned to motivate my learners recurringly, I also planned to invite professionals to address them about issues pertaining to their emotional and social well-being (see Chapter four).

1.6.4.5 Cultural responsiveness and maintaining inclusivity

Sebba (1996) argues that inclusive education is all about reforming education systems, schools, and classrooms so that they accommodate the learning needs of every individual learner. Mweli (2009, p. 26) asserts that "teaching and learning in the classroom should be designed and planned in such a way that learners' diverse learning needs are accommodated, and full participation in the learning process is achieved". This means that, to accommodate learners' learning needs, teachers must make use of various teaching methods. For instance, I aim to utilise collage-making, posters, practical work, writing, and group activities with the intention of accommodating all my learners' learning needs.

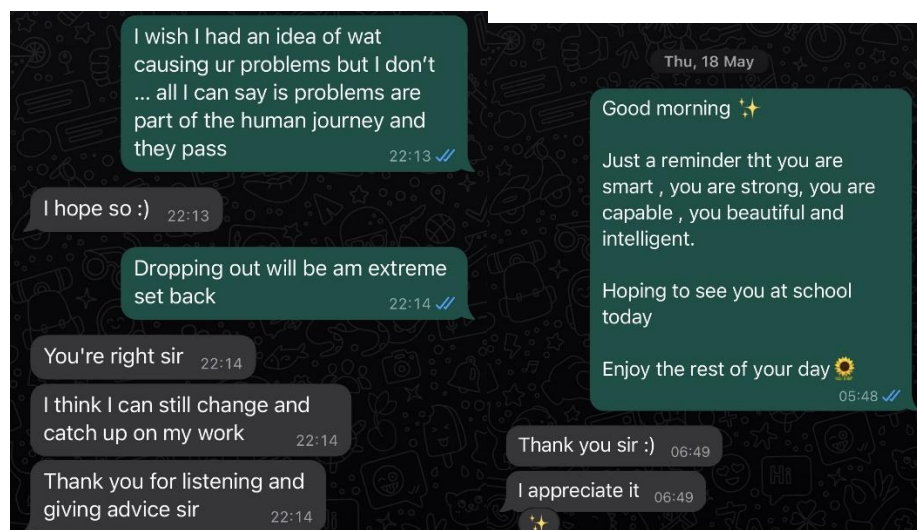


Figure 1.3: Screenshot of encouragement offered and appreciation given

1.6.5 Teacher learning

Teaching is a complex responsibility that requires teachers to be lifelong learners. The world is continuously changing and demands that teachers adapt to these changes by learning professionally. The out-dated approaches used by many teachers are no longer effective, as education has become more inclusive and varied according to context. Not only has society changed, but so have the learners in our classrooms, schooling policies, learner needs, and behaviours. For example, the learners in the classes I taught in 2022 were completely different from the ones I teach currently. Easton (2008, p. 1) explains that educators find that "...they often need to change what they do on a daily or sometimes hourly basis as they respond to the needs of the learners they serve". Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to contribute towards their professional learning and to improve their professional selves. For example, to keep up with my professional learning, I engaged in numerous workshops, social media hubs, and in this self-study research. All these have contributed to reframing my thinking and improving my teaching practice.

Calvert (2016) highlights that professional learning is ongoing; moreover, it is directly linked to the school's and District's goals and needs to be collaborative. Teacher professional learning is learning that stimulates teacher thinking and teacher knowledge and leads to informed teacher practice. Kelly (2006, p. 4) avers that teacher learning "is the movement of teachers from peripheral (novice) to full (expert) participation in a specific working practice". Kelly (2006) also claims that continued professional development takes place in many forms. For instance, in this self-study project I aimed to contribute towards my professional learning by examining and better understanding my and others' past experiences with the intention of improving my current practice.

As indicated by Gee (2008), people learn through social interactions with others such as family, peers, and friends. The same can be said about teachers whose thinking and learning do not occur independently, but are derived from activities and interactions with others such as colleagues, peers, parents, and family members. When I came to my current school, I never understood the concept of care and support for teaching and learning, or even what SASAMS¹ meant. As I engaged with others in the workplace, I started understanding certain terms and how and where to use them. Certain beliefs and values were also added as I engaged with other

¹ SASAMS: South African Schools Administrative Management System

teachers. I attended workshops and learned from others how to become a better teacher, and our shared experiences also contributed to my learning. Johnson and Golombek (2011) posit that teacher learning is a lengthy process that results from participation in many social activities, practices, and contexts. This means that teacher learning originates and emerges from participation in social activities. Senge et al. (as cited in Easton, 2012) argue as follows: “Learning is at once deeply personal and inherently social; it connects us not just to knowledge in the abstract, but to each other”. This argument emphasises the social dependence of teacher learning and thinking which are dependent on self-reflection and learning communities and requires teacher agency that is ongoing.

1.7 Methodological Approach

To execute this research study, I employed the self-study methodology that is explained in more depth in Chapter two. Samaras and Roberts (2011) note that self-study research requires teachers to critically examine their professional practices and the context in which they work if they aim to improve their classroom and other professional practices. Therefore, the self-study approach to research enables individuals to critically reflect on and examine their actions and professional values with the intention of improving their practice. LaBoskey avers that self-study researchers “...are concerned with both enhanced understanding of teacher education in general and the immediate improvement of our [their] practice”. Hamilton et al. (2008) state that self-study researchers use reflection to examine their practice, personal values, and professional work. In the current study, I made use of reflection as a tool to examine my practice, as is also proposed by Dewey (1933). This was done with an open mind, wholeheartedly, and responsibly. According to Hamilton et al. (2008), self-study research involves purposeful examination of one’s own practice as it is goal-driven and enables researchers to better understand themselves. When this methodology is used, the life experiences of the researcher play a huge role as this method allows for deep scholarly reflection of personal encounters. Hamilton et al. (2008) state that personal history and the voices of participants are powerful components of self-study.

As a novice teacher and researcher, I used this research approach to respond to the two research questions: *What can I learn from my personal history about positive learner behaviour?* To answer this research question, I used several self-study data sources (as discussed in detail in Chapter two). The aim was to trigger pertinent memories of my schooling experiences, whether positive or negative, and to understand how these had shaped and influenced my teaching. This

was crucial in helping me to understand my values as a teacher, how they had been formed, and how they affected my current teaching practice. The approach also assisted me in my professional learning as a teacher about positive learner behaviour and how this can be achieved within the classroom setting. Using the self-study research approach, I was also able to answer my second research question, which was: *How can I cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching?* To address this question, I used various data generation sources to explore various ways of cultivating positive learner behaviour in my classroom.

1.8 Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter one: In this chapter I introduce the background to the study and present the two key research questions that guided my investigation. I focus on the purpose of the study and present an overview of the literature that underpinned and supported my investigation, with specific reference to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theoretical framework, positive learner behaviour, teacher-learner relationships, and the need for a positive learning environment. The methodological approach that I adopted is also discussed. The chapter is concluded with a brief overview of the dissertation.

Chapter two: In chapter two, I discussed my research methodology in detail, defining self-study and its elements and further providing a brief background of my research participants and the role of critical friends in my study. I proceeded to present various self-study data generative methods that will be used in the study. Lastly, I shared some of the challenges I encountered and how these were addressed.

Chapter three: In chapter three, I responded to my first research question : *What can I learn from my personal history about positive learner behaviour?* I reflected on my past schooling, community, and family experiences. Moreover, I presented narratives of my personal history using numerous art-based self-study generative methods. I conceptualised my lived experiences summarising key learnings and lastly concluded the research chapter.

Chapter four: In chapter four, I answered the research question : *How can I cultivate positive learner behaviour in my teaching?* In responding to this research question, I engaged with critical friends and senior colleagues who assisted me in developing and structuring lessons that would promote inclusivity, respect, and learner positive behaviour.

Chapter Five: In chapter five, I make meaning of the data collected in both my research questions(chapter three and chapter four) I make use of extract to support research findings. I begin the chapter by defining and presenting key learnings from my personal history. Next, I share my learnings from my critical friends and learner participants. Lastly, I share new learnt insight about positive behaviour and consolidate the chapter.

Chapter Six: In chapter six, I reconsider how this study has influenced me personally and professionally. Moreover, I detail how applying the self-study methodology has enhanced my teaching practice. Finally, I deliberate on what I intend to do in future as a consequence of this research study.

1.9 Conclusion

The intention of this chapter was to introduce my self-focused study to the reader. I began by presenting the Haiku poem I had composed to articulate the focus and purpose of this study. This was followed by a brief background of my teaching career and the school where the study was conducted. I also provided a detailed explanation of the reason why I undertook this study. I then presented the two research questions that this study intended to answer. I explained the sociocultural theoretical perspective and further highlighted two key concepts, namely teacher-learning and positive learner behaviour. Lastly, I briefly introduced my methodological approach. In Chapter two, I provide a thorough description of the research methodology I employed, and I describe the methods I used to generate data for this self-study project.

CHAPTER TWO

FINDING MYSELF

2.1 Introduction

This study intended to explore positive learner behaviour in the classroom setting and to determine how a positive learning environment that facilitates critical and positive learner engagements may be established with the ultimate aim of improving learners' academic and social outcomes. Furthermore, I explained that it was my intention to contribute towards my professional teacher learning and practice and to understand the factors that inform learner behaviour. I commenced this dissertation by introducing my Haiku poem to present the focus of my research study. This was followed by a brief description of the background of the study and an explanation of the rationale for the study. The next step was to present the theoretical framework that underpinned the study, namely the sociocultural perspective followed by a presentation of the key concept.

In this chapter, I provide an in-depth clarification of the methodological approach that I used to bring this study to fruition. This is followed by a comprehensive discussion of the location of the study, the research participants, their role in the study, the contribution of critical friends, and the self-study research practices that I used for data generation.

2.2 Research Methodology

2.2.1 The qualitative research approach

This study employed the qualitative self-study research approach. A variety of methods can be utilised in qualitative studies such as interviews, historical materials, and collage making. Aspers and Corte (2019, p. 12) state that qualitative research is “a process in which significant new distinctions are made to the scholarly community”. This means that qualitative research is concerned with bringing new knowledge into the research field through the use of various data generation methods. Andrade (2009, p. 43) defines qualitative research as “a study process that investigates a social human problem where the researcher conducts the study in a natural setting and builds a whole and complex representation by a rich description and explanation as well as a careful examination of informants' words and views”. In executing this study, I used narrative inquiry as proposed by Tidwell and Jónsdóttir (2020). They argue that “text is used

as a secondary source to help inform the initial analysis of audio or video data”. To elicit the data, I listened to audio recordings of conversations and compiled lesson narrative (see Chapter four). This research approach further allowed me to make use of art-based data generative methods such as memory drawing, artefacts, photographs and self-box.

2.2.2 Interpretive paradigm

Andrade (2009, p. 43) states that interpretive research “assumes that reality is socially constructed and the researcher becomes the vehicle by which this reality is revealed”. The approach that I adopted was consistent with the selected theoretical framework as it was characterised by interactions. When this research paradigm is employed, the researcher interprets the data based on in-depth analysis of the phenomenon under study; hence, each key thematic pattern that is identified is supported by a large body of scholarly data. When I conducted this study, all identified and interpreted key concepts were critically analysed for in-depth discussion.

2.2.3 Self-study research

Anderson-Patton and Bass (2002) explain that self-study research is a methodological approach that enables individual educators to examine their teaching practice and it is done collaboratively to transform undesirable components of teaching practice. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001, p. 20) state that “the aim of self-study research is to provoke, challenge, and illuminate rather than confirm and settle”. I therefore worked collaboratively with critical friends (Master degree students and my colleagues) to transform and improve my classroom practice. According to LaBoskey (2004), although self-study research focuses is on ‘self’, interactions with others are vital so that one benefits from diverse viewpoints.

Self-study research methodology is grounded in reflective practice as one must constantly consider how and why one does certain things (Lunenburg & Samaras, 2011). Masinga (2009) notes that this approach involves critically examining what influences one’s thinking, the way one acts, and how one interacts with others. This research methodology was applicable to my study and I set research questions that enabled me to reflect on certain events in my personal history and how these had shaped and informed my knowledge of positive learner behaviour. I also reflected constantly on my teaching and assessment approaches with the intent of identifying gaps.

LaBoskey (2004) maintains that self-study research is self-initiated and self-focused, while Feldman (2003, p.5) refers to this as “personal situated inquiry”. This study was about me as a teacher and how I functioned within my teaching context. I thus explored past schooling encounters to determine how they had shaped my understanding of positive learner behaviour. To recall my schooling experiences, I used various self-study data tools that enabled me to engage in effective and purposeful reflection. I initially formulated key research questions to consider my practice as a teacher and I based the findings on observations and personal encounters. I was concerned about learners’ misbehaviour in my school, which was a concern that led me to explore ways to cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching. The intention was also to encourage personal growth as a classroom teacher and manager.

As advised by LaBoskey (2004), I sought to transform and improve my practice as a novice teacher by evaluating my assessment approaches and teaching methodology as I desired to positively impact my learners’ performance as well as my classroom practice. I hope that the outcomes of this study will contribute to the learning of other teachers, specifically those who are new in the professions. I also hope that school management teams will learn from the findings and understand how they can cultivate positive behaviour in their classrooms.

According to Samaras (2011), self-study research needs to be interactive and utilise collaborative inquiry as this approach contributes to the validity of the research findings. As the process of making meaning is not dependent only on one’s personal views, eradicating biasness in the study is important. I worked with numerous colleagues, specifically those who had been teaching for more than five years and I shared my learning and teaching experiences with them. They were able to lend me an ear and shared productive ways in which I could cultivate positive behaviour through my teaching. When confused and derailed, I consulted my critical friends who provided constructive feedback. Samaras and Robert (2011) highlight that working with others helps extend and transform one’s understanding. My critical friends were fellow Master’s degree students, the Care and Support for Teaching and Learning group, and colleagues at my school.

Using the self-study methodology as a teacher significantly impacts one's professional growth, teaching practices and learners' learning outcomes. Tidwell and Jónsdóttir (2020) assert that when self-study is done correctly and effectively, it leads to informed and enhanced teaching practice and improved self-awareness and reflection. Samaras (2011) further advice that it is

through self-study research that teachers can work to improve their expertise, with the intent of positively affecting learners learning and moreover impacting policy decisions and education system. Using the self-study methodology, I hoped to understand my learners' learning needs better, improve self-awareness, enhance teaching practice, and contribute to the broader educational community through shared research findings. Alluded by Hamilton et al. (2008) the intention of the self-study methodology is to positively contribute to the professional learning base establishing deeper understanding of the educational world.

Samaras (2011) alludes that integrity and authenticity are crucial components of self-study research. Furthermore, Feldman (2003) maintains that self-study research is self-initiated and motivated. In conducting my research study to ensure authenticity I ensured that the research questions were aligned with both my personal history and professional learning objective. In doing my self-study research I continuously reflected on my research questions and research objectives. The study followed the elements of self-study as presented by Feldman (2003) see pg. 34.

2.3 Location and Nature of the Study Site

This study was conducted in a semi-urban secondary school located in the heart of Greytown. The school is administered by the Umvoti cluster and is a multi-racial government school. It is a quintile 4 school that does not provide any feeding scheme for learners. The secondary component is a full-service school that caters for all learning needs regardless if learners are classified as slow, average, or high flyers. The school has sufficient resources to cater for the needs of all its learners. The school utilises the services of an onsite social worker and has a strong relationship with the local police.

The school is rich in diversity in terms of both learners and staff members. At the time of the study, the teaching staff consisted of 45 Black Africans and a few Indian teachers. The school accommodated 1 190 learners who were mostly Zulu-speaking Africans, with the minority being Indians and Coloureds. Due to an increase in learner enrolment in 2024, each classroom needed to accommodate as many as 45 learners. The SMT consisted of an African male Principal and two Deputy Principals, an Indian male and an Indian female. The school had four Heads of Department: three Indian females and one African male. My research study involved learners from two classes: grade 8C with 45 African male and female learners and grade 8F,

which was my Natural Sciences class that consisted of 40 male and female learners (30 African, 9 Indian, and 1 Coloured). In reference to the above mentioned, the number of learners in the class is not fixed as learners are during terms are changed from one class to the next.

2.4 Research Participants

2.4.1 Teacher-researcher participant

Samaras and Robert (2011) note that change comes from the inside out; therefore, as a novice teacher, I needed to improve the quality of my teaching practice to enhance student learning. My concern for the future of the learners at the school prompted this self-initiated study. Hamilton, Smith, and Worthington (2008) state that self-study researchers critically examine their values and teaching practice with the intention of realising growth. As the main participant, I was a novice teacher who had been teaching for three years. I taught Life Sciences (grade 12) and Natural Sciences (grades 8 and 9).

As the main participant in this research study, the first research question had to be addressed from my personal perspective: *“What can I learn from my personal history about positive learner behaviour?”* To answer this question, I used artefact retrieval and memory drawing to recall my own past schooling encounters that were both positive and negative and to determine how these had influenced me as a teacher. I also answered the second research question: *How can I cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching?* To answering this research question, I interacted with colleagues and critical friends to learn more about effective classroom practices that would assist me in cultivating positive behaviour through my teaching. They offered constructive criticism and advised me on ways to address challenges related to learner misconduct. They also guided me to use the Department of Basic Education policies to address learner misbehaviour.

2.4.2 Learner participants

My other study participants were my learners in grade 8F (40 learners) and grade 8C (45 learners). My learners assisted me by being present in class, and through their participation and change in attitude and behaviour that, I used to assess the effectiveness of the study.

2.4.3 Critical friends

This self-study enabled me to become an agent of change within my educational context as the methodology I employed guided me to learn from my personal history. However, Samaras and Robert (2011, p. 2) note that “self-study requires critical collaborative inquiry”, which means that one cannot conduct self-study research without the support and contributions of critical friends. Samaras and Robert (2011) explain that critical friends are there to question, provide clarification where necessary, and offer alternative perspectives to enrich those of the researcher. Samaras (2011, p. 5) defines critical friends as “trusted colleagues who seek support and validation of their research to gain new perspectives in understanding and reframing their interpretations”. Critical friends were therefore invited to share their ideas and provide a space for positive engagement that eventually served to transform my practice. My critical friends were Master’s degree students in the Teacher Development Studies discipline who were also engaging with self-study research in different educational contexts and with different research topics. We met bi-weekly via Zoom meetings. These critical friends assisted in the development of my research objectives and questions, allowed me to share my research findings, gave feedback, asked questions, and commented constructively on my work.

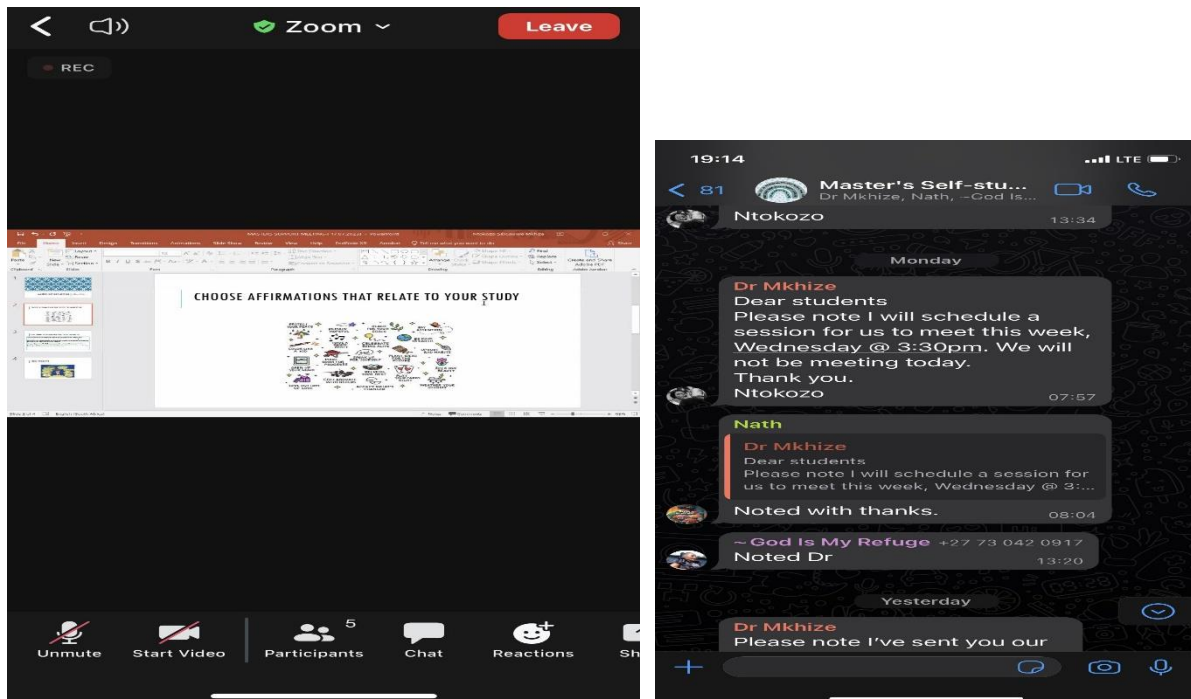


Figure 2.1: Screenshot of Zoom meeting and WhatsApp conversation

My critical friends also included some of my colleagues from school namely the Deputy Principal, Mrs Ramo (pseudonym) who had been teaching for more than 15 years, Mr Pawulo (pseudonym), a Mathematics teacher who had five years’ teaching experience and who had

been voted by the school as the Number 1 maths teacher, and Miss Thusi (pseudonym), a novice teacher who taught Hospitality Studies. We shared our ideas on various methods for cultivating positive behaviour in the classroom and explored various ways in which we could address learner misbehaviour such as bullying, vandalism, and non-submission of homework.

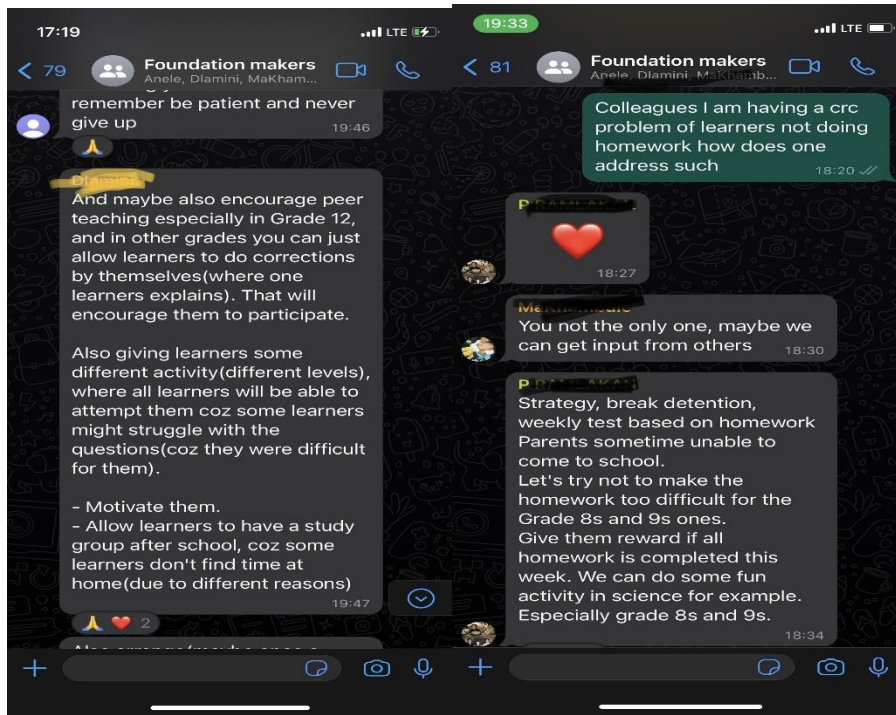


Figure 2.2: Screenshot of a WhatsApp conversation between me and my colleagues

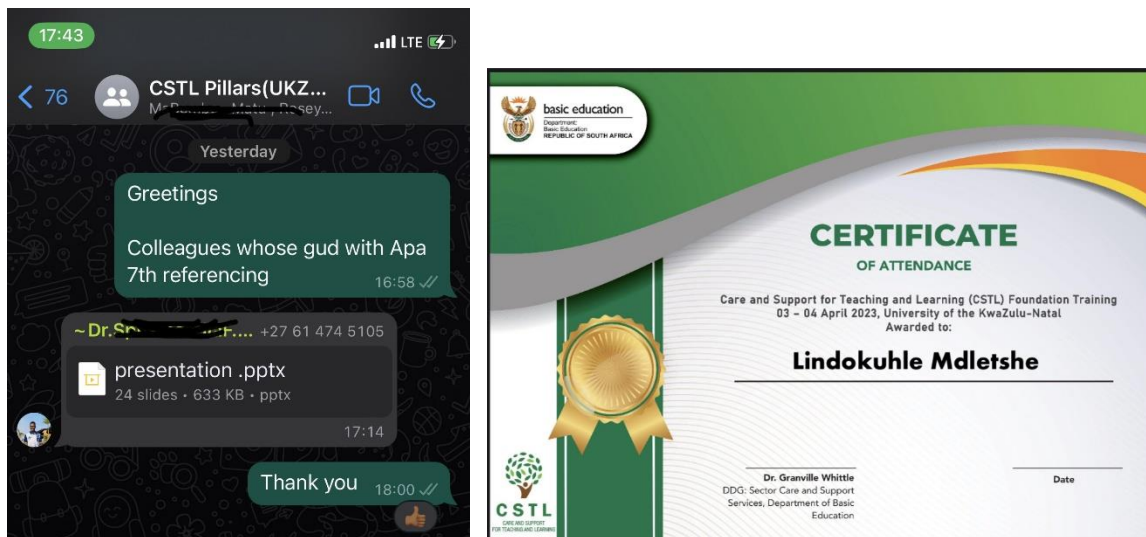


Figure 2.3: Screenshot of a group WhatsApp conversation and a Certificate of Attendance

2.5 Data Generation

2.5.1 Memory drawing

Self-study is a research approach that enabled me as an individual to critically reflect on my actions and professional values to understand and improve my practice. Reflection is crucial in self-study research and can be achieved through revisiting one's memories. As highlighted by Ovens and Tinning (2009), participants in memory-work write narratives of recalled experiences. The purpose is to enable researcher-teachers to learn from their personal histories and experiences. Mitchell and Weber (1999) propose that teachers use drawings as a means of reflection to learn from themselves and others. Memory drawing is not just a simple drawing, but requires participants' critical reflection on their drawings through writing about it and sharing their thoughts with others. Luthuli (2016) in his study made use of this self-study data generative method noting that the method increases learning by using artistic drawings as a means of expression. Furthermore, Luthuli (2016) point out that drawing can be used to stimulate memories.

As the main study participant I used memory-work to answer the first research question: *What can I learn from my personal history about positive learner behaviour?* To reflect on my personal history, I used stick drawings as recommended by Pithouse-Morgan et al. (2019). I created memory drawings of events that in my earlier life that shaped my thinking. I first drew a picture of a life-changing moment we I was still at school. To ensure that I recalled the event accurately, I sat alone in the classroom which helped me to recall the feelings and emotions I experiences when the incident occurred. I drew the classroom as I remembered it; the seating arrangement, the chalkboard, the teacher, the cane, and myself. As I drew the incident, I recalled the harsh words the teacher had used prior to lashing me and how they had impacted me throughout my high school life. I could not forget the smiles and laughter of my classmates as she lashed out and embarrassed me in front of everybody. I drew a thought bubble and inserted words to show how I felt during the incident.

I applied the same method in the classroom when I asked my learners to reflect on both positive and negative experiences involving teachers. This allowed me to understand how certain events

made them feel and, if they were positive, I adopted these to my teaching approaches. If the experiences were negative, I learnt from them and explored ways in which circumstances could have been handled better for the benefit of both the learner and the teacher. Mitchell et al. (2011, p. 25) argue that “drawing as a research method is more than just making drawings. It entails participants drawing and talking (or writing) about the meaning embedded in their drawings”. I took this advice and presented my learners with opportunities to share their insights with the rest of the class.

2.5.2 Photographs of artefacts

My interest in using artefacts as a means of reflection was ignited by one of my Honours degree lecturers who used an artefact to highlight meaningful events and experiences in her life. As explained by Mitchell et al., (2009), artefacts can ignite childhood memories. In Chapter three I identify artefacts that had a significant impact on my life. I present them to indicate how they assisted me in recalling past experiences and how these experiences had shaped my thinking about both negative and positive school experiences. The negative experiences helped me to learn from the mistakes my teachers had made and I endeavoured to change this negativity to positive experiences. The positive experiences were then used as stimuli to cultivate positive behaviour. I took photographs of these artefacts that served as recollections of my adolescent history and that reminded me of what had informed my present self. Mkhize (2016) acknowledges the pivotal role of artefacts in reliving and recalling past personal encounters. Noting “ I used artefacts to provoke my memories and reflect on my past experiences”(Mkhize 2016,pg 23).

2.5.3 Memory box

Naicker (2014) describes the memory box as a physical box that can be used to store any object/s of significance. I was initially introduced to the concept of a memory box during my Honours degree in Teacher Development Studies (TDS). The objects that I placed in the box evoked memories of significant value in my life and helped me to understand what had shaped me to become the teacher I was. In Chapter three I discuss the memory box as a reflective method in more detail. I used the memory box to answer the first research question to illuminate what I had learnt from my personal history about positive learner behaviour.

2.5.4 Audio recordings

Audio recording of some lessons I conducted involving my learner participants helped me to record, analyse, and store data. Masinga (2012) avers that learner participants can serve as a third ear to allow the re-visitation of classroom discussions and further clarification. By involving my learners and recording their voices, I gained in-depth understanding of their emotions during our discussions. Masinga (2012) also expresses that using audio recordings enables researchers to gain much deeper understandings as they can revisit the data generation process. I discuss the audio recording I made in depth in Chapter four, explaining that audio recordings were a source of reference for all the engagements that took place in the classroom. They allowed me to reflect on my practice and to understand where I had gone wrong and how I could improve and cultivate more positive learner behaviour through my teaching. Mkhize-Mthembu (2022) avers that audio recordings enable us to replay and further highlight critical points, and I used this method to share my findings with my critical friends during meetings and to obtain constructive feedback from them.

2.5.5 Collage making

I also created collages as Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010, p. 2) advise. They explain that collage making is “the process of using fragments of found images or materials and gluing them to a flat surface to portray phenomena”. It entails the cutting out and pasting of pictures on a sheet of paper to represent a certain idea. By creating collages, I allowed my learners to work in groups to highlight what they deemed positive and negative behaviour. This activity is discussed in Chapter five. Pithouse (2007) acknowledges the important role of collage making in self-study research pointing out that the data generative method gives a clear image of the researchers learning experiences. Further alluding “I saw the collage as a medium through which my reader and I could enter into the particularity and complexity of my experience and open it up for ongoing questioning and meaning making”(Pithouse 2007,pg 44)

Constructing collages was a process that facilitated positive learner engagements while they contributed to our learning as certain topics were elucidated that highlighted key themes pertaining to the research topic. The collages also stimulated collaborative learner participation and ensured that the learners learned from one another. Butler-Kisber (2008, p. 265) explains that a collage “can mediate understanding in new and interesting ways for both the creator and the viewer because of its partial, embodied, multifocal, and nonlinear representational

potential” (see Chapter six). In brief, I made use of collage making to elucidate key patterns and key themes that emerged from the data.

2.5.6 Reflective journal writing

As explained by Meyer and Wills (2019), journaling allows for reflection and enables researchers to recall experiences they might have dismissed during discussions or field activities. Pithouse (2007) explains that journal reflection is a method of data production and collection. Luthuli (2016) in his study outlines that “ I recorded in my journal the highlights of what transpired during meetings and discussions with participants as well as critical friends”. I used reflective journal writing to note down important discussions that took place in the meetings that I attended. There was a school accountability meeting where teachers shared various ways that they will be using to improve learner results. In chapter four, I also used journal writing to recall thought provoking discussions that took place in the classroom. I further used journaling for narrative writing of the lessons I conducted in my chapter four. In chapter five I used excerpts from my journal to reflection to analyse key themes, understand my role in the learning community and identify new learnings.

Table 3.1: Summary of the data generation tools and process

Research Question	Data Generation Activities	Participants	Data Sources
<i>1) What can I learn from my personal history about positive learner behaviour?</i>	a) I made use of drawings to reflect on my past schooling experiences. Drawing one life changing moment that shaped me as a teacher. My learners made use of this method as well reflecting specific event which has shaped their	a) My learners and me	a) Memory drawing. Reflective journal writing. b) Audio recording.

	<p>perception about behaviour in the classroom.</p> <p>b) I recorded discussions which took place with my critical friends and reflected on my life experiences using reflective journal writing.</p> <p>c) I used a memory box by putting objects in it which had significant value in my life. I explore my emotions evoked by these objects and recorded them in writing.</p> <p>d) I also used artefact retrieval as a reflective method. I collected photographs of objects that evoked memories of my experiences as a learner at school.</p>	<p>b) Me</p> <p>c) Me</p>	<p>Reflective journal writing.</p> <p>c) Memory box</p> <p>d) Artefact retrieval</p>
<p>2) <i>How can I cultivate positive learner behaviour through my</i></p>	<p>a) Working with learners we constructed collages of classroom rooms we also then made use</p>	<p>a) My learners and me</p>	<p>a) Collage inquiry. Reflective journal writing</p>

<p><i>teaching?</i></p>	<p>of collage making in summarising lesson and learners presenting.</p> <p>b) I kept track of classroom discussion which took place by writing down key discussions and further make use of audio recordings to record classroom discussion</p>	<p>b) Me and my learners.</p>	<p>b) Audio recordings Journal writing.</p>
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2.6 Extracting Meaning: Data Analysis and Interpretation

To generate data that would address the first research question concerning my personal history, I made use of various research tools, one of which was collage making. Davis (2008) describes a collage as pieces of images pasted on a sheet that generate new and holistic understanding. This method of data generation enabled me to visualise my learning and, by creating the collage, I was able to revisit the main purpose of my study. By cutting out and pasting various pictures on a sheet, I was able to reflect on what had informed my knowledge of learner behaviour. I used collage making to paste pictures that carried learning from my research study, collectively these pictures carried meaning, experiences, and lessons learnt. This process inspired me to share my learning experiences with my colleagues and to highlight the crucial role teachers play in learners' lives. My collage illuminated how words and actions may contribute to learners' academic performance and build their self-esteem. LaBoskey (2004) explains that self-study research is interactive. To illustrate, I made an audio recording of myself sharing my experiences with my fellow colleagues, which I later shared with my supervisor. I also made use of memory self-box, where I reflected on personal encounters, in looking back I was concerned with understanding how my personal history has influenced my meaning of behaviour. Learning from these experiences I intended to improve my teaching

practice and make my classroom a positive one through cultivating positive behaviour in my teaching.

To answer my second research question, I used collage making and could illustrate Various ways in which I cultivated positive behaviour through my teaching. Throughout the data analysis process, I was concerned about analysing patterns and themes. To narrow down my data and findings for the second research question that explored the cultivation of positive learner behaviour, I made use of concept mapping. Daley (2004) notes that concept mapping can be used to reduce data further by analysing themes and finding interconnections in research. My understanding of how to cultivate positive learner behaviour in the classroom came from workshops that I attended, school-based meetings led by Department heads, meeting with school-based critical friends, interactions with my colleagues, teacher-based groups on social media platforms, my schooling experiences, and from my learners. Concept mapping enabled me to reduce these data and identify key themes in the data. Furthermore, I made use of journal writing as a method of narrating my lessons. These lessons formed a crucial part of my data generative method. I reflected on these lessons highlighting key-learnings, personal and professional discoveries and gaps in my practices. Furthermore, narrating my lessons enabled me to reflect on my participants and how they have contributed to my professional learning.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

All researchers are expected to adhere to ethical requirements in their research study, particularly when the study involves animals, adults, and children. Samaras (2011) notes that researchers must respect the rights, privacy, and confidentiality of their participants. My research participants were informed of their rights and the confidentiality of their responses at all times. My study followed the self-study methodology and I was the main participant. Prior to conducting this study, I obtained approval from the Department of Basic Education as I would work in a school and involve minor learners. I also obtained ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Once the study was approved, I presented the letter to my principal and the School Governing Body (SGB). Consent forms were signed by all the participants and the parents of the learners. Prior to their consent, I wrote a letter to the parents informing them about the nature, aim, and focus of the study. I detailed the role of the learners and explained that they had the right to withdraw at any time and that their participation would not negatively influence their academic performance in any way (Appendix A). I also issued an informed consent form (Appendix B) to each learner in understandable language to

articulate their role in the study and to explain its focus and aim. I also verbally gave learners a clear understanding of their role and how this study would impact them positively by improving our learning space.

Instead of using real names, I made use of pseudonyms to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. Where pictures are used in the dissertation, the faces of the learners are hidden and their names were removed from the work that I use as examples. The same applied to my critical friends and others who assisted me during the study. All identities are hidden and pseudonyms are used.

2.8 Trustworthiness and Validity

As explained by Feldman (2003), to cause change it is important that self-study research provides reasons for others to trust the findings. To ensure the trustworthiness of my study, I adhered to the four guidelines of self-study research as presented by Feldman (2003). For instance, I provide a clear and unambiguous description of the data generation tools and methods and explain that I relied on multiple sources of data. These included photographs of artefacts (to reflect on my experiences as a learner), memory drawing (to evoke emotions from both my learners and myself), journal writing (to keep track of important discussions), collage making (To summarise emerging themes), and audio recordings (that were stored on my phone and laptop to ensure data authenticity and recall). All these methods assisted me in answering both the research questions.

To further ensure the validity of the study, I kept track of the research findings and how these contributed to my professional and personal learning. I then shared my findings with colleagues, critical friends, and the supervisor. As noted by LaBoskey (2004), self-study is interactive, hence sharing the findings elicited constructive discussions with my colleagues. Feldman (2003) recommends that validity in self-study research can be enhanced being honest and open about the way the data were generated. I made use of lesson narratives, to provide a thorough description of what took place in my classroom and my learning experiences during each lesson, and I also engaged in journal reflection to explore the challenges and successes accomplished in each lesson. According to Feldman (2003), to ensure validity in self-study research, one should provide evidence of the value the changes we adopted brought to us as teacher educators. Therefore, I shared the difficulties I had encountered and the positive lessons that I had learnt with and from my learners with critical friends. I also shared how my

perception of behaviour had altered and explained that my aspiration was that other teachers should learn from my experiences to their benefit.

2.9 Research Challenges

The first challenge was the issue of time, and it remained prevalent during the course of this study. Advised by a critical friend, I spent at least six hours daily on my study, but it became impractical as I had to juggle my work hours, extra tuition, and babysitting hours. During these activities, I could not engage with my studies. I was also a member of the School Governing Body (Teacher Representative), and occasionally attended meetings from 15:30 to 18:00. All this affected my working pace and the timeframe that I had set.

During the period of this study, I also experienced many unforeseen circumstances, and I was hospitalised for one week. This prevented me from working and submitting tasks on time. I also needed a period of full recovery which took a few weeks. The issue of load shedding remained a big concern, as it also affected my working pace. During the period of load shedding I had no network connectivity, preventing me from meeting with my critical friends via online channels. During the course of the study, two of my laptops became dysfunctional, this impacted the timeframe I had stipulated for my study.

Another unforeseen challenge that I encountered was the issue of learner's behaviour in certain classes. The learners were used to a different method of addressing learners' misconduct within the classroom, which often involved punishment. When this was no longer being enforced, they perceived the classroom as not having any consequences. They started not doing homework and causing disturbance in the classroom. This made working with them extremely hard, as even the school policy did not set clear consequences of learner offences, and how these should be addressed.

Given a second opportunity to conduct this study, I would look into only teaching the senior phase as these do not require one to commit any extra tuition which is done during afterschool hours and weekends. I would familiarise myself with the South African schooling policy exploring various ways in which I can address issues within the classroom. This would better equip me in the classroom as a novice teacher.

2.10 Conclusion

I began this chapter by advocating the importance of self-study research as my research methodology. This was further followed by a brief description of the context in which the study was conducted on. Thereafter, I explained who the participants in the study were, and their role. Furthermore, I discussed who were my critical friends and the contributions that they made towards my study. Proceeding this was an articulation of how data was collected for this research study. Lastly, I explained ethical issues related to my study, how I ensured trustworthiness, and the challenges I encountered in conducting my self-study.

My key learning in drafting this chapter is that through self-study research I was able to critique, analyse, and evaluate myself as a professional. As a novice teacher, I gained new insight and understanding of the value of the teaching profession through determinedly examining my teaching practice. Through self-study, I was able to transform myself as a teacher, transforming my teaching and how I perceive my learners. Through collaboration, I learnt that I was not alone, and that my colleagues were my pillar of strength. I learnt that no man was an island, and that working together we would achieve the greater good.

In the following chapter, I recall past lived schooling experiences, and explore how these shaped me as an educator, through recalling these encounters. I attempted to understand what informed me as a teacher about positive learner behaviour. To relive these experiences, I made use of various self-study data generative methods.

CHAPTER THREE

EVOKING MY MEMORIES OF ALMOST-FORGOTTEN CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this self-study research was to enable me to reflect on my personal schooling experiences so that I would be able to cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching. In the previous chapter I presented my research methodology and the research context. I briefly elucidated the three key research participant groups and discussed the data generation methods. I acknowledged the challenges I had encountered during the study and described how I had mitigated them. In this chapter I present data that address the first research question: *What can I learn from my personal history about positive learner behaviour?*

This study adopted the sociocultural theory as posited by Vygotsky (1978). According to Gee (2008), the sociocultural perspective looks at knowledge and learning in terms of the relationship between an individual and the environment in which the individual thinks and acts. Murphy and Ivinon (2003) argue that how one thinks is strongly influenced by one's immediate social environment and the activities one performs with others. According to the sociocultural approach, the environment is not only limited to the physical, but also includes historical and social surrounds. Murphy and Ivinon (2003) explain that the learner brings to the classroom the norms, standards, and values of the community, and these influences directly impact the nature of the learner's participation and ability to learn. Therefore, in my context, how I act as a teacher is strongly influenced by those that I am in constant interaction with. For example, my knowledge of classroom management has been strongly influenced by my colleagues, earlier experiences, and my parents.

To respond to the first research question, I reflected on both positive and negative encounters that I had experienced as a learner. Although I reflected on some primary school experiences, I predominantly focused on some pertinent high school encounters. I also recalled some encounters that had occurred at home and considered carefully how these had shaped my perception and understanding of learner behaviour. To re-live these past experiences in this chapter, I used photographs, memory drawings, artefact retrieval, a memory box, and concept mapping. These data generation methods ignited almost-forgotten feelings as they allowed me

to listen to my inner voice. Weber and Mitchell (2002) allude that the main aim of critical memory-work is to learn from one`s personal encounters in the past to improve the present and the future. This research methodology places much emphasis on teachers as reflectors of their practice; hence, as I recalled some negative lived experiences, I learnt to avoid making the same mistakes in my classroom while I also learnt from some positive experiences how to cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching

This chapter commences with my memories of some lived experiences that occurred within my family. Although my granny played a primary role in shaping my perceptions of positive behaviour, members of my family also had a tremendous impact on my thinking and my actions as an individual. These encounters and learnings were, according to the sociocultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1974), the first sphere of influence that I encountered at a young age. I also recall pertinent past primary school encounters. To reignite some almost forgotten memories, feelings, and emotions, I used memory drawings and artefact retrieval. The reader will note that I paid much attention to my grade 2 teacher. I also explored my childhood by recalling what I had learnt from some secondary school encounters. In this process, I made use of a memory box and photographs of artefacts to relive these impactful experiences.

3.2 My First Sphere of Influence: My Granny



Figure 3.1: My grandmother and some close family members

The picture in Figure 3.1 was taken at my granny's house where I grew up. In the picture are me, my mother, two sisters, a cousin, and my granny. It was taken just after we had returned from a family gathering. My in-depth reflection on this photograph was a powerful method of data generation. Tidwell and Jónsdóttir (2020) explain that the use of photographs makes the researcher's voice visible, while Magubane (2014) notes that photographs elicit memories. I made use of this data generation method to reflect effectively and purposely on what I had learnt based on my past experiences.

I grew up in Maphumulo, a rural area in KwaZulu-Natal near Stanger. Just like many South African rural areas, my childhood stamping ground was populated by middle- to low-income Black families. During my childhood, many residents were elderly and few could join the workforce. This may be attributed to apartheid policies that determined town planning. Apartheid was a system that enforced racial segregation as it encouraged White supremacy and Black inferiority (Posel, 2001), hence Black people were forced to live far from the central business districts of towns and cities. Even in post-apartheid South Africa, many Black people still live in rural areas, but many have migrated to urban areas in search of better job opportunities.

In my family, the main bread winner was my granny, who was a retired teacher. During the prime of her life she was a Life Sciences (then referred to as Biology) teacher in the apartheid era, and I believe that she was my inspiration to become a teacher. I also stayed with my grandfather who was a herdsman at heart. He was well-disciplined and a soldier during the apartheid era. My two older brothers also formed part of the family. We went to the same school and we shared many experiences. I hardly remember my uncle because he spent most of his life in prison. I mention him because I learnt many life lessons from him that I still adhere to. He was always regarded as the black sheep of the family and an example of what we should not do or become.

Gazing at this old photograph of my family, I recalled the life lessons I was taught by my grandmother. These were lessons of love, kindness, and hope. As I grew up, I kept these values close to my heart and believe that I have been manifesting them in my classroom. My granny's influence on my life has taught me that it is love that prompts me to accept children of all cultural, religious, and sexual orientations. Today, as an adult teacher, I kindly listen to my learners, show empathy when required, and offer advice when necessary. I also keep hope alive

by always anticipating a rainbow at the end of a storm. My lessons are constructed in such a manner that I teach my learners the values and skills they can enact within the wider society.

My granny's and family's influence on me was profound. For instance, one day I argued with one of my crèche teachers. She wanted us to sing the song *Sizinyoni thina sizinyoni*, which in English means *We are birds*. I was not willing to sing this song! I was four years old and attended crèche with two of my cousins. The teacher called my granny, and she came to school with a cane and gave me and my cousins a hiding. We still remember this punishment for our disobedience. I learnt from this experience that my granny was a genuine advocator of respect as her beliefs were grounded in the Christian belief that sparing the rod will spoil the child. Although she was strict, she always explained patiently to me what I had done wrong and insisted that, in future, I should know better and respond more appropriately.

I looked up to my granny for her wisdom and strength of character and her philosophy of life influenced my own. She undoubtedly contributed greatly to moulding my personal and professional identity and my perceptions of what is good and what is bad behaviour were all learnt from her. She also contributed significantly to my understanding of what misbehaviour is and how one should address it. As a novice teacher, I have employed her standards to determine what misbehaviour is and how one should deal with it.

3.3 My Primary School Years: Encounters with a Teacher Who Inspired True Greatness



Figure 3.2: Assembly area for grades 1 to 3 and my classroom block

I spent a few years in primary school in Maphumulo. The school was ranked quintile 2, which means that parents did not have to pay school fees. The school also provided us with breakfast

and lunch and sometimes with fruit during breaks. Just like most South African schools that are located in rural areas, this school was under resourced with congested classrooms and multi-grade teaching. The photograph above shows the junior block of the primary school I attended. It was here that grade 1 to 3 learners assembled in the morning and during recess. My classroom was in the block to the right.



Figure 3.3: *Gumboot dancing!*

The reflective drawing in Figure 3.3 above illustrates a gumboot dance my team mates and I performed during a much anticipated awards function. The three figures to my right represent my best classmates. According to Derry (2005), this arts-based method offers the reader a multi-layered perspective on the experiences of the researcher. The gumboot dance memory drawing illustrates a day when I was in grade 2 and we had just written a summative assessment test for the term. I was not the brightest learner in the class, but my class teacher had a way of boosting my confidence. At the end of each term we had an awards presentation function to celebrate learners who had achieved outstanding results. To participate in any activity such as singing, poetry recitation, and dancing at these functions, one had to attain high marks. I recalled my sadness when I knew that I was not going to perform the gumboot dance due to my low marks. However, my teacher motivated me to do better the following term by allowing me to perform at the function if I assured her that my marks would improve the next term. For me, performing was not only to entertain the audience, but also to make my grandmother proud. I recalled the smile on her face when I performed. It was my late grandfather who had

taught me the gumboot dance, and I knew that the performance would make my grandmother and brothers proud of me.

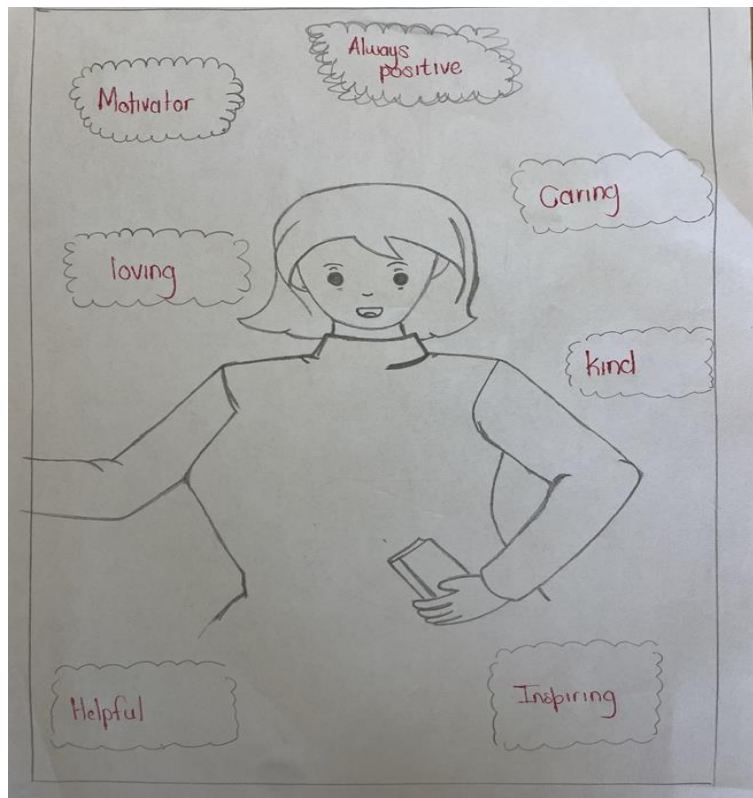


Figure 3.4: My primary school teacher and adjectives that describe her character

Above is a memory drawing of the primary school teacher who motivated and encouraged me. One lesson I learnt from this teacher is to be kind and to understand that learners are gifted differently and that their efforts should be celebrated regardless of these differences. As I recalled how the opportunity to perform had made me feel, I knew that I wanted to evoke the same feeling in my learners. Hence, to cultivate positive behaviour through my teaching, I applaud every effort my learners make, no matter how small. Instead of celebrating only outstanding achievements, I guide my learners to also applaud their most improved, most consistent, and most outstanding classmates. This approach ensures that learners with average marks are also made to feel recognised and appreciated.

Reliving my experiences using these memory drawings and the photograph of the school evoked numerous memories of my teacher. I reflected on her kind nature and remembered how she had cared for us as individuals and as a class. I smiled when I recalled her dancing when she was having a good day and the songs she taught us to memorise certain key concepts. I remembered how she was more than just a teacher; she was also our ‘mother’ as she cared for

us, loved us, celebrated our differences, strengthened our weaknesses, and made sure we left the classroom excited about the next day's lesson. I jotted down a few words that came to mind when I recalled her character and inserted them in the memory drawing above.

Samaras (2011) notes that self-study allows us to reflect on our past to improve our practice in the future. My primary school teacher therefore taught me that a teacher is more than just a leader in the classroom, as he or she is also a parent who listens, cares, loves, demonstrates kindness, and is assertive.

3.4 Learning from the Community: It Takes a Village to Raise a Child



Figure 3.5: Visiting a neighbour for a celebration

The above picture was taken when I revisited a neighbour and he and others celebrated my return. After reflecting on some primary school experiences and family encounters, I realised that it had taken more than these groups to shape the teacher that I had become. The sociocultural theory highlights the significance of social interaction in the growth of the child. Daniel (2001) notes that, as we grow up, we are supported by others such as our parents, teachers, friends, and community members.

I later moved from Maphumulo to Ntuzuma where I completed my primary and secondary school education. Ntuzuma D is a small township located on the outskirts of Durban North. The residents are predominantly low- and middle-class Africans who earn middle to low incomes. What struck me was that members of the community genuinely believed in the slogan:

Working together we can achieve more! This was visible in community structures such as the Community Forum and Doda Ndoda. These movements aimed to decrease crime in our community and to forge a sense of brotherhood amongst the men.

To relive my past experiences, I visited a neighbour who had been prominent in the community when I was a child. Upon my arrival, I noted that my visit would be celebrated in a ceremony and that I could renew my acquaintance with many people who had known me as I grew up. We laughed heartily as we recalled an incident that had occurred when I was probably in grade 7. I got into a fight with a guy in our neighbourhood who was much older than me. A very irate Auntie separated us and gave us each a memorable hiding. She emphasised that we should, at all times, respect one another and stated firmly that violence was never a solution. My neighbours and I laughed when we recalled what a little chancer I had been and how my sisters had supported me during the fight by throwing stones at the boy I was fighting with.

As I reflected on this experience, it dawned on me that no person is an island and that we all depend on others to grow and develop, whether that growth is personal or professional. I also came to understand that my role as a teacher is to encourage positive interactions among my learners. I am therefore there to scaffold my learners' learning and to provide them with advice that will contribute to them becoming worthy citizens. I learnt from my sisters who threw stones at the person I was fighting that establishing positive relations with family members creates an environment of support during hard times. In my classroom, I therefore aim to cultivate positive interactions that incite learners to support one another and I encourage parents to become involved in their children's education.

I also understand that when one oversteps the mark, there will be consequences. In the community where I lived as a child, the most severe consequence was corporal punishment which was always used to maintain order and to enforce discipline among the children. This habitual disciplinary measure initially informed my understanding of 'positive' behaviour and how discipline 'ought' to be maintained in the classroom. When I first entered the profession, I thought it would be appropriate to apply corporal punishment, but I learnt to acknowledge that I need to change as I came to understand that time and context had changed. In fact, some perceptions that were developed when I was a child are no longer relevant today, and I understand and respect the policy that no longer allows the use of corporal punishment in schools.

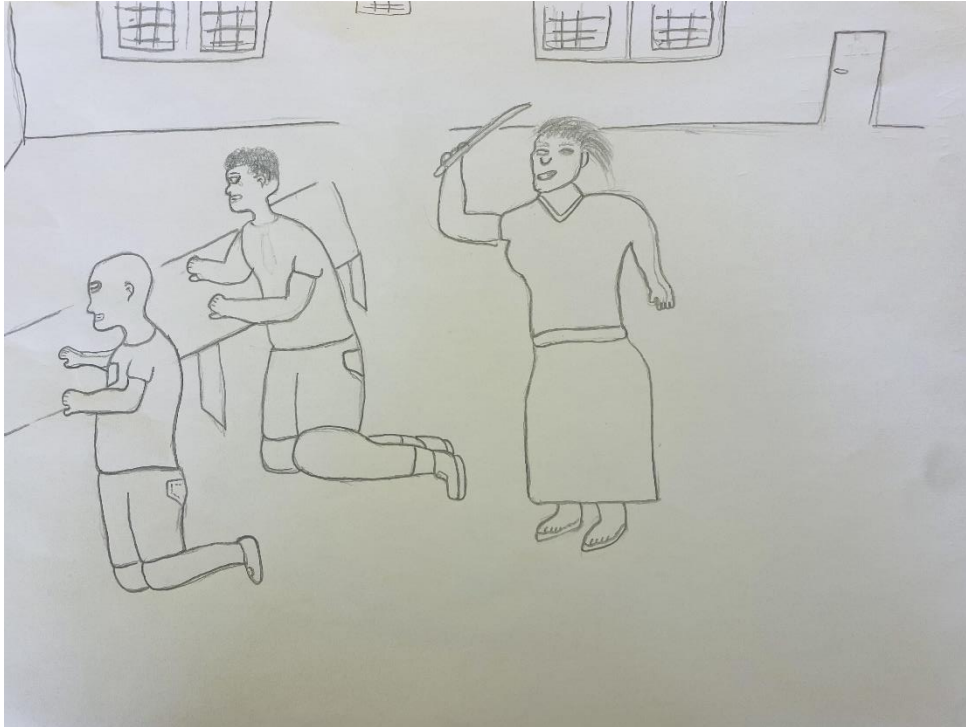


Figure 3.6: Corporal punishment to teach us not to fight

An older boy and I received what was probably a well-deserved hiding for fighting. This memory drawing (Figure 3.6) triggered how I felt at the time of the incident. Mlambo (2013) highlights that such drawings enable us to look back at almost forgotten experiences that still sit in our subconscious minds. Although it was painful and, yes, humiliating to receive a hiding, I understood that my grandmother was showing me love and care. The words she used to make us understand the error of our ways were to encouraged us to be united and supportive of one another. In the rural area where I grew up, children were raised to respect all adults and to perceive them as parents. As the grown-ups did not hesitate to administer corporal punishment to discipline misbehaving children, I was raised to believe that such punishment would be the answer to cure any form of misconduct.

To answer the first research question, I also visited my former secondary school to revive some memories, whether they were positive or negative, and to analyse them to understand how they had shaped me as a teacher. I took photographs of places and artefacts that jolted my memory. Mkhize (2016) notes that photographs can be used to stimulate our thoughts and stir our emotions. Mitchell et al. (2019) explain that exploring photographs will enable the self-study researcher to look back on the past as well as forward into the future. I therefore scrutinised photographs of places where I had spent time with my friends, the school garden, and my form

classroom and to reflect on some encounters when I attended secondary school, and I recalled these experiences to help me determine how I could improve as a classroom practitioner. Samaras (2011) notes that self-study is improvement focused, and I therefore critically reflected on my teaching with reference to my past experiences so that I could make better informed decisions.

When I was in secondary school, I moved from Maphumulo to Durban where I attended a multiracial school in the Berea area which is near the Durban CBD. Although it was a multiracial school that reflected the democratic racial dispensation, it was predominantly attended by Black African, Coloured, and Indian learners. Due to its advantaged location, the school was categorised as a quintile 4 school, which means it was a fee-paying school and it received limited resources from the Department of Basic Education (DBE). The teacher-learner ratio was 1:40. The school staff was also diverse and we were taught by Indian, Coloured, and a few African teachers.

3.5 Impactful Secondary School Memories: My Memory Box

According Naicker (2014), any suitable box can be filled with various items that tell parts of the researcher's story. I therefore placed items in a shoe box that represented key secondary school encounters. These items helped me to make meaning of what it was that had informed my 'becoming' as a teacher.



Figure 3.7: Memory box that elicited deep reflections on secondary school experiences

Upon reflection of the simple and unadorned memory box above, I realised that I had never had much, nor was I considered a physically attractive person. In fact, I was always reminded of my ordinary appearance inside and outside the classroom. My English teacher used to refer to me as a ‘weird-looking guy’. Initially, my ordinariness was just a joke, but it soon became my reality. Whenever I saw myself in the mirror, all I saw was a weird-looking boy and it was especially hurtful that it was my teacher who reminded me of this ‘reality’. I felt bullied, and the impact of this behaviour still plagues me to this day; even to the extent that I fear taking pictures of myself. On a positive note, this type of bullying made me realise the importance of addressing this issue in the classroom and on the school premises. I came to understand that words have the power to destroy or build a learner depending on how they are used.



Figure 3.8: Memory box with artefacts of my secondary school experiences

The artefacts I treasured and placed in the box represented authentic experiences of my years in secondary school. The simplicity and unadorned outside appearance of the box represent the emotional scars that were inflicted on me during my adolescent years in secondary school.

The first artefact I placed inside the box was a picture of my mother. She played a crucial role in my life as she was my mother, counsellor, mediator, and protector. She taught me the art of communication, the importance of being vocal, and the value of allowing my voice to be heard.

I remembered an incident when I was bullied by two boys in my neighbourhood. I ran home crying and she said: “Diba buyela emuva ufunde ukuzimela!” which means “Go back there and stand your ground!” I remember going back and chasing those guys off. Today, those two young men are two of my best friends.

Unpacking the learning experiences my mother instilled in me was crucial, as her influence was profound during the troublesome years of secondary school. During this phase of my life, I was living with her as my father was no longer there for me, and she played the role of advisor and counsellor. The experience I narrated above was one of many encounters that I believe moulded me to become the person I am today. Due to my weight and height, I was always picked on and bullied, especially during adolescence. However, my mother taught me that life is not about fighting, but rather about learning to stand my ground. This made me an extraordinarily strong person as I grew older. I felt as if she understood what I was going through as a kid and she helped me cope with bullying by encouraging me to always stand up for myself. As I reflected on the incident I narrated, I realised how it had shaped me as a classroom practitioner. At first, I responded very aggressively when learners bullied others and at times I would not forgive the bullies and treated them differently from their victims. I deprived them of certain privileges, but I did not realise that this was not the solution. Only when I reflected on my experiences with bullies did I realise that the solution was not rejection, but affirmation and assertiveness.

The second artefact which I placed inside my memory box was a watch. It was not the one I used to wear at school, but it was very similar. Samaras (2011) argues that an artefact is an object that has personal meaning for the researcher, be it a photograph or any other object that elicits memories and emotions. The watch reminded me of my Technology teacher, who was a man of God. We called him Mr Thomas as Thomas was a famous Biblical figure. During morning devotion, he would often read scripture from the Bible. One specific scripture that he read quite often was: “Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself”. I recalled one incident when he asked me why I always wore a watch. My response was that I wanted to keep track of time. He then told me something that completely changed my life. He said, “Time brings worry, worry brings fear, and in fear there is no faith”. He said there was no reason to keep track of time when you have no power over it. I took this to heart, and to date, I have not worn a watch again. He was more than a teacher to me, as he was someone I could count on to cheer up my day. He taught me that communication and motivation are

crucial for the cognitive and emotional development of a learner. I therefore employ his strategies in my daily teaching as I believe I may then positively impact my learners' education as well as the rest of their lives.

I also placed various stationery items like a ruler, pen, and colour markers in my memory box. I added these as they reminded me that I did not have much as an adolescent. I did not have a privileged background and struggled to purchase the necessary stationary. However, my learning environment encouraged us to share not only our ideas, but also the few pieces of stationary we had. Classmates seemed to understand this need, especially in grades 8 and 9 when we were still juniors. My grade 8 class teacher always emphasised that we should accept diversity, whether this was cultural or financial. She wanted us to love one another and treat others with respect. Her attitude taught me a lot, especially as I had been a victim of racism in my previous school. I hated learners of other races and assumed that everyone who was not African was a racist. However, my teacher changed my attitude as she encouraged learners of all races to work together and to befriend one another in her classroom. She created moments that I shall never forget as she made me feel equal to all others. I learnt that racism is exuded only by some individuals within a group, and not by everyone.

Making the memory box was a bitter-sweet moment as it simultaneously evoked pain and fond memories. It made me realise how traumatic bullying had been and how powerless I had felt. I recalled days when I cried myself to sleep because I felt unwanted and unattractive. What made it worse was that my sister had unknowingly become a part of it and I could not discuss it with anyone. However, as I placed the items in the memory box, I started to reflect on my strengths and to consider how, regardless of many challenges, I was able to persevere and to become the person that I am today. I realised that this experience was instrumental in making me a better teacher. I have become more thoughtful about what I say to my learners and I continuously remind them that we need to love one another regardless of our differences. I assure them that we are stronger together and that division makes us weak. I believe that being bullied broke me emotionally, therefore I never want to see any child experiencing such negativity.

3.6 The Impact of My Secondary School Friends on My Development



Figure 3.9: Entrance to the school's administrative offices where my friends and I often met

When I returned to the school as an adult and researcher, the first place that I noted was the entrance to the school where I had spent a lot of my time with friends. We used to call it the 'gaming zone' and I always felt welcome and accepted here. It was in this zone where I mostly interacted with my friends. This was also a space where I experienced healing as it was where I was able to share my views and feelings coherently. I had four special friends in secondary school whom I had known since primary school but their role became more prominent in my life in high school. As I stood at this entrance, I remembered a specific event that had occurred in grade 8. We had recently entered high school and we had to do a physical education task in the Life Orientation programme one lesson. We were all expected to wear shorts. I remember that everyone laughed at mine as my family could not afford to buy me new PT shorts. I was broken and humiliated. As I recalled this incident, tears welled up in my eyes, but then I remembered a friend who was my counsellor throughout secondary school. The advice he gave me during recess was compassionate and kind and he reminded me of how much my mother and grandmother loved and valued me. He said it was human nature to have opinions about other people's lives, but we had to believe in ourselves regardless of negativity. The mockery, bullying, and body-shaming continued for three years and this affected me emotionally and academically. However, my special friends played a crucial role as they comforted me and inspired me with their positive words and friendship. To escape reality, we mostly played games on our cell phones and found much joy in the challenges these games provided.

As I reflected on my secondary school memories, I began to understand the necessity of cultivating learners' positive behaviours. They need to respect one another and others regardless of race, family background, religion, and gender, and they must value one another.

Forging positive relations at an early age is therefore crucial. As the educator I have to be their source of learning and serve as a model of positive behaviour at all times. According to Vygotsky (1978), a child's learning begins when they interact with other people. I recalled the minimal support I had received from some of my high school educators and the impact it had had on me, and I now know that I want to be a completely different role model.

The motivational role my special friends played when I really had a hard time in high school made me realise the need to motivate my learners through kindness and consideration. This links directly to what Gee (2008) argues, which is that we learn through imitation, instruction, and collaborative learning. To cultivate positive behaviours in my learners, I as the teacher need to infuse them with positivity. Learning from my past has inspired the desire in me to be kind and to create a positive learning environment in my classroom where misconduct such as bullying and bunking will not be tolerated. I heed Luthuli's (2016) advice that professionals such as teachers, counsellors, and social workers should endeavour to establish positive behaviours in learners regardless of their circumstances.

3.7 Concept Mapping

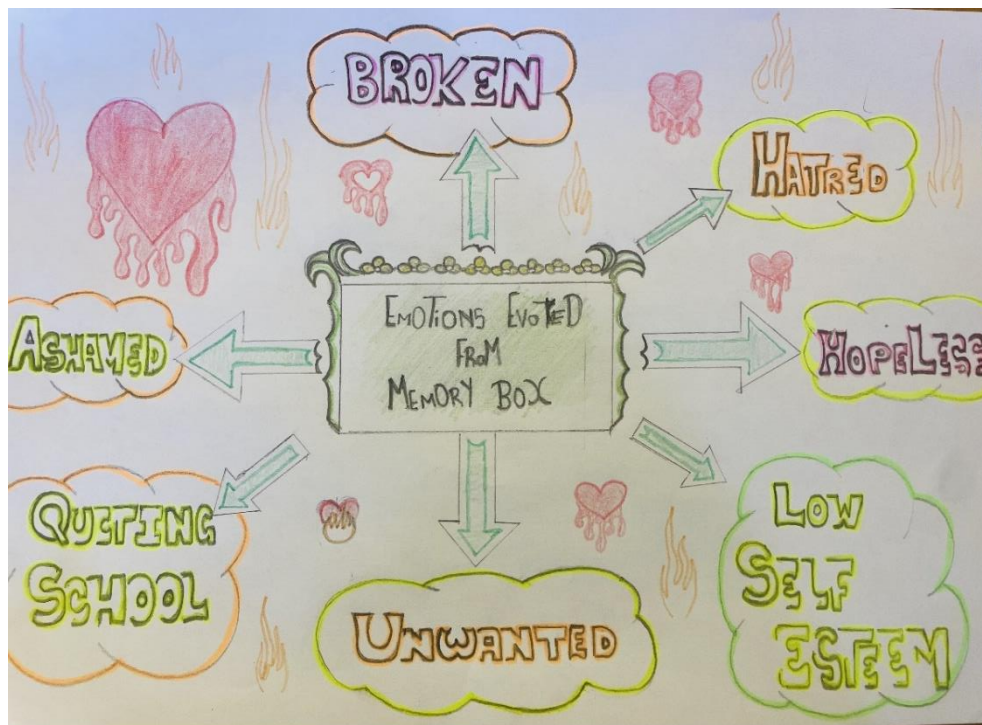


Figure 3.10: Concept map of the negative feelings that were evoked during my high school years

Buzan and Buzan (2003) explain that a concept map connects one's ideas and thinking. According to Moodley (2009), concept mapping can be used to illustrate different outcomes based on reflection and the evaluation of one's thoughts. My intention with the concept map was to visualise my learning, to present it to my critical friends while I articulated these learnings, and to explain how various experiences had shaped the teacher that stood before them. I therefore drew the concept map (Figure 3.10) to make my feelings more visible and to facilitate my in-depth evaluation of my childhood experiences. The negative emotions reflected in the concept map serve to remind me to abolish such negativity from my classroom and to always consider their positive antonyms.

3.8 Conceptualising the Key Lived Experiences of My Youth

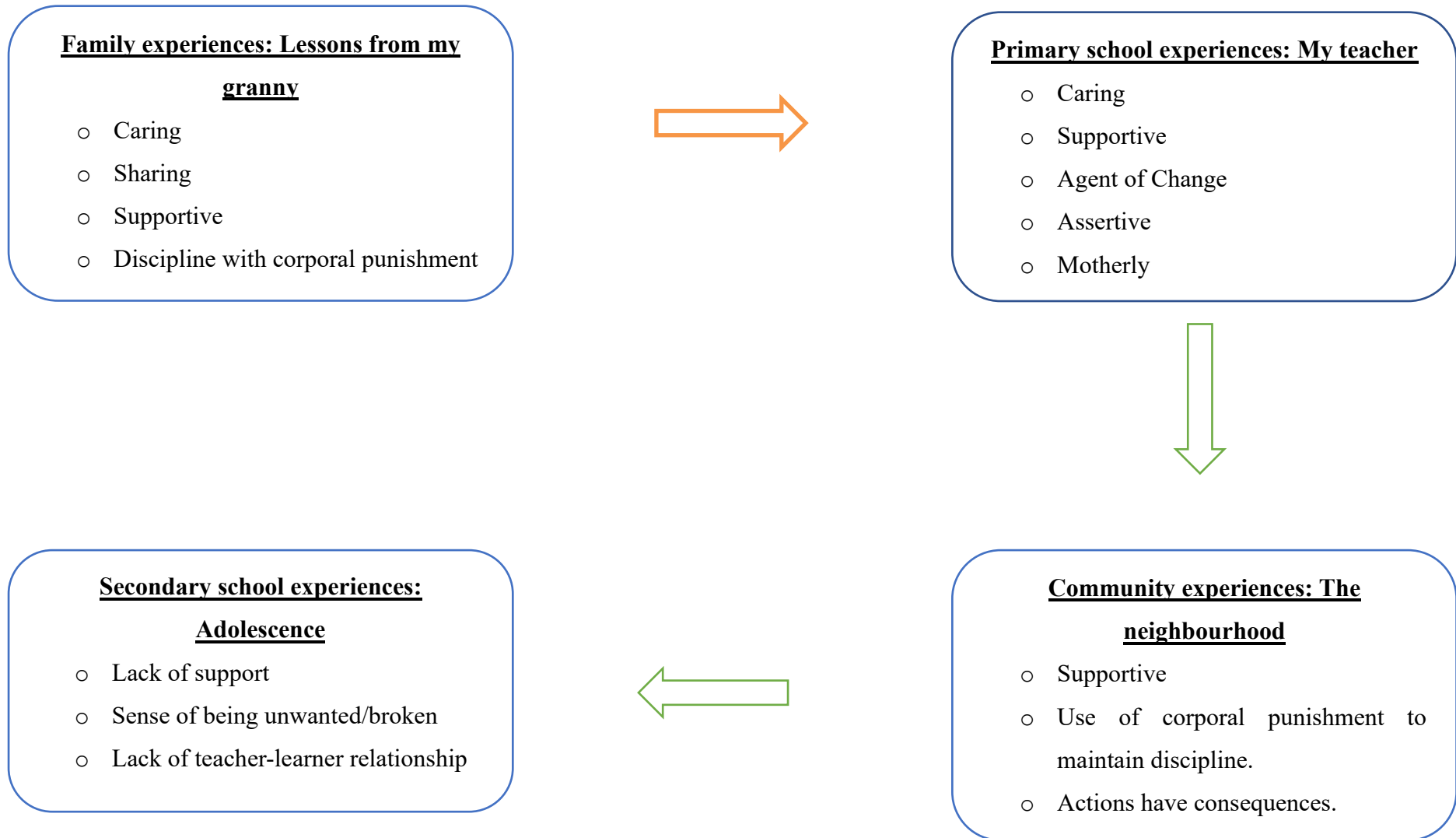


Figure 3.11: Diagram that summarises my learnings based on my childhood experiences

3.9 Conclusion

As I reflected on various encounters in primary and high school, I learnt that people in my immediate environment, namely family members and friends, were my first sphere of influence. It was also clear that their influence could be either positive or negative and that my beliefs and classroom practice as a teacher had undoubtedly been impacted by my upbringing. It was therefore natural to me to start the day in my classroom with prayer, which is something my granny inspired in me when I grew up. She loved and cared for me and now I love and show kindness to my own son and also to my learners in the classroom. I learnt that, as a teacher, I must establish a teaching and learning environment that promotes love, kindness and care as these have the potential to positively impact the behaviour of my learners both inside and outside the classroom. Self-reflection enlightened my insight that corporal punishment is no longer a tool to instil discipline but that positive reinforcement, kindness, compassion, and assertiveness are far better, and I therefore needed to change my approach to discipline for the better.

As I reflected on the role that my primary school teacher played in my life, I learnt to embrace the powerful attributes of a professional teacher. The most important is the conscious effort to inspire learners to become a better version of themselves, and in this process corporal punishment plays no role. I also learnt that positive behaviour can only be cultivated through positive experiences and that no person is an island as we rely on others to learn and grow. Vygotsky (1974) pertinently alludes to the fact that growth and development require interactions with others, hence such classroom practices enable learners to work together towards a common goal.

My lived experiences in secondary school also taught me valuable lessons such as that being with supportive friends can create a space for healing but that mockery and demeaning a child are abusive and cruel. My reflections illuminated my understanding of how I should cultivate positive learner behaviours through my teaching. My memories of how my mother and grandmother had raised me also gave me a clear understanding that learners require emotional support at all levels: at school, in the community, and in the family. This was a lesson that taught me to encourage and respect parental support for my learners and I thus set activities and assignments that require parental assistance. I also reflected on some positive experiences

in secondary school that I associated with kind teachers from whom I had learnt various methods that I could incorporate into my teaching to improve my practice and cultivate positive learner behaviour. It was especially Mr Thomas who taught me that the teacher is also a parent, a motivator, and a mediator. My recollections taught me that sharing words of wisdom and motivating learners play a crucial role in cultivating positive behaviour. Moreover, as I remembered the negative and unsupportive teachers who had touched my life, I was reminded of what not to do and how not to behave in the classroom. The concept map that I created consolidated my learning from my lived experiences, and I still utilise this illustration to map my behaviour in the classroom as it summarises my learning of how not to be and behave based on my past experiences.

In self-study research, we author our own questions concerned with our teaching practice. Samaras (2011) notes that self-study research accords the opportunity to reflect on lived experiences. In this research chapter, I critically reflected on my experiences with family, primary and secondary school teachers, friends, and community members who had shaped me to become the teacher that I am. I made use of several self-study data generation methods with the aim of reflecting on what I had learnt from my past experiences, to understand what it was that had informed me as a teacher, and to find ways in which I could cultivate positive behaviour through my teaching. In reliving these experiences, I was able to gain a clear understanding of my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. Learning from my past personal encounters, I was also able to generate new knowledge and understand how I could cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching. In Chapter four, I present the data that addressed the second research question.

CHAPTER FOUR

CULTIVATING POSITIVE BEHAVIOURS THROUGH MY TEACHING

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter three, I examined some lived experiences of my youthful self, using memory-based and arts-based methods as proposed by Yohani (2008). Mitchell et al. (2019, p. 10) note that “arts-based methodologies produce a richly emotive and embodied data set for practitioners to draw insight from and clarify clinical decision-making processes [that] ultimately better serve their clients”. To ensure the richness of my data, I used photographs, concept mapping, and memory drawings to illicit memories of past encounters. Through reflection, I was able to gain a deep understanding of what it was that had informed me as a teacher and where my understanding of behaviour had stemmed from. In essence, my recollections informed me of what had shaped me as a teacher. In this chapter, my main objective is to answer the second research question, which was: *How can I cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching?* Based on a reflective analysis process, I provide a thorough description of the lessons I prepared and taught to extract data for this self-study research. The lessons were conducted in English, which is the medium of instruction at the school where I teach. Where learners failed to answer certain questions in English and responded in their mother tongue, I translated those responses into English. I taught numerous lessons, but for the purpose of this study I discuss five.

4.2 Positive Learner Behaviour is Generated through Effective Lesson Planning

O'Brien (2013) avers that teachers need to define behaviour so that they are able to change their learners' behaviour and improve it where and when necessary. Positive learning entails interactive and constructive activities in which learners become active participants and demonstrate respect and compassion for their fellow classmates and teacher. Through such lessons, children learn to exhibit positive behaviour, value classroom rules, and adhere to the school's Code of Conduct. Yeung et al. (2009) explain that disruptive learner behaviour not only affects the learning environment, but also has a debilitating impact on learners' academic outcomes. An unwelcoming school and classroom environment often leads to a lack of learner participation, autonomy, and motivation. To cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching, I therefore needed to establish a positive learning environment that would be free

from bullying, intimidation, judgement, and discrimination in any form, and to achieve this I had to plan my lessons carefully and appropriately.

The sociocultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978) places much emphasis on the interdependence between individuals and social processes of learning. The theory perceives learning not as an individual journey, but rather as being socially embedded. In the classroom context, this means that learners learn from and with one another, and their actions are influenced by their classmates and by the teacher. Moreover, the theory also perceives teacher learning and learning in general as collaborative, and each person thus becomes a source of relevant knowledge. Calvert (2016) acknowledges this notion while the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2017) also places much emphasis on group work and learner collaboration to accomplish a task. Teachers are therefore encouraged to shift from a teacher-centred approach to a learner-centred approach to enable learners to share skills, values, and knowledge. In my desire to cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching, I fostered positive and meaningful classroom engagements that contributed to establishing a positive learning environment in my classroom. This was achieved through practical work when possible. I further used classroom activities that prompted the sharing of ideas and classroom interactions. These interactions were safe and scaffolded to ensuring that they would influence the learners positively and constructively.

The lessons were designed in such a manner that they promoted learner participation and engagement, allowed learner autonomy, engendered positive values, and contributed to learners' positive behaviour. According to the Department of Basic Education (2000), positive behaviour can be achieved through learner behaviour support. The DoBE argues that "the term learner behaviour support implies developing and managing positive relationships among learners and between learners and teachers" (Department of Basic Education, 2000). To measure the effectiveness of my research study, I focused on learners' engagement, their eagerness to work with one another, and their willingness to work with me. Furthermore, I observed the class activities that we did together and the homework they were required to complete. This was monitored on a weekly basis. As noted by Samaras and Robert (2011), self-study results in improved teaching and improved student learning. As my research adopted the self-study approach, I also measured the effectiveness of my practice after I had changed my pedagogical approaches. These outcomes assisted me to change my definition of positive behaviour and to understand how it ought to be achieved in my school and classroom.

4.3 Sources for Improved Classroom Engagements



Figure 4.1: Sources of my ideas for interactive classroom activities

The lesson activities I conducted with my learners were mainly ideas generated from teacher online groups, workshops, and from my critical friends. As noted by Samaras (2011), critical friends are trusted colleagues who mediate, provoke, and support new understanding. Tidwell and Jónsdóttir (2020) further posit that, in self-study research, we learn from others. Schuck and Russell (2005) observe the following:

“Critical friends [are engaged to] provide constructive criticism in the self-study research process to inform the researcher and impact the research process. It is through this collaborative work with a critical friend that self-study research can address the concerns found in the difficulty of assessing one’s own practice and reframing it” (p. 108).

My critical friends were not limited to my research cohort but was extended to other teachers from my school as well. To answer the second research question, I used their suggestions to cultivate positive behaviour through my teaching.

4.4 Creating a Positive Learning Environment

4.4.1 Lesson 1: Positive behaviour and collaborative learning

Period : 1st period
Time: 8:10-8:50
Subject: Natural Sciences
Grade: 8F
Topic: Matter and Material

This lesson was conducted in the first period of the day as it is always an exciting time to host a science class. Due to its geographic location, Greytown often experiences cold weather even in summer, and this was one of those unexpectedly cold days in January. I entered the classroom and, as per school procedure, the learners stood up to greet me. I am against this and usually do not permit my learners to stand when I enter. The reason is that the process is time consuming and often positions the teacher as an authoritarian figure within the classroom. For this lesson and future lessons, I requested that the learners sit down, and I greeted them. I said enthusiastically, “*Good morning!*” and they excitedly responded, “*Good morning, Sir!*” I then proceeded to introduce the lesson by explaining the importance of a positive learning environment that is free from intimidation, bullying, bunking, or corporal punishment while promoting inclusivity and acknowledging mistakes as learning opportunities. My starting point was to allow my learners to understand what a positive learning environment is. When I posed a question to seek their understanding, Amu said, “*It is when we are all doing our work together and supporting each other.*”

I explained to the learners that, from that term on, I intended to make education fun and develop lessons which would develop their subject knowledge, skills, and values as stipulated in the Curriculum Policy Statement. Moreover, I explained that my intention was to develop lessons that would promote positive peer collaboration, improve their academic performance, and develop a school culture that would promote positive learner behaviour without causing harm or intimidation to any learner. I used simple language and, to engage their involvement, I

asked, “How do we achieve this? How do we make our classroom a place where everyone is excited and joins in?” Sonwabisi answered, “Ayi, Teacher, we have no problem with being hit, just as long as we understand why we are receiving it!” A very sweet boy (I refer to him as ‘Sweet Guy’) said, “Sir, in our primary school the teacher gave us stars. This made us happy and we always were excited when going to her classroom. Maybe we can do the same thing here, Sir.” This made sense, and I decided to employ this pedagogical approach of positive reinforcement in my future lessons. Ayanda said, “Sir, one of the best ways which we can do to make our learning space fun and exciting is through making it colourful and, most importantly, by developing classroom rules.”



Figure 4.2: Posters designed by some learners to illustrate positive classroom rules

I applauded these suggestions, and to move the lesson forward, I requested that the learners drafted classroom rules together. We were to stick them on the walls. I allocated 15 minutes for this activity, ensuring that there was sufficient time for my lesson. The learners were thrilled

as it gave them a chance to show their artistic side. They went all out making their classroom rules colourful and attractive. Some of these were verbs and some were signs that needed no explanation. I collected all these posters and explained that rules are important as they are principles that guide one's behaviour in the classroom and that make our learning environment conducive and positive. I clarified that these rules had been developed by and for them and that they had to live by them. They needed to be respectful, demonstrate kindness and compassion, and show love and respect for their classmates. I explained that these rules did not exclude me as their teacher and that I had to lead by example.

To begin the lesson, I explained that science is everything around us: cows that produce milk, humans and animals that breathe, one shivering on a cold day, and one sweating on a hot day. I explained that all these were processes that could be explained scientifically. I then proceeded to present the particle model of matter, explaining the scientific theory. For this lesson, I had prepared slides to make my lesson visual and inviting, but due to unforeseen circumstances the projector did not work.

In the next part of my lesson I introduced the phases of matter and I asked the learners if they knew the three phases of matter. Neliswa responded by saying, "*Yes, Sir, there is solid, liquid, and gas matter*". I acknowledged this answer and proceeded to explain how these phases of matter change.

In the next part of the lesson the learners had to define the following terms by consulting with a companion sitting at the desk next to them:

- Evaporation
- Freezing
- Condensation
- Sublimation.

To consolidate the lesson, the learners were given a homework activity. As I had learned a valuable lesson from one of my own teachers, I set the learners a task that would involve their parents as I sought to foster parental involvement in these children's education. The activity was based on the various effects of climate change on the phases of matter.

Learnings: In this day's lesson, one thing that I learnt was that learners know what it takes to create a positive learning environment. They were aware of what positive behaviour is and what actions are considered to be positive. It was crucial that I learnt this so that I could work collaboratively with my learners. The one question which arose was whether learners knew that bunking, bullying, non-homework submission, intimidation, sexual harassment, racist behaviour, and all other forms of misconduct were wrong. It ignited many questions which made me doubt if it would be enough to just model positive behaviour and expect learners to learn and practise positive behaviour. Would transforming their learning space and making lessons exciting and stimulating be enough? Would collaborative activities foster positive relations among learners and yield the desired results? All these questions ran through my mind as I reflected on the day's lesson.

Journal reflection (Date: 16-01-2023): *Today's lesson was a success. The activity that I had planned was well designed and I was able to learn from the learners themselves what they wished to be done in their classroom to enhance their learning experiences. The development of classroom rules was a crucial starting point in cultivating positive behaviour. The learners were informed about what is considered to be good and bad behaviour and working together ensured that the learners developed a sense of ownership of their classroom to ensure that it would be a conducive and pleasant learning environment. As I reflected on this lesson, I became aware of the first change in me: I had become more conscious about what I said to my learners and how I said it. Secondly, I am now much more eager to enter the classroom and I look forward to having an exciting lesson with my learners as opposed to the past when I always found myself encountering challenges when it was teaching time and suffering from teacher burnout. During the lesson, the learners were deeply engaged and participated actively. In one of the lessons to come, I intend to get a professional to present a brief talk with my learners regarding to positive behaviour. One of the key challenges that became visible was that certain learners tended to cross the teacher-learner relationship boundary as they became too friendly towards me and this was a concern that I had to address.*

4.4.2 Lesson 2: Igniting intrinsic motivation

Period: 1st period
Time: 8:10-8:50
Subject: Natural Sciences
Grade: 8c

Topic: Energy and Change



Figure 4.3: A motivational speaker from the Department of Health addressing the learners

This lesson was one that I had thoroughly prepared for together with my learners. It would be a practical lesson and my learners and I were looking forward to this day as it would be our first formal task for term three. Considering the experiences that the learners had had the previous day, I engaged a close friend in the social work division to organise a person who could present a motivational talk to the learners. I decided to have the talk in the morning at assembly for the whole school as this was a way to contribute to a positive school culture. It was perfect to have to talk in the morning as the lesson would be conducted in the first period and it was also a perfect opportunity to reflect on the talk. The weather was fine and moderate with clear skies. The speaker presented a positive talk that radiated encouragement on what behaviour is and how learners should be differentiating between positive and negative behaviour. The speaker further noted the role of depression as a factor that contributes to negative learner behaviour and to academic failure.

After the talk, the learners entered the classroom. I could not really tell how they felt as they were mostly quiet. I greeted them and they replied, “*Good morning, Sir*”. I then asked, “*Learners, how was the talk?*” Sabelo at the back of the class shouted, “*Ayi, Sir, bathi sine depression!*” which translated means “*Sir, he said we are depressed!*”. The learners burst into laughter and I joined in. Mbali said, “*Sir, he was just reminding us that we must not judge one another as our behaviour comes from different places. He also said we must behave well*”. I believed the professional had done justice to the topic. I then introduced an activity that had

been part of their homework and that related to the talk. I grouped the learners into groups of four as we had to prepare for the formal task. As proposed by Vygotsky (1978), students learn best through collaborative and interactive processes.



Figure 4.4: Learners engaging in practical work in the classroom

Due to limited resources at the school, I had to increase the number of learners in each group so that the resources could be evenly shared. The main purpose of practical work in Natural Sciences, as outlined by the Department of Basic Education (2000), is to develop critical thinking and for learners to identify problems and provide solutions for them. Practical work is aligned with the sociocultural theory as learners work collaboratively to share their knowledge, skills, and values. Mkhize-Mthembu (2022, p. 3) explain that “learning at school requires a classroom community from which individuals learn and with whom they share insights”. During the practical activity, the learners demonstrated in-depth understanding of the work and, by working together, they achieved the desired results. I was impressed by this endeavour as all the learners did well.

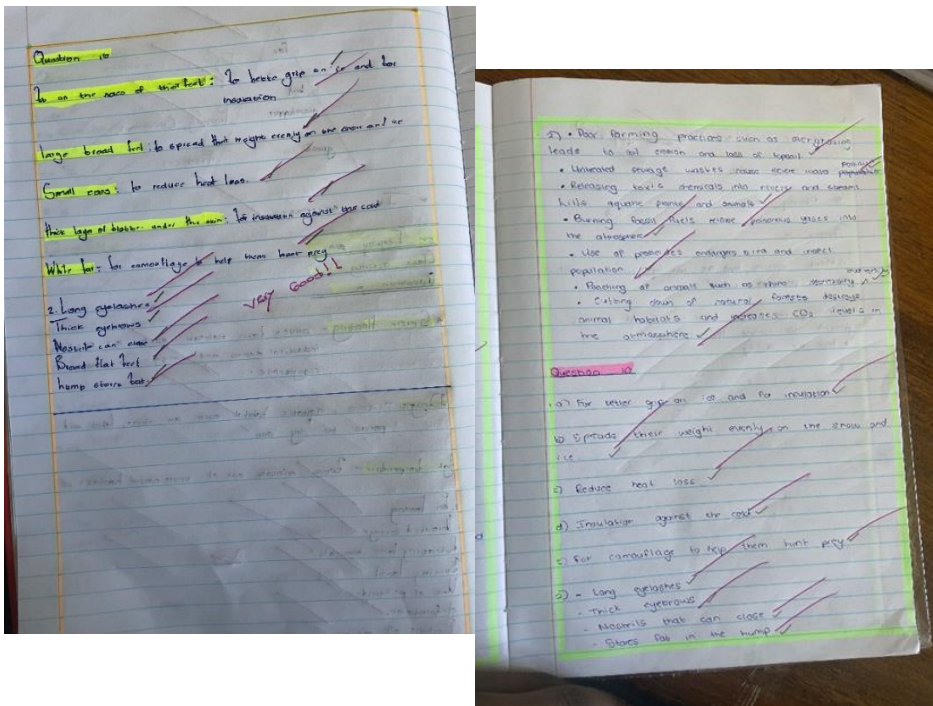


Figure 4.5: Copy of learners' Natural Sciences exercise books

I checked the exercise books to see if the learners had understood the activity that we had done and if they had done their corrections and homework. I had earlier requested the learners to make their books colourful and inviting and to submit well-presented work that would be easy to assess. I also encouraged them to study. I was excited when I noted that all my learners' exercise books were up to date and that all the activities had been done and corrections completed where necessary.

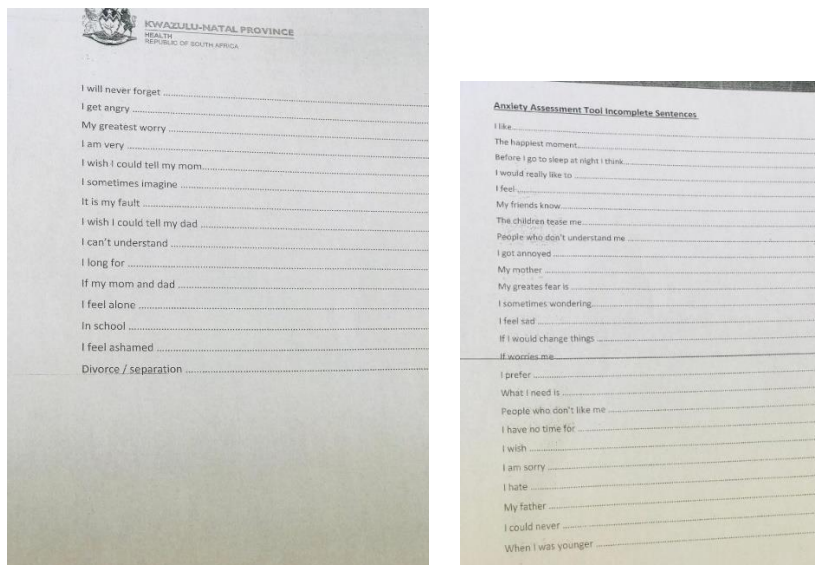


Figure 4.6: Copy of a learner's homework as directed by the social worker

To consolidate the lesson, I gave the learners homework from their study guides. The speaker had also requested that I give learners an activity that would allow me to get to know my learners better. The learners' answers were confidential as only the social worker and I would have access to them.

Learnings: In this lesson I learnt much about behaviour and now understand that behaviour is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors. I understand that behaviour has much to do with what is happening in the learner's life. As the teacher, it is important that I address negative behaviour in an appropriate manner.

Journal reflection (Date: 18-01-2023): *Today's lesson was a success. The learners concluded their practical task by working collaboratively. This was their first formal task after I had started my self-study research, hence their results were a true reflection of the effort I had been putting into each lesson. Seeing them work at their optimum and being willing to work with one another was a powerful motivation for me as a novice teacher to continue this approach. My learners' exercise books were evidence of their consistency and diligence. There were no challenges encountered in this lesson and time was sufficient to complete the activity.*

4.4.3 Lesson 3: Learning from earlier school experiences

Period: 4th period
Time: 10:25-11:15
Subject: Natural Science
Grade: 8F
Topic: Energy and change

With this lesson I aimed get to know my learners better and to understand what it was that prompted potential misbehaviour. I intended to learn from their past encounters and build on these to make our classroom environment a positive one. As explained was explained to the attendees at a Positive Behavioural Interventions and Support (PBIS) workshop, there is a correlation between a positive learning environment and positive learner behaviour. As I entered the classroom, I energetically greeted my learners by shouting, "Good morning, Bafundi!" I often randomly threw a few Zulu words in to encourage non-IsiZulu speakers to learn IsiZulu as this fosters positive relations and understanding among the learners. The learners tepidly responded, "Good morning, Sir". Even more energetically I said, "GOOD

MORNING, LEARNERS!” and they finally responded with more fervour. Repeating a greeting enthusiastically often excites learners and abolishes a lethargic energy in the classroom.

I began the lesson by sharing a story of a boy who spent most of his time in the classroom sleeping. No one understood him, he had no friends, and he hardly spoke to anyone. No one believed he could even pass the current grade and both learners and teachers called him names. Some referred to him as ‘*umalala*’, which means sleeper. No one cared until one day a teacher called him during recess. She offered him a meal and said, “*Son, what is going on?*” Tears dropped from the young man’s eyes as he began to share his story. It was discovered that the young man was born HIV positive. He stayed with his mother who was also critically ill and he had to take care of her. The young man often came to school hungry. He was rejected and the only place that should have made him feel better also marginalised him. The teacher assisted the young man and he received all the necessary help he needed.

The learners were intrigued by this story. They were quiet and all eyes were on me. I had heard this story at a workshop I had attended. Anita asked, “*Sir, where did the boy stay?*” I said I could not disclose that, and instead of focusing on who the boy was and where he came from, I asked them what could have been done better at school to support for the boy. Samke said, “*The teachers failed him as they showed no interest in him.*” Lerumo agreed and said, “*The teachers should have sat him down and asked him what was going on.*” Amanda disagreed and said, “*It is often hard for teachers as learners often misbehave, making it difficult for teachers to see when there is a problem. As learners we must have a person to talk to like a member of the RCL or anyone else.*” It was thrilling to see my learners engage in the story in this manner. I explained that both learners and the teachers could have done a better job in ensuring a safe and supportive environment for the young man. It is crucial that teachers develop a positive relationship with their learners so that they will easily identify when there is a problem.

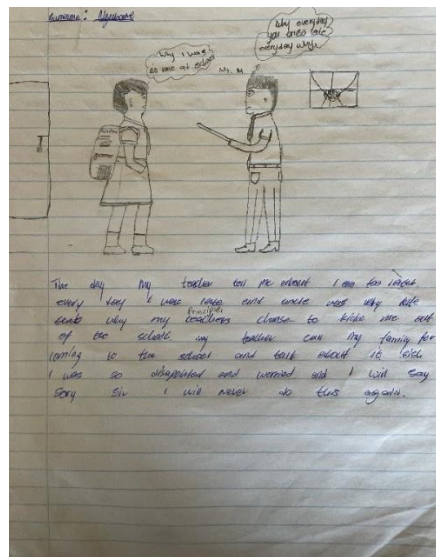
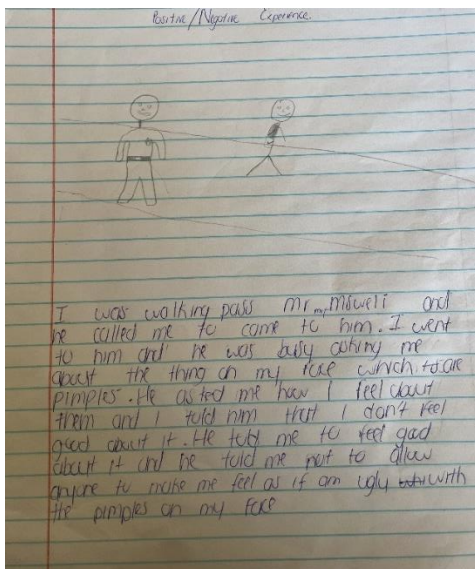
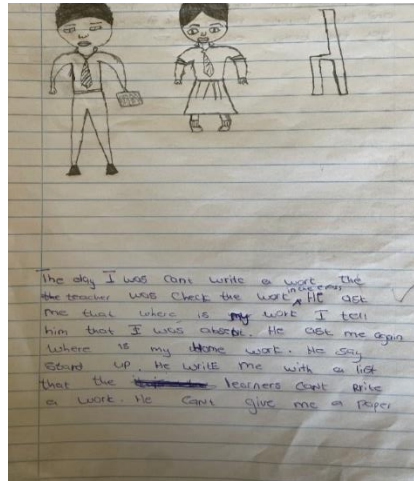
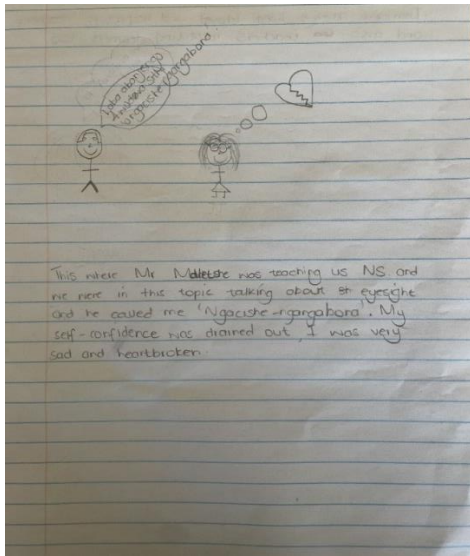


Figure 4.7: Some of my learners' memory drawings that reflected their experiences

I requested the learners to make drawings to share some memorable encounters they had experienced at school, whether these had been supportive or unsupportive. They also had to write a short paragraph outlining what had occurred. I wanted to use this activity to learn more from my learners' experiences, and most shared some heartfelt emotions. Due to time restrictions, I only asked three learners so share their experiences with the class. The learners' experiences were a pointer of what I should do and not do in the classroom and their narratives were a reminder that my role as their teacher was crucial in modelling positive behaviour. It

was clear that they did not only regard me as their teacher, but I was also expected to support their academic, social, emotional, and behavioural well-being and I was thus reminded of the need to be a better educator for them. We gave those who were brave enough to share a round of applause.

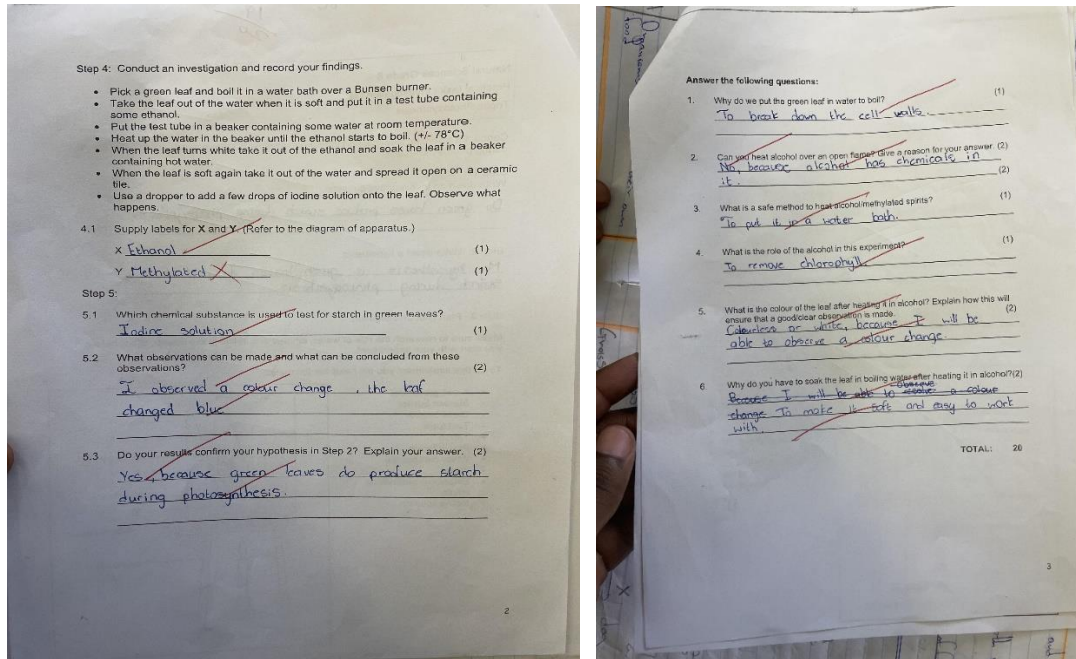


Figure 4.8: Examples of an informal practical task done in preparation for a formal task

The learners had to group themselves into groups of four in preparation for a formal practical task as part of the program of assessment for grade 8. The learners had to answer the questions in consultation with the members of the group they were in. Practical tasks are usually a great method to enable learners to share ideas, skills, knowledge, and values. Johnson (2009) argues that knowledge is a socially mediated activity which results in the transformation of self. By encouraging my learners to work together, I wanted them to grow emotionally and academically. The learners demonstrated understanding of the activity and some even obtained full marks. I assessed their work and provided feedback as soon as possible. To consolidate the lesson, I reminded the learners not to forget the various requirements for the formal practical. They seemed excited about this and all chanted, “Yes, Sir!”

Learnings: This day’s lesson affirmed the invaluable role that teachers play in moulding learners’ perceptions about behaviour, social values, and academic success. The lesson also underscored the crucial role of group work as a learning tool as it boosted my learners’ academic performance in this specific activity. The learners participated actively and

respectfully and this yielded the desired results. The lesson also emphasised the need for me as a novice teacher to continuously engage in teacher learning and to improve my assessment and teaching methodologies to impact my learners' lives meaningfully.

Journal reflection (Date: 20-01-202): *Today's lesson was a success with no challenges encountered and the lesson met the desired aims and objectives. The first activity truly enabled me as a teacher to understand some of my learners' schooling experiences that were both positive and negative. I was able to understand the psychological effect of the use of corporal punishment in the classroom on my learners. Moreover, through this reflective activity, I came to the realisation that what I say and how I say it have a significant impact on my learners' sense of belonging in the classroom. Hence, it is crucial for me at all times to model positive behaviour both inside and outside the classroom and I have to allow the learners to learn from me as their teacher. My new approach clearly showed that I no longer had to threaten or intimidate my learners in order for them to participate in the lesson. In fact, the learners themselves saw the need to share their past lived schooling experiences with others.*

The group practical activity enabled the learners to share their ideas, knowledge, and skills. Most importantly, grouping contributed to the fact that all the learners achieved the desired outcomes of the informal practical work. This was very important for me as it suggested that my pedagogical approaches were now effective. Most importantly, I realised that grouping learners was no longer only about friendship, but that they were now more willing to assist those who required assistance. One challenge I encountered was time. The issue of time will always be a factor as lessons are only 45-50 minutes per period.

4.4.4 Lesson 4: Fostering positive engagements

Period: 2nd period
Time: 8:50-9:30
Subject: Natural Sciences
Grade: 8C
Topic: Energy and change

The lesson took place in the second period of the day. At this time, the learners were still energetic and I enjoyed their energy. Upon my entry into the classroom, the learners stood up to welcome me. I kindly acknowledged their greetings and asked them to sit down. This time

I did not divide them into groups. The desks formed seven rows facing forward, with each row having a maximum number of 12 learners. I started the lesson with an icebreaker activity which I had prepared the previous day. I had decided to adopt this approach based on the advice of my research supervisor. I realised that the icebreaker activities she usually did generated lively conversations and sharing of feelings and ideas. I wanted to achieve the same in this lesson by encouraging my learners to participate actively and positively.



Figure 4.9: Picture of the cues in the icebreaker activity

I pasted the colourful poster above onto the board. The poster had one question written in bold, “*How are you feeling today?*” The poster also had 15 adjectives (see Figure 4.9) from which the learners could choose to describe how they were feeling. I then chose two words that described me that day, namely ‘energised’ and ‘uncertain’. I explained to them that I loved morning lessons as they occurred at the time of day when I was energised and when I looked forward to the next lesson. However, I was uncertain about the topic we would be exploring that day, as I was not sure if they would be able to establish links between matter and material and energy and change. I opened the floor to my learners by allowing them to take turns to raise their hands, choose two words, and explain why they were feeling that way.

Sweet Guy was the first to share his feelings. With a smile on his face he said, “*Sir, I feel loved by my friends and my mom.*” His friends in the middle row chanted, “*Awwwww!*” (this is a sound of agreement and empathy). Two stood out for me and really touched my heart. Nelly said, “*Sir, I am feeling lucky I guess, because I woke up today and both my mama and papa are still alive*”. Zoe also stood up and said, “*I feel courageous because I aim to write my own novel very soon. You also write short stories at times and some are true!*” Everyone was

motivated by this, and we then requested her to kindly read and share her stories with us as a class.

The icebreaker activity achieved the desired results as it allowed for active and positive engagement and clearly revealed how my learners were feeling and what their demeanour was. The icebreaker activity also planted the seed of a safe and nurturing learning environment where learners were able to express their feelings freely. I then moved on to present the topic for the day, which was *Energy and Change*. I gave a brief introduction of what the topic entailed and asked the learners to write their answers to two questions:

- 1) What is your understanding of electricity?
- 2) Is there a link between the present topic and the previous one? Substantiate your answer.

The learners were allowed to work with their peers sitting next to them. This pair work is important as it allows learners to learn from their peers and it encourages positive relationships. As the learners shifted from viewing one another as strangers or as islands to perceiving others as sources of knowledge, the classroom transformed into a learning institution where knowledge was shared.

I then asked a few learners to share their answers to the first question, which they did to the best of their ability. I then built on their schemata, explaining the source of electricity and how it reaches our households. I then moved to the second question and asked the learners to share their answers. I realised that most learners had failed to create a link between the previous chapter and the present, and only one learner was able to answer the question correctly. We applauded him and I then emphasised the need to establish links between topics learnt previously.

To conclude the lesson, I tasked the learners to study static electricity. Their parents/guardians could assist them in drafting questions to answer in preparation for the next lesson and to complete the homework in their study guides. I learnt much by reflecting on this lesson and pondering the motivational power of positive relations between parents and their children.

Learnings:

- In this day's lesson I learnt that it is important to establish links between topics and not to view each topic as independent of others.

- Learners came into the classroom with prior knowledge from their immediate environments, and the teacher should link this knowledge with what is taught in the classroom.
- Learners' emotions are important as they influence how they act. It is important to understand their emotional state and to understand what it is that informs their behaviour.

Journal reflection (Date: 23-01-2023): *In this lesson I really got to understand my learners much better as the icebreaker activity gave me the platform to engage them on a personal level. Besides this, it gave us as a class the opportunity to be heard and to be comfortable with one another. As my intent was to cultivate positive behaviour through my teaching, I came to understand the significance of positive interactions. As I reflected on this lesson, I realised that the group activity had been very effective as each little group had been able to work effectively and purposively. My intended goal that today was attained as I had encouraged positive engagement and let my learners take charge of their learning, as required by the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). One minor challenge I encountered was that some learners were overly excited during the icebreaker activity, and shifting from that to introducing the lesson of the day was a bit difficult. But I learnt from this experience and will tackle icebreakers a bit differently the next time. A key highlight in this lesson was when Zoe stood up and shared her love and respect for her parents. This was a huge step forward as she tended to be very shy and aloof person. As a novice teacher, this lesson taught me to appreciate the importance of learner engagement. Zoe later shared one of her stories with me to read I am looking forward to sharing my suggestions with her.*

4.4.5 Lesson 5: Cultivating peer understanding

Period: 4th period
 Time: 10:30-11:15
 Subject: Natural Sciences
 Grade: 8F
 Topic: Energy and Change

That day was lovely and warm with clear skies and these made the weather perfect for the day's planned activity. I entered the classroom and I was welcomed by my learners who seemed

excited about that day's lesson. They were smiling and, as usual, the guys in the middle row shouted, "Awwww, Sir!" As usual, I had promised them a thrilling lesson for the day and this made each lesson a mystery. Homework had been done and everyone wanted to be part of the surprise lesson. I had learnt about this approach from an online teacher group to learn ways to make my classroom a more positive learning space. I started by requesting the learners to go outside to the soccer field. The reader can imagine the shouting and excitement that ensued. I requested them to form one single line which was difficult. I had to enforce discipline with a touch of my 'teacher's voice' and we headed off to the field as I led the line.

There I instructed the learners to form a circle for an icebreaker activity that I had learnt about in one of the Care and Support to Teaching and Learning (CSTL) workshops. My intention with this activity was to indirectly teach discipline, teambuilding, and uniformity as all these play a crucial role in creating a positive learning space. Teaching a diverse class is often fraught with misunderstandings and often results in learners grouping themselves according to what they are familiar with, such as race. In this activity (when I grew up, we referred to as 'Donkey'), the learners were each given a number ranging from 1 to 50. A number would be called and the learner whose number was called would have to catch the ball while the rest would run out of sight so that they would not get hit by the ball once the ball had been caught and thrown. We played this game for 15 minutes and returned to class. During this icebreaker activity, all the learners actively participated but one. Nicole (pseudonym) said, "Sir, I can't run," but my response was, "Today is definitely the day you learn!"



Figure 4.10: *Playing 'Donkey', an icebreaker activity*

Back in the classroom, one could still sense the level of enjoyment in my learners, with Mazet saying in isiZulu, "Thisha nakusasa phela asophuma," which means "Sir, can we also go out














tomorrow?”. Once they were all seated, I asked, “*What do you look for in someone before you become friends with them?*” Siphos said, “*I look for what we have in common, for example music,*” and most of the learners said something similar. The main intention was to get them engaged. My next question was what it was that we all had in common, and Nokuthula said, “*We all do Natural Sciences*”, while Gaby said, “*We all have eyes, ears, and a nose*”. Sweet Guy said, “*Sir, we are all human.*” The latter for me was an important answer and I reminded them that, regardless of our culture, sex, or race, we are all human and therefore we should love one another regardless of our differences. I continued to place emphasis on the spirit of Ubuntu, which means that working together we can accomplish a lot. Luthuli (2016) acknowledges the importance of motivation in lessons, and my intention was for my learners to accept and understand the diversity that existed within our classroom. More importantly, they needed to be able to work and respect one another regardless of race, gender, wealth, and cultural background.

The next part of my lesson involved introducing symbols used when drawing electric circuits. Although this is a topic that is covered in grade 6, grade 7, and grade 8, I did not take it for granted that they would have sufficient knowledge about it. I clearly explained the role of each component and the appliance it symbolised. With only 10 minutes remaining of the lesson, I allowed the learners to work in groups of three to answer questions. I then spent the few remaining minutes to check some books and provide clarity where needed.

COMPONENTS OF A CIRCUIT

- A circuit comprises energy sources (cell or battery), switch to open or complete the circuit and resistors (bulbs, kettles, stoves etc.).
- Symbols are used to represent different components of an electric circuit as shown:

Symbols of Electric components

 Variable resistor / Rheostat	 Variable resistor / Rheostat
 Open switch	 Cell
 Closed switch	 Ammeter
 Resistor	 Buzzer
 Resistor	 Voltmeter
 Fuse	 Lamp / Bulb
	 Battery

Answer the following questions:

1. What is another name for a rheostat? _____
2. What is the use of a rheostat?

3. Give an example of where a rheostat is used. _____
4. What is the function of a switch in an electric circuit?

5. What is the function of a voltmeter in an electric circuit?

6. How is an ammeter and a voltmeter connected in an electric circuit?

7. What is a battery?

Page 4

Grade 8 Term 3 Informal Tasks

Figure 4.11: Activity done in groups of three

Learnings: From the day’s lesson I learnt that teachers hold a special place in learners’ hearts. Classrooms serve as spaces for cultivating the mind and for planting seeds of knowledge and hope. The issues of racism and sexism are still prevalent within our schools and classrooms, and it is teachers who play a crucial role in cultivating a positive mind-set and creating an environment that enables positive learner relations. This can be achieved by establishing well-structured activities that place emphasis on communication and teamwork.

Reflective Journal (Date: 23-01-23): *Today’s lesson was a huge success. As I reflect on it I appreciate how much I have improved and learned as a teacher. It was important to pay attention to each learner as I led them to the field as I had to maintain discipline regardless of their excitement. To cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching, it is crucial that I always model positive behaviour. For today’s lesson I was punctual, although sometimes this is impossible as I move from class to class. Reflecting on the icebreaker activity also made me realise that, as much as the intention had been to achieve team building, acceptance, and understanding, it was important to have fun and to grow fond of my learners. In today’s lesson*

I aimed to ignite unity amongst my learners, something that I realised was lacking. I understand that this is not a day's work but hope that, through the activities we do together, my goal will be achieved. I am still battling with time management, and in today's lesson I had less than 30 minutes teaching time and thus failed to mark the work. I also did not give them homework, and therefore in my next lesson I shall have an indoor icebreaker activity and all the activities will be done in the classroom. This will maximise teaching and learning time.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented a detailed account of how I worked with my learners in my efforts to cultivate positive behaviour through my teaching. I responded to the second research question which was: *How can I cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching?* I described, narrated, and used photographs to detail the interactions that had occurred in the classroom and on the field. These lessons formed the basis for data generation. I also shared the lessons I had learned as well as my journal reflections in which I highlighted some strengths and weaknesses in each lesson.

Key learnings emerged from the data. The first was my realisation that stimulating and fostering positive interaction among my learners and between them and myself in the classroom played a crucial role in changing my learners' attitude towards their own learning. In fact, I noted that most had developed a sense of learner agency, and positive interactions within the classroom contributed to the learners' positive change in behaviour. These interactions played a significant role in the sharing of knowledge, skills, and values between the teacher and learners and among the learners themselves. Scott and Palincsar (2013, p. 8) note that if "learners participate in a broad range of joint activities and internalize the effects of working together, they acquire new strategies and knowledge of the world and culture". As I applied this advice to my classroom context, my learners worked together and engaged in a variety of classroom activities that led to the acquisition of new strategies for knowledge acquisition.

As I compiled this chapter, I became aware of the correlation between the sociocultural perspective and my quest to cultivate positive behaviour through my teaching. As explained by Gerhard and Mayer-Smith (2008), learning is not an individual but a social phenomenon as we learn from others. The theory foregrounds interactions and enables us to see and understand the importance of interactions in learning. When I applied these tenets, my learners were able to work effectively and positively. I also noted that the learners learnt much more from me than

before, possibly as I had played a more active role in modelling positive behaviour. Vygotsky (1978) argues that learners learn through imitation, instruction, and collaborative activities, and to cultivate positive behaviour through my teaching, I modelled positive behaviour and gave clear instructions in my lessons.

As I completed this chapter, I had a deep understanding of the in-depth relationship between teacher learning and the sociocultural perspective. As defined by Kelly (2006), teacher learning is the shift that occurs when teachers change from being novice teachers to expert educators, and this does not occur due to individual learning but through working with others. Bertram (2011, p. 7) describes teacher learning as a complex process which requires “the development of propositional knowledge, practical knowledge, and personal knowledge, and this learning also often involves the disruption of existing knowledge”. I came to understand that my own learning journey would not be a lone one and that, to reach my desired goals, I had to engage with others. As I completed this chapter, I also realised that the role of critical friends had become more tangible. These critical friends were colleagues, experts, and experienced people in the educational field, and we had thoughtful, provocative, and productive interactions that resulted in the changes I could make in my teaching pedagogy. We shared various approaches of making the classroom environment positive and conducive and all this contributed to making my teacher learning journey an effective one, as posited by Lave and Wenger (1991). My earlier knowledge of what behaviour entails was changed, and I gained new knowledge of what positive behaviour is and how it ought to be achieved in the classroom.

CHAPTER FIVE

MAKING MEANING OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES

5.1 Introduction

The self-study research methodology enables teachers to learn from and with others. Reflection is fundamental to this learning process as it serves to enhance the classroom practitioner's insights and awareness. Calvert (2016, p. 3) describes teacher agency as "the capacity of teachers to act purposefully and constructively to direct their professional growth and contribute to the growth of their colleagues" and, in my view, that of their learners. The main aim of this self-study research was to explore positive learner behaviour and to learn more about it from my personal history, the constructive contributions of critical friends, and my lessons involving grade 8 learners. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) aver that the sociocultural theory places learning in a cultural context, and they emphasise that those who are part of the individual's immediate environment initiate the development process. To learn from my past experiences, I focused on four learning spaces: the family, my friends, the community, and my school and its learners (see Chapter four and this chapter). I also explored ways to improve my teaching practice as well as the learning outcomes of my learners by conducting this self-study.

Self-study methodology is commonly embedded within Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which is the theoretical bedrock of how to cultivate positive behaviour in the classroom context. Therefore, by adapting my teaching methodologies, I was able to foster collaborative and interactive learning in the classroom. Scott and Palincsar (2013) argue that the sociocultural theory endorses cooperative learning, and I therefore worked collaboratively with critical friends and colleagues to develop lessons that promoted inclusivity and reinforced positive behaviour. This approach enabled me to provide support for my learners so that they could reach their full potential within the ZPD, as discussed in Chapter one. LaBoskey (1978) notes that temporary support and guidance are necessary to help students develop skills and understanding not only to fulfil academic requirements, but also to become worthy and valued citizens. The sociocultural perspective also guided me to engage in fruitful conversations with my learners and to encourage active participation in the activities I had devised for the classroom.

In Chapter four, I responded to research question two: *How can I cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching?* In response to this research question, I structured and implemented lessons that promoted strong values such as respect and kindness, autonomy, collaboration, and critical thinking. These creative lessons improved my learner's learning experiences and contributed significantly to my teacher-learning. For example, one lesson that was conducted in the second period on 16 January 2023 focused on *Creating a Positive Learning Environment*, while a lesson on *Igniting Intrinsic Motivation* was conducted in the first period on 18 January 2023. While critical friends' inputs aided me in planning these lessons, I was also inspired by thought-provoking and innovative teacher development workshops organised by the Department of Basic Education.

Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) note that making meaning in self-study qualitative research depends on the researcher's interpretation and analysis of the data. In this chapter, I reflect deeply on what made sense and what worked when I presented the above and other lessons (I consider five lessons in total) to explore positive learner behaviour. The lessons were designed to address the first and second research questions (*What can I learn from my personal history about positive learner behaviour?* and *How can I cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching?*). I explored highlights during these lessons in which I involved my learner participants to make meaning of new personal discoveries and to reflect on the new knowledge that I gained by engaging with critical friends. I then considered how the various learnings that emerged had contributed to my teacher-learning journey.

Teacher learning occurs when the educator has gained agency and has acquired new, meaningful knowledge, skills, and understandings to improve current teaching practices. Kelly (2006) explains that teacher learning requires moving away from being a novice to becoming an accomplished expert in the educational context, which means that teacher learning is a lifelong process during which the teacher continuously acquires enhanced skills, knowledge, and understanding to improve their overall teaching practice. Cole (2011) avers that memory plays a crucial role when one reflects on one's learning journey and teaching practice. Easton (2008) further explains that robust and effective professional learning is grounded in reflection; this means that the reflective teacher should pause in their busy work schedule and try to make sense of what is happening around them. Therefore, to be effective teachers, we need to constantly reflect on our actions, identify gaps in our practice, and find ways to fill these gaps with the intention of ensuring quality education for our learners.

5.2 Defining Personal History

In Chapter three, which I titled *Evoking my memories of almost-forgotten childhood experiences*, I selected numerous data sources to recollect and present narratives of my personal history. I used memory artefacts and drawings to prompt my inner voice and to listen attentively to it. I further used audio recording and journal writing to revisit conversations with critical friends and classroom discussions. The following is an example of the reflections that I recorded in a journal on 23 January 2023.²

Reflective Journal:

Today`s lesson was a huge success, reflecting made me appreciate how much I have improved and learned as teacher. Paying much attention as how I lead my learners to the ground and maintained discipline of the learners. In cultivating positive behaviour in my teaching it is crucial for me at all times to model positive behaviour, in today`s lesson I came precisely on time, although in certain occasion this becomes impossible as I move from class to class.

Figure 5.1: Journal excerpt reflecting my satisfaction with the outcomes of an interactive lesson

Mitchell et al., (2009) argue that the ideal motive for critical memory-work is to learn from further explain that personal history relates to past experiences that are rich in personal stories about education and schooling that have a profound impact on how teachers teach their learners. I therefore reflected on my personal experiences to gain insightful understanding of positive learner behaviour, thereby learning to improve my present and future teaching practice. LaBoskey (2004, p. 843) explains this process as follows:

"The assumption is that the accuracy of our memories does not matter; whatever shape they take, they influence the construction of our identities, our current thinking, and our future behaviour. Therefore, if we begin to access and interrogate those memories, we can have more control over them and their impact on our teaching."

Mitchell (2011) describes memory artefacts as objects that are infused with personal memories, while Evans, Ka' Ōpua, and Freese (2015) argue that artefacts can be perceived as prompts that will elicit memories of long-ago encounters. Correspondently, Mitchell et al., (2009) explain that artefacts are sources of significant childhood memories and, when their meanings are recalled and explored in self-study research, they evoke authentic emotions and thoughts of

² The reflections in the journal remained unedited for the purpose of authenticity.

lived experiences. I heeded these tenets and, to enrich my self-study research outcomes, I took photographs of artefacts that had significant meaning as they were reflective of stories that had informed my 'becoming' as a teacher. I reflected on these artefacts to specifically understand how they had shaped my understanding of positive learner behaviour. I also made use of memory drawings to evoke my memories of almost-forgotten lived experiences. Mlambo (2013) articulates that using drawings in self-study research enables one to reflect on events that are buried in the subconscious mind. Pithouse-Morgan et al. (2019) add that memory drawing could be used as part of the process of retracing personal history to recall and make hidden lived experiences visible. I therefore used memory drawings as I recalled and explored my experiences as a member of my community and as a primary and secondary school learner to learn from them and to enhance my professional practice as a teacher. I shared my understandings and the meanings I attached to these drawings with my supervisor and critical friends, thus heeding Samaras' (2011) advice to use collaborative inquiry in my self-study research.

According to Masinga (2012, p. 8), journal writing "provides moments of reflection and interpretations of all aspects of the experience gained from each [learning] session". Furthermore, Mlambo (2012, p. 10) notes that journaling is when "one can write daily responses to one's life experiences and events". In my self-study research, I used journal writing on a daily basis to keep track of the interactions that occurred during my lessons. This dissertation pays particular attention to five of those lessons. Recording my reflections in this manner enabled me to extract pertinent information about my learning based on crucial interactions during these lessons. I also utilised journal writing to reflect on discussions with my supervisor and critical friends. Audio recordings of these discussions were also made, as Masinga (2012, p. 7) argues that such recordings serve the purpose of "data storing and reflection". Audio recordings allowed me to revisit the discussions that had taken place and to remember them accurately. I also recorded the lessons I conducted in the classroom to accurately reflect on the conversations and to extract pertinent meanings. These recordings also enabled me to identify crucial moments that I might have missed.

5.3 What I Learnt from my Personal History Regarding Positive Learner Support

Who am I?

How have my experiences shaped me?

What have I learnt from my personal history regarding positive support?

Where to from here?

These above were some of the questions that I posed as I reflected on what I had learned from my personal history. I realised that each personal encounter played a role in shaping the teacher that I had become. Initially, I thought that all negative experiences had to be eradicated, such as the bullying (persistent name-calling, mockery, and the use of corporal punishment) that I had experienced from my teacher and some peers. However, as I reflected on what I could learn from these experiences, I realised that these encounters had strengthened my character and resolve and that they were a clear guide of what not to do in my classroom. I reflected on these experiences (in my authentic language) as follows:

Upon completion I realised that this was not me, I realised that the box was not a true reflection of who I am and what informs me as a novice teacher. Thinking just about how the self-box should physically look made me realise that I myself never had much, nor was I considered to be an attractive person physically. In fact, I was continuously reminded about this each and every day in the classroom and outside. My English teacher always enforced this by referring to me as “weird looking guy” initially it was just a joke till it became my reality. Whenever I saw myself in the mirror all I saw was a weird looking boy, it pained me each and every day to make matters worse it was my teacher who was doing this to me, I felt bullied. The impact of this is still present up till this day, as I even fear taking pictures of myself.

Figure 5.3: Free-writing extract of my reflections on negative schooling experiences

As the leading participant in my study, I intended to learn from my personal history. One key lesson that I learnt is to appreciate the importance of positive teacher-learner relationships and to forge bonds with the learners in my classroom. Mokhela (2006) endorses the significance of such relationships and maintains that positive teacher-learner relations assist in promoting effective and healthy classroom behaviour. This is what my primary school teacher taught me, as her classroom was always inviting – not because of its physical appearance only, but because she forged positive relationships with her learners and boosted their confidence. Mensah and Koomson (2020) argue that a positive and meaningful relationship between teacher and learners is essential for academic engagements and achievement. Molefe (2021, p. 9) further maintains that “positive teacher-learner relationships create an enabling environment for all as they engage with each other”. My primary school teacher became more than just a teacher as she was a woman who ‘mothered’ us all. She was strong in her gestures of kindness and a model of positive teacher behaviour that elicited positive learner behaviour in the classroom. We respected her and, in turn, demonstrated kindness towards her and one another. We had an open but respectful relationship with her and she became part of our lives. Due to her, we

abstained from any misbehaviour in her classroom and wanted her approval at all costs. Her example instilled in me a desire to cultivate positive teacher-learner relationships through my teaching. I reflected of her example of positive teacher-learner relationships in my free writing as follows:

One lesson I learnt from this as a teacher presently is practicing kindness, understanding that learners are gifted differently therefore, all their effort should be celebrated differently. Recalling how this opportunity made me feel I wanted to evoke the same feelings in my learners. Hence in cultivating positive behaviour in my teaching I applauded all efforts my learners put in their work. Instead of celebrating one outstanding learner we applauded also the most improved, most consistence, and lastly most outstanding. This allows even the most average learner to feel recognised and appreciated.

Figure 5.4: Reflections on the positive lessons my primary school teacher taught me

Samaras et al., (2004, p. 2) state that personal history in the self-study approach allows “professors and their students [to] reconstruct significant life events to inform them of their professional identity formation and to help them make meaning of their pedagogy and the connections of their practice to theory”. My personal history also included the vital role that the community and my family had played in raising me as child. As I reflected on my history, I realised that each learner in my classroom was unique and should be treated as such. I further learnt that they came from different environmental backgrounds, had been taught different values, and that their different environments had equipped them with different social tools. I thus learnt that acknowledging and respecting social and cultural diversity should be a significant imperative in my classroom now and in the future. I thus consciously promote respect and understanding of social diversity through my teaching. When I plan each lesson, I consider the schemata of my learners and this ensures that what they have learnt from their families and communities is heeded and the starting point of my lessons.

5.3 My Learning from Critical Friends

Samaras (2011, p.3) defines critical friends as “trusted beings who pose challenging questions, present data [from] a new perspective, and provide constructive feedback on your work as friends”. Moreover, Tidwell and Jónsdóttir (2020) note that one can address and reframe most concerns in the effort to improve one’s teaching practice by collaborating with these trusted people. In one of the sessions that was hosted by my supervisor, Dr Mkhize-Mthembu, and Prof. Daisy Pillay, I shared my memories of some youthful experiences. When my presentation

was over, I was asked how I had dealt with adversities in the past. I deemed this an important question as I suddenly realised that to shift my demeanour and move away from the past, I had to deal with the consequences of the challenges I had experienced. That was a moment of epiphany as I understood that I could not change the bullying, name calling, and corporal punishment, but I could learn from my hurt and pain and change the present for the benefit of my learners. Improving their learning experiences and contributing to their academic performance therefore became my priority as I understood that one's personal identity as a teacher is inseparable from one's professional identity. My critical friends played a significant role in guiding my reflections on my personal history and I prompting these new and profound insights. They also guided my thinking about the lessons I needed to develop that would promote and cultivated positive learner (and teacher!) behaviour.

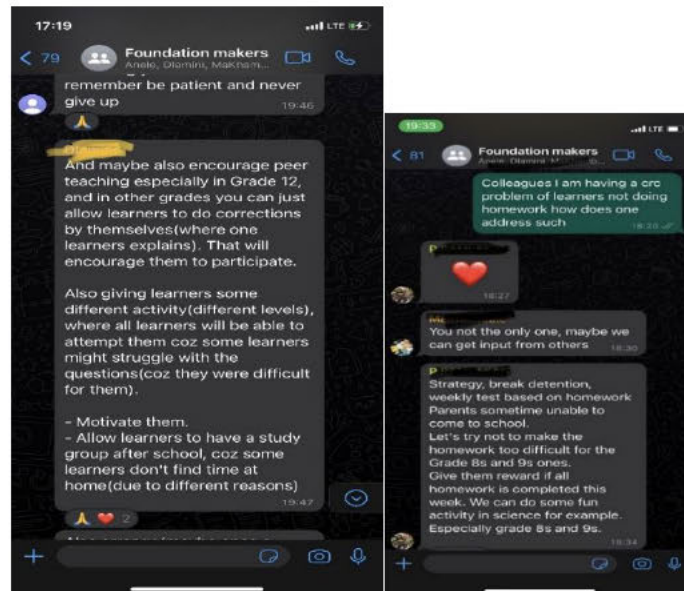


Figure 5.5: Screenshot of how my critical friends guided me to develop appropriate lessons

5.4 What I Learnt about Positive Behaviour from My Learner Participants

Key learnings were that learners want to be:

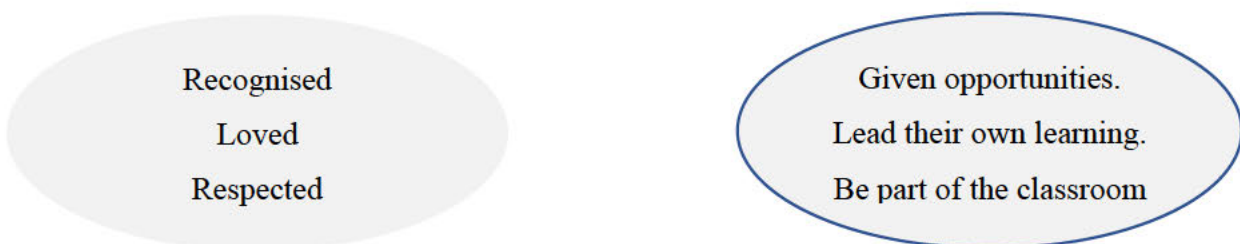


Figure 5.6: How positive behaviour is enhanced

During the lessons that I conducted with emphasis on my self-study research, it became clear that my learners wanted to be recognised whenever they did well. My brief comments such as

“Well done!” or “Excellent job!” in their exercise books encouraged their desire to do their best and achieve to their fullest potential. I understood that my learners wanted and needed recognition for doing well, and this desire included their parents’ approval. Recognition was a form of motivation that also pushed them to maintain good behaviour. I further realised that all learners thrived on recognition when the principal announced the school’s top achievers and I noted how honoured and proud each of these learners felt. Celebrating learners’ accomplishments and improvement, whether this is a change in their behaviour, the completion of an activity, getting the answer correct, or being honoured as a top achiever is always important. Johnson (2008) avers that recognition will contribute to a positive learning experience and inspire a desire for continuous learning.

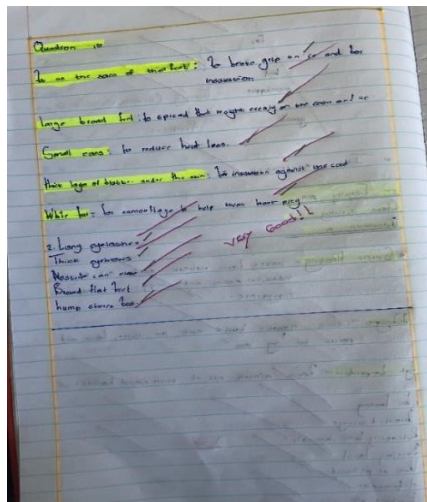


Figure 5.7: Copy of a learner’s work that illustrates positive learning

During the lessons that I conducted with my learner participants, it became evident that they wanted to be heard; they wanted to be listened to and they wanted to be given opportunities to take ownership of their learning. Therefore, learners’ voices are always important and need to be encouraged at appropriate times and in pertinent spaces. This is especially valuable when teacher and learners work collaboratively in the classroom and even on the sports field. Below is a free-writing excerpt that reflects the flow of my thoughts as I considered the meaning of a particular lesson:

The learners were intrigued by this story u could easily sense it, they kept quiet, and all eyes were on me, I had learnt this story from one of the workshops I attended. Anita randomly asked "sir where did the boy stay" I affirmed that I can't disclose such but instead of focusing on who and where the boy came from, I asked them what could have been done better at school level to support the young man. Samke raised her hand and said, "the teachers failed her as they showed no interest towards him" Lerumo further supported this and said, "the teachers should sat him down and asked him what was going on". Amanda suggested that "it often hard also for teachers as learners often misbehaviour making it difficult for teachers to see when they is a problem, as learners we must have that one person, we talk to like the RCL or anyone else". It was thrilling seeing my learners engage in this manner, I explained that both the learners and the teachers could have done a better job in ensuring a safe and supportive environment for the young man, as teachers it crucial that we develop positive relations with our learners so that we can easily Identify when there is a problem.

Figure 5.8: *Extract of the lessons I learnt when learners and I engaged in a discussion*

Below is another excerpt of my reflections on the way my learners shared their ideas and insights in a guided conversation. In this instance I was touched by the impact of collaborative group work on their development and growing self-confidence and positive behaviour:

Date: 20-01-2023

Today's lesson was a success with no challenges encountered, the lesson met the desired aims and objectives. The first activity truly enabled me as a teacher to understand some of my learner's schooling experiences both positive and negative. I was able to understand the psychological effect of the use of corporal punishment in the classroom, on my learners. Moreover, through this reflective activity I came to the realisation that as a teacher what I say a significant impact on my learner's life. Hence it is crucial for me at all times to model positive behaviour in the classroom and outside the classroom, allow for learners to learn from me as their teacher. It came to my attention that I no longer had to threaten nor intimidate learners in order for them to participate within the lesson, the learners themselves saw the need to share their past lived schooling experiences. The group practical activity enabled for learners to share ideas, knowledge and skills. Most importantly the grouping contributed to the learners achieving desired results for the informal practical work. This was very important for me as it suggested that my pedagogical approaches were now effective. Most importantly I realised that the grouping of learners was no longer just about friendship but rather learners willing to assist those who required assistance. One challenge I encountered was time, the issue of time will always be present this is due to our school lesson some being 45-50 minutes per period.

Figure 5.9: *Journal reflection on how learners took charge to complete a task*

My learners were gradually equipped with the capacity to pose thought-provoking questions, complete tasks, and participate confidently in classroom discussions. They were also willing to participate enthusiastically in icebreaker activities which acknowledged and respected their voices inside and outside the classroom. Johnson (2008) urges that students need to be listened to as they value this form of recognition. I noted that icebreaker activities were invaluable as

they presented informal opportunities for conversations and interactions among my learners and between my learners and myself.

5.5 New Learnings of and Insights into Positive Learner Behaviour

5.5.1 Fostering a positive and creative learning space

A point of departure for cultivating positive learner behaviour through teaching is undeniably the establishment of a positive learning environment where learners' dignity is protected and where teacher-learner well-being is respected and enhanced. Such an environment is built on positive teacher-learner relations and is grounded in collaboration. I learned this early in my life from my primary school teacher, but it took careful reflection in this self-study project before I realised the true value of her example as my role-model. My negative experiences in high school emphasised this lesson as I realised that an element that was lacking in some high school classrooms was a learning environment that fostered positivity and promoted the well-being of learners. I therefore resolved to work with my learners to develop classroom rules. I was inspired to do this by teachers I met on an online group who assured me that classroom rules are not only mine but belong collectively to the class. The classroom rules that my learners proposed and adopted were therefore reflective of our shared values instead of being forced on them through a top-down approach. Landua (2006, p. 708) supports this notion and acknowledges that establishing "a foundation based on shared values is a necessary first step when working with students to develop classroom rules". Samaras et al. (2004) assert that learning is an active social process, and I soon realised that learners love being hands-on and actively engaged in their learning. Hence, the classroom rules we had created together were pasted on the walls and this added to the inviting and attractive appearance of the classroom.



Figure 5.10: Collaboratively developed classroom rules to create a positive learning environment

I also divided the learners into groups to work together to create posters. This was an excellent way for them to learn to work in a creative learning space. The learners had the opportunity to showcase their artistic drawings as part of developing a positive classroom environment. These collages made the classroom appear creative and unique and, most importantly, ours. All the activities they were required to perform were conducted in a positive and physical learning space where the way the desks were arranged encouraged learner interaction. I also learned that every classroom should be unique and inviting and should promote learners' creativity.



Figure 5.11: Collage making: A learner activity that created an inviting classroom atmosphere

5.5.2 Cultivating positive interactions and scaffolding learner autonomy

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory recognises the importance of working together to develop knowledge and to learn. Gee (2008) asserts that the sociocultural theory is foregrounded in the community of practice concept, which is a space where people share a set of practices while working together. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) further explain the implication of this theory in the classroom context by articulating that it is imperative that teachers and learners engage in collaborative discoveries where teachers scaffold learners' learning as they construct knowledge. Initially, this was a theory that foregrounded my research, but that I had never put into practice before. When I began to apply it in my teaching, it was accompanied by numerous fears such as learners spiralling out of control and failing or refusing to work together constructively. Encouraging my learners to work together during my lessons was a first breakthrough. I realised that each learner came to the classroom with a wealth of knowledge which would allow them to work together and share their understanding with their classmates. My fears were allayed when the safe-guarded interactions I encouraged enabled my learners to share positive values and allowed them a chance to get to know one another on a more personal level. These activities fostered engagements that promoted the

acquisition not only of content knowledge, but also of positive values such as respect and skills. Below is an excerpt of my free and unedited writing about the value of interactive learner engagement in the classroom:

The learners were intrigued by this story u could easily sense it, they kept quiet, and all eyes were on me, I had learnt this story from one of the workshops I attended. Anita randomly asked "sir where did the boy stay" I affirmed that I can't disclose such but instead of focusing on who and where the boy came from, I asked them what could have been done better at school level to support the young man. Samke raised her hand and said, "the teachers failed her as they showed no interest towards him" Lerumo further supported this and said, "the teachers should sat him down and asked him what was going on". Amanda suggested that "it often hard also for teachers as learners often misbehaviour making it difficult for teachers to see when they is a problem, as learners we must have that one person we talk to like the RCL or anyone else". It was thrilling seeing my learners engage in this manner, I explained that both the learners and the teachers could have done a better job in ensuring a safe and supportive environment for the young man, as teachers it crucial that we develop positive relations with our learners so that we can easily Identify when there is a problem.

Figure 5.12: Excerpt of my reflections on classroom engagement

I also reflected on the nature and value of positive interactive engagements that elicited learner autonomy and confidence. One journal excerpt that reflects my thinking is the following:

Journal reflection:

Date: 18-01-2023

Today's lesson was a success, the learners concluded their practical task working collaboratively. This was their first formal task after I have started my self-study research, hence their results were a true definition of the amount of effort I am putting in each and every lesson. Seeing them work at their optimum willing to work with each other was motivation for me as a novice teacher. My learner's exercise books were evidence of my learner's consistency and diligently. They were no challenges encountered for this lesson, as time was sufficient for today lesson.

Figure 5.13: Excerpt of my reflections on positive learner engagement and autonomy

5.5.3 Be the change you want to see: Modelling positive behaviour

Vygotsky (1978) posits that a learner learns from others as they imitate what they see and experience in their immediate environment. Noting this, I came to understand the vast impact I have, and will continue to have, on my learner's lives and their learning experiences. Dinkelman (2003) defines self-study research as a systematic enquiry of oneself in practice, noting that the self-study methodology is grounded in critical self-reflection. Additionally, Skerrett (2006, p. 3) states that self-study research is "a necessary pedagogical stance for

improving teaching and learning”. Hamilton et al. (2008) affirm that a self-study is a method of research that allows the researcher to examine and better understand their practice with the intention of improving it. As I soon learnt that the self-study research methodology is improvement aimed, I resolved to model positive behaviour in my classroom. I changed my authoritarian attitude towards my learners and allowed them to engage in activities where I could learn to understand them better. Icebreaker activities in particular enabled me to be much more informed about my learners’ feelings and to better understand how specific actions and words made them feel. My lessons also enabled my learners to communicate much more freely with me and their peers. Most importantly, I learnt that as I acted more positively towards my learners by, for example, being on time during lessons and demonstrating compassion, love, and respect towards them, they learnt from this and started emulating my behaviour by showing respect for their classmates and engaging in learning activities in a much more positive manner. The following unedited excerpt illustrates the positivity that emanated from constructive encounters during an icebreaker activity:

Sweet guy (Pseudonym) was the first to share and with a smile on his face and a bit shaky he said, “*Sir I feel loved by my friends and my mom*” his friends in the middle row chanted “*awe*” (this is usual slang which is a form of agreeing). Two stood out for me and really touched my heart, Nelly (pseudonym) said “*Sir I am feeling lucky I guess, because I woke up today and both of my mama and papa are still alive*”. Zoe (pseudonym) also stood up and said “*I feel courageous, courageous because I aiming to write my own novel very soon. Sir also write short stories at times, and some are true*”. Everyone was motivated by this, and we then requested that in the next lesson to come could she kindly read and share her stories with us as a class.

The ice breaker activity achieved desired results, as it allowed for active and positive engagement, gave me a clear understanding of how my learners were feeling, most importantly the ice breaker activity planted the seed of a safe and nurturing learning environment where they (learners) are able to express their feelings freely. I then moved on to presenting the topic for the day “*energy and change*” gave a brief introduction of what the topic entails I then asked the learners to write two questions:

Figure 5.14: Positive conversation and comments that emerged from an icebreaker activity

The combined images below (Figure 5.15) were taken during icebreaker sessions that resulted in interactive activities and positive behaviour by the learners:



Figure 5.15: Images of icebreaker activities that prompted positive engagement and behaviour

5.6 Conclusion

Hamilton (2008) affirms that self-study allows the researcher to examine and better understand their educational practice with the intention of improving it. LaBoskey (2004) asserts that this research methodology is grounded in reflection. Therefore, in this chapter I critically reflected on various stories and lived experiences as I explored and analysed what I had learnt. I also illuminated my key learnings from my learner participants and critical friends and explored and analysed these newly acquired discoveries. A key data generation tool in this chapter was the lessons I had conducted involving my learners, and I thoroughly and deeply reflected on the meanings I could unpack about positive learner behaviour based on these lesson outcomes. I also analysed some key learnings from my critical friends that enriched my practice as I unpacked my discoveries along this self-study journey of teacher learning. To generate the data, I used text-based narratives of my lessons, journal reflections, and photographs.

Easton (2008) explains that teachers need to be well-informed and wise if they wish to change and enrich their practice. Kelly (2006) notes that this change occurs as teachers shift from being novices towards becoming expert educationists. This process was clarified for me as I explored and analysed Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory which foregrounding my research study, and this research perspective clarified the significant value of others in the teacher-learning process. It brought to mind the Zulu proverb: "*Umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu*", which translated means: "*You are because I am*", and which manifested in my study. I learnt to appreciate the role of others (my family, community, research participants, critical friends, and colleagues)

along my teacher-learning journey. Mokhela (2006, p. 151) notes that “every teacher has to create an environment in which each learner is guided towards an attitude of caring and respect for other learners”. This research study taught me the significance of positive teacher-learner relations to ensure that a positive learning space that promotes sound values, knowledge, and skills is created in the classroom.

Furthermore, I learned the significance of enabling learners to take charge of their learning inside and outside the classroom. This is crucial as it is such learning that allows learners to develop a sense of agency and a sense of ownership of their learning. A crucial awareness that this study elicited is that my teacher-learning journey needs to continue as I still have to learn much more about positive behaviour in the educational sphere, particularly as such behaviour extends far beyond the classroom to the lives our learners will one day live as adults and worthy citizens of this beautiful country.

CHAPTER SIX

TOWARDS A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

6.1 Introduction

Weber (2014, p. 8) notes that self-study is “a multi-purpose endeavour that simultaneously involves research, teaching, learning, and evaluation”. LaBoskey (2004) asserts that self-study methodology, by its very nature, follows a qualitative approach as teachers generally want to enhance their understanding of teacher education and improve their practice. In my school, the number of learners who did not do homework, bunked classes, and engaged in bullying had increased rapidly by the end of my three-year tenure. These delinquent behaviours prompted me to conduct this self-study research as I needed to determine what positive behaviour entails and how it can be instilled in learners. I aimed to reflect on, evaluate, and learn from my personal history to understand how my earlier experiences had moulded and shaped my understanding of positive behaviour. To achieve this aim, I utilised self-study data generation tools. Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998) define self-study as follows: “Self-study is the study of oneself; one’s actions, one’s ideas, as well as the ‘not self’”. This scholarly notion encouraged me to want to learn more about what it was that had informed the pedagogical epistemologies I adhered to at the time. I utilised in-depth reflection as I intended to learn from both positive and negative experiences and to use these learnings to cultivate positive behaviour through my teaching, thereby improving my learners’ learning experiences. My ultimate aim also included minimising learner misconduct and misbehaviour by enforcing positive learner support.

Positive learner behaviour manifests when learners are active participants in their learning. It also entails experiences when learners learn from their mistakes, engage in collaborative learning, set their own educational goals, and engage in thoughtful self-reflection, all of which result in a positive mindset. I therefore sought to cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching by providing positive learner support and encouraging positive behaviour. Saito et al. (2015) assert that positive behaviour support is a strategy to reform learner misconduct, and this strategy involves developing a positive and supportive learning culture in the school and classroom. The sociocultural perspective as posited by Vygotsky (1978), which emphasises collaborative learning, was pivotal in cultivating positive learner behaviour through my teaching. Saito et al. (2015) state that learners can forge positive relations with their peers when they are engaged in cooperative learning; therefore, to cultivate positive

behaviour through my teaching, I encouraged collaborative learning, modelled positive behaviour, fostered positive engagements, allowed learner autonomy to develop, and encouraged active participation and active learning. I conducted several lessons in which these tenets were applied and described five of them in Chapter four to illustrate how I had managed to cultivate positive learner behaviour. These lessons were conducted in response to research question two: *How can I cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching?* The lessons were intended to promote a positive learning environment that would be grounded in respect, collaboration, and mutual understanding. They were also designed to promote positive teacher-learner relations and learner autonomy. In Chapter five, I shared some of my learning highlights and experiences that had emerged during these lessons and that were crucial in informing my continued teacher-learning journey as they allowed me to evaluate the lessons I had learnt. I also made use of journal writing. Nyamupangedengu and Lelliott (2016) explain that journal writing may be used as a method of reflection and introspection; therefore, I engaged in thorough reflection of the lessons in which I had involved my learners.

In the next section I provide a brief overview the dissertation. I then present the key personal and professional learnings that emerged from this self-study and I provide a clear explanation of my methodological learning. A collage is also used to summarise the overall knowledge that I acquired about the nature of positive learner behaviour and how it can be achieved.

6.2 Overview of the Chapters

In Chapter one, I explained my research focus and purpose. This was followed by an extensive description of the background to and rationale for the study, and I subsequently presented my two key research questions and research objective. I proceeded by discussing the sociocultural theoretical framework within which the study was embedded. This theory guided my reasoning and enabled me to answer both research questions once I had analysed the data. My understanding of the interdependence of my learning with interactions was illuminated by the theory and it clarified that positive behaviour is embedded in imitation, instruction, and lived experiences. I also better understood McMurtry's (2015) reasoning that this theory focuses on how people learn in relation to their cultural and social surroundings. I then presented the key concepts that were used in the study, particularly positive learner behaviour and teacher learning, and I concluded by presenting a brief articulation of the research methodology.

In chapter two, I presented the research methodology in more depth and explained what self-study entails. Feldmann (2003) avers that this research methodology allows educators to recognise that they need to change their perspectives to improve their teaching practice. This was followed by a brief description of the research site and participants, which were my learners and me. I also highlighted the vital role of critical friends in self-study research and referred to them as Master's degree students, colleagues from my school, and my supervisors who had assisted me in structuring the research chapters and developing lesson plans that were intended to promote positive learner behaviour. I was also able to share emerging data with them for constructive direction. I proceeded by discussing the various data generation methods I had utilised, such as collage making, memory drawings, photographs, and journal writing. I acknowledged the challenges I had encountered during the study and explained how I had neutralised some of these challenges.

In Chapter three, I addressed the first research question: *What can I learn from my personal history about positive learner behaviour?* Samaras et al., (2004) explain that personal a history entails the life experiences of a teacher and that these experiences influenced their thinking about their way of teaching. In response to my first research question, I extracted data from various data-rich sources and commenced by reflecting on some primary and secondary school experiences that had been both positive and negative. I also recalled pertinent encounters that had occurred at home and in the community and considered how these had shaped my perception and understanding of teaching, learning, and positive learner behaviour. Moreover, I proceeded to present narratives of my personal history using memory drawings, photographs. I had presented the findings to my supervisors and critical friends for their comments.

In Chapter four, I responded to the second research question: *How can I cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching?* To answer this key question, I engaged with critical friends and senior colleagues who assisted me in structuring lessons that would promote inclusivity, respect, collaboration and, most importantly, positive behaviour through my teaching. I provided a thorough description of the lessons I had presented to my grade 8 learners to elicit data about and to better understand the factors that contribute to positive learner behaviour in the classroom.

In chapter five, I reflect and make meaning of the various lessons I conducted to cultivate positive learner in my classroom through my teaching. In making meaning of my learning

journey, I reflected on both my research questions (see chapter one). I begin the chapter by defining personal history, this is proceeded by a discussion of my learning from my personal history, critical friends , and learner participants. Lastly, I share my new professional discoveries and conclude the chapter.

In this concluding chapter, chapter six, I provide a review of my self-study dissertation. This is proceeded by a reflection of my self-study methodology. Next, I deliberate on my personal and professional learnings and lastly, I articulate what I intend to do in future, as a result of this research study.

6.3 Applying Self-Study Methodology to Enhance My Teaching Practice

The self-study methodology is grounded in reflection and this allowed me to constantly pause and reflect on my teaching, my relationship with my learners, and my pedagogical approaches. Hamilton, Smith and Worthington (2008) note that the self-study research approach requires researchers to examine their practices, experiences, and perspectives to better understand a particular educational phenomenon. Because my quest in this study was to understand positive learner behaviour, I engaged in reflection by questioning my teaching and learning approaches. Hamilton, Smith and Worthington (2008, p. 10) assert that self-study researchers “focus on their practice by examining their personal values and their professional work; [and in this process] reflection plays a vital role”. By questioning myself about my teaching practices, I learnt the art of identifying gaps in my practices and to pose questions about them that generated answers which improved my teaching practice. Samaras and Robert (2011) state that the primary intent of self-study is improved learning, which is a notion that I whole-heartedly embraced.

Using the data that had been generated, I engaged in deep reflection on my personal history, identified issues about misbehaviour in my classroom, and considered honestly how I had been addressing various issues in the classroom. For instance, I learned I had not supported my learners’ social and emotional needs and had neglected learner agency as my teaching approaches had not been learner-centred. Wells (2000, p. 56) states: "Learning is the transformation that continuously takes place in an individual's identity and ways of participating through his/her engagement in particular instances of social activities with others". As I worked with others, I started drafting lessons that cultivated positive behaviour through my teaching. After I had conducted these lessons and reflected on the data, I understood the importance of positive interaction thanks to my understanding of the sociocultural theory,

which places much emphasis on collaborative and interactive learning. This theory, which goes hand in hand with self-study research, also guided me to understand that learners come from different families and communities that have been taught differently due to their diverse backgrounds and family realities. I thus learnt that I have to scaffold my learners' learning and be the change I intend to see. In this process, self-study methodology allowed me to reflect on my lived encounters and to understand how these had shaped the teacher that I had become prior to the study. I thus learnt that my professional identity had been informed by my personal experiences as a child, an adolescent, and a novice teacher. I therefore believe that a teacher should always reflect on these personal experiences in order to move forward.

Most importantly, self-study methodology is embedded in the sociocultural theory and therefore emphasises the significance of working with others in the learning process, which should be life-long. Tidwell and Jónsdóttir (2020) affirm that working with others can provide solutions to the difficulties one encounters when assessing and evaluating one's own practice and reframing it. Murphy and Ivinon (2003) assert that learning is a socially constructed process that occurs in the relationship between an individual and his/her immediate environment. From this I learnt to acknowledge that I was not an island nor isolated along my teaching and learning journey as I had to work with colleagues who were more experienced than I was. In fact, I learnt that working with others allowed me to provide solutions to complex issues. When I encountered challenges in my teaching, I engaged my critical friends and they assisted me constructively and supportively. I also learnt that, as a novice teacher, my learning had no full stop; it has to be ongoing and, most importantly, grounded in continued reflection.

6.4 Looking Back to go Forward: My Personal and Professional Learnings

6.4.1 Self-directed and collaborative learning

I learnt that positive learner behaviour occurs when learners engage in self-directed learning, when they are allowed to think critically about their actions, and when they work interactively during lessons. It also occurs when they are mindful of others, embrace diversity, are aware of their social-emotional needs, and when they are vocal about these needs. As I reflected on my professional learning, I asked myself: *What do I now know about positive learner behaviour that I did not know before?* In response to this question, I listened again and again to the audio recordings of the lessons I had conducted, read the lesson narratives, and revisited my journal reflections. It became clear that the teacher has the power to enable and drive collaborative

learning and to cultivate positive learner behaviour. I listening to and *heard* my learners' voices as they worked together constructively and purposefully, and this reminded me that learning is not an independent journey but a 'community of learning affair'. As Gerhard and Mayer Smith (2008, p. 5) put it, "learning is not an individual activity but rather a social phenomenon". Furthermore, I learnt that learners should share content knowledge and work together to develop skills and imbue values through conversations and collaborative engagements. These collaborative processes encouraged a sense of unity, stimulated acceptance, and enhanced understanding and respect among my learners.

The sociocultural perspective emphasises the importance of a teacher working together with the learners as they learn. I reiterate here that Gerhard and Smith (2008, p. 50) argue that "a sociocultural perspective is grounded in the belief that learning is not an individual activity but a social experience". This means that interaction plays an essential role during the teaching and learning process and therefore, to cultivate positive behaviour through my teaching, I worked with my learners in many instances, but particularly when we established classroom rules. Looking back on this experience, I learnt that learners tend to respect classroom rules when they take ownership of these rules and when consequences are clearly spelt out if they do not adhere to them. Clearly, my learners were constantly searching for autonomy as they wanted shared responsibility and were eager to take charge of their learning. This observation taught me that my teaching and assessment approaches had to change to accommodate my learners' learning needs.

McMurtry (2015) maintains that, by interacting with others, teachers can reconstruct their understanding of their context. Easton (2012, p. 50) affirms that learning means "that we work with many people [by] encouraging discoveries and learning from mistakes [and] helping everyone to find what works". The sociocultural theory influenced me to perceive my learning journey as a teacher as a shared journey. John-Silver and Mahn (1996) agree, arguing that learning is a social process. As I worked with my learners, I was reminded that, as their teacher, my professional learning emerged from working with those around me. I learnt to appreciate the positive values, ethics, and sound teaching strategies that my colleagues had shared with me as these contributed to my learning about cultivating positive learner behaviour. Mkhize (2016) urges teachers to learn by working with others and by sharing their thinking and teaching methods with them. My colleagues also taught me that modelling positive behaviour at school will contribute significantly to my learners' changed attitude, while my critical friends

taught me that interactions play a crucial role in the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, I learnt that icebreaker activities are always an excellent start to a lesson as they foster engagement in the classroom and stimulate learners to think.

6.4.2 Forging supportive and positive teacher-learner relationships

Yeung et al. (2009) state that teachers must establish and maintain strong positive relationships with their learners and cultivate learners' autonomy so that they will accept responsibility for their own behaviour. Wu et al. (2010) note that positive teacher-learner relationships are crucial in establishing a positive learning environment and in ensuring that learners will feel welcome and are supported in the classroom. As I reflected on the data, I learnt that the more I worked and supported my learners, the easier it became for them to engage and interact with me. It became clear that a positive teacher-learner relationship was ideal for strengthening positive learner behaviour and for contributing to a positive learning environment that encouraged positive values. I worked closely with my learners and promptly provided feedback on their assessment tasks and activities. I supported my learners and ensured that they reached the desired outcomes in my subject. Lindo et al. (2014, p. 285) assert that "children are more likely to succeed in school when the teacher-child relationship is characterised by warmth, trust, and a low degree of conflict". I lent my learners my ear and ensured that their voices were heard, and this approach minimised undesirable conflict. Overall, I learnt that supportive and positive teacher-learner relations play an essential role in cultivating a positive learning environment and minimising learner misconduct, while such relations also contribute to desirable academic performance.

6.4.3 Fostering a Positive learning Environment

Hau and Li (2008) explain that effective classroom management is critical in building a positive learning environment. To create a positive learning environment in my classroom, I ensured that I worked with my learners to establish classroom rules. This was important as they understood what was expected of them as well as their role in the classroom. Achieving a positive learning environment also required a change in the physical appearance of the classroom. Before the study I had observed that the classrooms where learners often misbehaved had been vandalised and did not appear inviting. I thus worked with my learners to make our classroom look inviting. Hau and Li (2008, p. 63) note that teachers "need to create the best possible physical environment to ensure that their students have a comfortable and pleasant atmosphere in which to learn". I guided my learners to create posters and collages to

make our learning space an inviting and attractive one. I learnt that learners' contribution to creating an attractive class develops a sense of ownership in them and that they will respect such a learning space and take ownership of it. In the case of my classroom, I am delighted to report that vandalism was eradicated.

I learnt that my creative teaching approaches also played a role in creating a positive learning environment as they made my lessons interactive, goal-driven, and collaborative. I used icebreaker activities, encouraged teamwork, and developed lessons that encouraged critical thinking. I learnt that in such a positive learning environment inclusivity is crucial. Mkhize (2016, p. 10) states: "To be inclusive as teachers, we have to be creative in our approaches and methods of teaching; creativity can positively enhance teaching and learning". Inclusive education is significant as it allows teachers and learners to embrace diversity and respect all learners regardless of their abilities and backgrounds. I therefore used various teaching tools, including visual aids such as collages, to enrich the learning environment and to reinforce subject content concepts. I also used group work extensively to encourage my learners to accept and understand one another.

6.4.4 Learner autonomy and agency

Learner autonomy refers to learners taking charge of their learning which emerges from self-directed learning that is fostered by a positive learning environment. McNeece (2018) states that learners seek independence from a young age and that learner autonomy can be achieved through the gradual release of teacher responsibility while some responsibilities are transferred to the learners. Autonomy does not only focus on individuality, but it can also be achieved through collaboration. Fisher (2008) argues that, to achieve learner autonomy, teachers must provide clear instructions and guide learners to understand what they are learning and why. In my self-study, learner autonomy meant that my learners gained newly learned knowledge in the classroom by working with others to solve problems and engaging in self-reflection to improve their behaviour. It also meant that my responsibility in the classroom as the source of knowledge gradually decreased as I began to support knowledge and learning by scaffolding my learners' learning so that they could reach their full potential, as posited by Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD. McNeece (2018, p. 18) notes that decreasing the teacher's responsibility "creates more opportunities for him or her to work with individual students and small groups, allowing for daily formative assessment and feedback".

To encourage my learners to become autonomous, I used numerous teaching strategies that involved, amongst others, clear expectations and instructions for the learners. This enabled them to clearly understand what was being learnt and what was expected of them. I did this especially when learners were about to do a practical task and emphasised the main objectives of the practical investigation. I also encouraged group work and this helped the learners to share new ideas and creative thinking. Although group work was emphasised in the classroom, homework was done independently. In most instances, the homework the learners had to do required them to reflect on classroom activities and respond to pertinent questions that required some research. Encouraging learner autonomy also required that I gave constant feedback based on both formative and summative assessment tasks.

6.4.5 Social-emotional learning

Recognising and respecting human emotions is crucial in all teaching and learning processes as how one feels can impact the efficacy of one's learning. Teachers play a significant role in cultivating a learning environment that promotes and protects learners' emotional health and well-being as learners learn well in an environment that responds positively to their emotional needs (Blake et al., 2007). In this study, I realised that emotions would influence and inform my learners' actions and responses, and this meant that I needed to understand how my learners felt as it would contribute to their overall learning experience. To address this need, I made use of icebreaker activities that encouraged my learners to share their feelings. This allowed my learners to share expressions of empathy and understanding which contributed to a sense of unity among them, as was evident in the expression of "Awwwww!" when the learners responded emotionally to another. Mkhize (2020) states that listening to learners' voices allows one to find connections and cultivate unity within the classroom, which is a notion I support.

Teachers can also promote socio-emotional support by encouraging respectful communication in the classroom. The nature of collaborative inquiry not only eases learning but also enables learners to communicate meaningfully with their peers, and this presents opportunities for learners to share and express their feelings. Blake et al. (2007) aver that learners are less likely to develop mental health problems if they have good communication skills and positive relations. Kelly (2006) notes that learning requires comprehensive classroom interactions and participation, while Mkhize (2020) affirms that participation and interactions in the classroom allow learners to embrace diversity. Teachers should therefore acknowledge each learner's

voice in the classroom to help them gain a sense of belonging. I agree with Mkhize (2020, p. 23) who states:

“Schools need to engender a sense of belonging within the school and smaller classroom communities by balancing children's need for individual identity and autonomy with sound social relationships in which others' needs are also considered”.

6.5 Collage Interpretation of My Key Learnings

I engaged in a collage-making activity to represent and interpret the key learnings that emerged from my self-study research. Mkhize-Mthembu (2023) explains that collage making is a fruitful approach that assists the self-study researcher to reflect on key learning experiences, research accomplishments, and challenges encountered during the research process. Van Schalkwyk (2010, p. 10) explains that the pictures/images in the collage “...act as supportive structures or cues assisting the process of drawing out rich and vivid stories of the self”. The collage I had created was presented to my critical friends and their comments and the ensuing discussion were audio recorded.



Figure 6.1: Collage that illustrates the outcomes of my learning experiences

The picture of a family in the top left-hand corner represents the vital role my family played in my ability to construct knowledge and understand positive learner behaviour. I thus acknowledge that what I learnt from them was instrumental in my success. I thus share my

understanding that a learner's success not only depends on the teacher, but on parental support as well.

The words *love, caring, land of smiles, sharing, and sustained energy* are words that came to mind as I reflected on the positive culture that had been developed collaboratively in my classroom. These particular words came to mind as I reflected on the role my primary schooling had played in my development as a person and as a teacher. The pivotal position of these words in the collage also signifies that my research objectives were achieved. However, I acknowledge that certain spaces still need to be visited. The pictures of *children working together to catch fish* and of *the friends sharing a meal* reminded me of the theoretical framework that had guided my research and my understanding of the importance of working together. I realised that using this framework had inspired my decision to guide learner interaction which, in turn, enabled my learners to share knowledge, values, and skills. Moreover, I realise that my teacher-learner journey was and will continue to be grounded in learning from others who have much more experience than I have.

6.6 Moving Forward

This research study has provided insight into what can be achieved through cultivating positive behaviour through a teaching approach that encourages positive teacher-learner relations, reduces learner misbehaviour, and potentially contributes to the improved academic performance of all learners. As I became aware of these insights, I shared (and will continue to share) my self-study findings with my colleagues to motivate them to encourage collaboration and interaction in their classrooms. Furthermore, this approach enables learners to share understanding, knowledge, values (such as respect and caring), and skills and allows them to learn from one another. When such learning occurs in one classroom, it expands and contributes to a positive school culture that is grounded in positivity, with the result that learner misbehaviour and misconduct are minimised and even eradicated.

The findings of this study compel me to motivate my colleagues and other teachers to model positive behaviour inside and beyond their respective classrooms. It is undeniable that learners learn from others; these may be their peers and also people who are more experienced and knowledgeable than they are. Hence, when teachers demonstrate care, compassion, and recognition, their learners will learn from them and emulate these attributes. A crucial lesson I learnt from this study is to foster positive teacher-learner relations as this 'bonding' allows

learners to share their personal experiences and feelings which significantly improves their participation in learning activities. I therefore encourage my fellow teachers to develop strategies that will improve teacher-learner relationships and that will positively impact the atmosphere in their classrooms.

6.7 Study Limitations

No study is ever perfect and all-encompassing and this study was no exception as certain gaps are clearly evident. One measure that I shall employ is to engage in more extensive teacher-learning activities to improve my practice on an ongoing basis. Time management also needs to be improved as I was challenged by limited time to complete the icebreaker activities and lesson content. I acknowledge that icebreaker activities need to be shorter yet still impactful to maximise teaching time. I shall also explore more ways to improve my teaching practice and ensure that my lessons remain innovative, creative, and inclusive.

In future research studies, I intend to explore the effect of positive teacher-learner relationships in teaching and learning, as this became one of the key learning experiences during my study. Alternatively, I shall explore the effectiveness of self-study research on teacher learning.

One limitation that stood out for me and that the reader might have noticed is that I excluded teacher training experiences from the data. Such data would undoubtedly have enriched the findings as the gap between secondary school learning experiences and being a novice teacher in the classroom was not addressed in this study. My and possibly other researchers' future endeavours should therefore fill this gap to extend our understanding of the teacher's role in engendering positive learner behaviour.

I also acknowledge that the study was limited to one school and only two classrooms which means that its scope was limited and that the findings may not be generalised to all schools in the District or the KZN Province. However, the trustworthiness of the data and the subsequent findings may inform similar studies in the future.

6.8 Conclusion

In Chapter five, I emphasised the nature of and need for self-study research in the educational context. I provided a brief overview of this thesis and described the key personal and professional learnings that emerged from the data and I discussed how the self-study research approach aided my teaching practice. I acknowledged the limitations of the study and provided

guidelines for future researchers who might wish to extend the scope and findings of their studies to provide further enlightenment regarding the cultivation of positive learner behaviour.

The primary aim of this study was to cultivate positive learner behaviour through my teaching. To achieve this, I reflected on my schooling experiences and also worked collaboratively with others to cast more light on the topic under investigation. In essence, I learnt that fostering a positive learning environment, encouraging positive learner interactions, and allowing for learner autonomy contribute to the fact that learners are enabled to adjust and reconstruct negative behaviours. I also learnt that promptly responding to learners' emotional and learning needs may positively change their behaviour. Furthermore, this study has taught me that positive learner support is vital in cultivating a positive school culture.

While I was engaging in this study, I was constantly reminded of the importance of positive teacher-learner relationships and regard this as key in maintaining a positive learning environment. Therefore, I intend to further explore the various ways in which I, as a novice teacher, can encourage and maintain positive teacher-learner relations through my teaching.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Letter of consent for parents


Greytown

3250

12 August 2022

Dear Parent/ Guardian

Letter of consent for parents

Research title: Cultivating positive learner behaviour in my teaching. A secondary teacher`s self-study.

My name is Lindokuhle Mdletshe. I am a Life Sciences and Natural Science teacher at Greytown Secondary School. I am currently studying towards my Master`s degree in education at the College of Humanities, faculty of Education, University of KwaZulu - Natal. As part of the course work for this degree, I am required to conduct a research study.

My research study is a self-study, where I will learn from my personal history with regards to learner positive behaviour and further explore how I can cultivate positive learner behaviour in my teaching. This study will allow me to learn from my past schooling experiences, furthermore, contribute towards learner positive behaviour in the classroom. In participating in this study, your child will engage in numerous classroom engagements and discussion, contributing to the sharing of knowledge and ideas.

As part of collecting data for my research study, I request to have your son/daughter as my participant, kindly note that your response to this letter will not in any way influence the way I view the learners nor have any effect on their academic progress. If I receive your consent, I will work with your child/ ward in a way that respect their dignity, privacy, and confidentiality. Their names and pictures will not be shared with anyone. Instead of using real names, pseudonyms will be used ensuring anonymity. If pictures are used, the faces of the learners will be hidden.

I would appreciate if you can take some time to consider my request and discuss it with your daughter I son. Please complete, sign, and return this letter.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours Sincerely

L.Mdletshe

Cell: [REDACTED]

Email: 216017755@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Supervisor details:

Supervisor: Dr. Mkhize-Mthembu

Email: MkhizeN39@ukzn.ac.za

Contact number: [REDACTED].

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration

Research Office, Westville Campus

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000 KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Tel: +27 31 260 4557- Fax +27 31 260 4609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

I----- (name of parent/ guardian), parent/ guardian of
----- (name of learner) hereby confirm that I have discussed the
contents of this letter with my daughter/son and give/ not give (circle one) my consent
for Mr. L Mdletshe to refer to my daughter/son's work in class and participation as part of data
collection.

APPENDIX B: Letter of consent for learner participant


Greytown

3250

12 August 2022

Dear Student

Letter of consent for learners

Research title: Cultivating positive learner behaviour in my teaching. A secondary teacher's self-study.

I am Mr. L Mdletshe, a Life Sciences and Natural Science teacher at Greytown Secondary School. I am currently studying towards my Master's degree in education at the College of Humanities, faculty of Education, University of KwaZulu - Natal. As part of the course work for this degree, I am required to conduct a research study.

My research study is a self-study, where I will learn from my personal history with regards to learner positive behaviour and further explore how I can cultivate positive learner behaviour in my teaching. This study will allow me to learn from my past schooling experiences and contribute towards cultivating positive behaviour in the classroom.

As part of collecting data for my research study, I request to work with you, record interaction and discussion which will take place, use journal writing to reflect on my personal history and to note daily interactions which will take place, make use of collage making to allow for participation and the sharing of knowledge and lastly make use photographs. Kindly note that your response to this letter will not in any way influence the way I view you nor have any effect on your academic progress. If I receive your consent, I will work with you in a way that respects your dignity, privacy, and confidentiality. Your names and pictures will not be shared with anyone. Instead of using real names, pseudonyms will be used ensuring anonymity. If pictures are used, faces will be hidden.

Informed consent document for participants

Research title: Cultivating positive learner behaviour in my teaching. A secondary teacher`s self-study.

I ----- grade-----

hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of this study and **do/do not** (circle your answer) consent to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to leave/withdraw from the study anytime if I want to without any negative or undesirable consequence.

Warm regards

L.Mdletshe

Cell: [REDACTED]

Email: 216017755@stu.ukzn.ac.za

For any enquires please contact:

Supervisor details:

Supervisor: Dr. Mkhize-Mthembu

Email: MkhizeN39@ukzn.ac.za

Contact number: [REDACTED]

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration

Research Office, Westville Campus

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000 KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Tel: +27 31 260 4557- Fax +27 31 260 4609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

APPENDIX C: Gatekeeper's letter (principal)


Greytown

3250

12 August 2022

Dear Sir/ Madam

Gatekeeper's letter

Research title: Cultivating positive learner behaviour in my teaching. A secondary teacher's self-study.

I am Mr. LMdletshe, a Life Sciences and Natural Science teacher at Greytown Secondary School. I am currently studying towards my Master's degree in education at College of Humanities, faculty of Education, University of KwaZulu - Natal. As part of the course work for this degree, I am required to conduct a research study.

My research study is a self-study, where I will learn from my personal history with regards to learner positive behaviour and further explore how I can cultivate positive learner behaviour in my teaching. This study will allow me to learn from my past schooling experiences and contribute towards cultivating positive learner behaviour in my teaching.

As part of collecting data for my research study, I request to work with learners from my school, more specifically Two classes 8D and 10 C. I will record interactions and discussions which will take place within the classroom, use journal writing to reflect on my personal history and to note daily interactions which will take place, make use of collage making to allow for participation and the sharing of knowledge and lastly make use photographs of the interactions which will take place. The learner's willingness to participate or not will not, in any way, influence the way I view them, nor have any effect on their academic progress. I will work with the learners in a way that respects their dignity, privacy, and confidentiality. Their names and pictures will not be shared with anyone. Instead of using real names, pseudonyms will be used ensuring anonymity. If pictures are used, faces will be hidden.

Furthermore,

1. Data will be stored in a secure storage and destroyed after five years.
2. Learners will have the autonomy to participate or withdraw from the study and will not be penalised for taking such an action.
3. Learners' involvement is solely for academic reasons only and no financial benefit will be involved.
4. Findings will be shared with learners, critical friends, and colleagues.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours Sincerely



L.Mdletshe

Cell: [REDACTED]

Email: 216017755@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Supervisor details:

Supervisor: Dr. Mkhize-Mthembu

Email: MkhizeN39@ukzn.ac.za

Contact number: [REDACTED].

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Administration

Research Office, Westville Campus

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000 KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Tel: +27 31 260 4557- Fax +27 31 260 4609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Informed consent document for the principal

Research title: *Cultivating positive learner behaviour in my teaching. A secondary teacher's self-study.*

I: ----- signature: -----

Hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of this study and **do/do not** (circle your answer) consent to learners participating in this study.

APPENDIX D: Ethical Clearance letter



30 March 2023

Lindokuhle Mdletshe (216017755)
School Of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Lindokuhle Mdletshe,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00005313/2023

Project title: Cultivating positive learner behaviour in my teaching. A secondary teacher's self-study.

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

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

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

This approval is valid until 30 March 2024.

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

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

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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

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

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

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