SUPPORTING FOUNDATION PHASE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A SELF-STUDY OF A HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

BY

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DEGREE

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SUPERVISOR: **DR KATHLEEN PITHOUSE- MORGAN**

ABSTRACT

This personal history self-study focuses on supporting Foundation Phase teacher learning through professional development in an Independent school context in South Africa. In engaging in this study I am the main research participant who takes the reader through the passages of my early childhood experiences, my schooling, and my training as a student teacher and my practice of being a teacher and a Head of Department at an Independent Muslim School. I investigate how I can use a deeper understanding of my personal history to enhance my understanding of my professional practice and thus to better support Foundation Phase teacher learning through professional development strategies and initiatives in my particular Independent school context. Through this process of deliberate remembering, I uncover many hidden experiences of my early learning, and of becoming a professional, which have impacted on my present practices as teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department. Key themes that emerge are: *a) guidance and inspiration from family; b) evolving from teacher centredness to learner centredness; c) deep-rooted intrinsic motivation; d) teacher mentoring and collaboration; and e) developing greater self esteem and freedom of expression.* From these themes I develop questions to spur me on in supporting teacher learning through professional development initiatives in my school context, allowing me to revisit my existing practice. This study illustrates how our lived experiences have helped to shape and continue to reshape our practices as teachers and school managers. The study also shows how we can learn from our personal histories in order to enable us to develop our pedagogical and managerial capacities.

DECLARATION

I, Rashida BeBe Khan declare that

(i)   The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.

(ii)   This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

(iii)   This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

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Signed……………………………

STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR

This dissertation is submitted with / without my approval.

…………………………………

Dr Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan

26 August 2011

Mrs R Be Be Khan (210551456)
School of Education & Development
Faculty of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Khan

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0755/011M
PROJECT TITLE: Supporting Foundation Phase Professional Development: A self-study of a Head of Department

In response to your application dated 17 August 2011, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application 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 school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Professor Steven Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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cc: Ms T Mnisi, Faculty Research Office, Faculty of Education, Edgewood Campus

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ABBREVIATIONS

ISASA	Independent Schools Association
UMALUSI	Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training
HOD	Head of Department
DoHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
MEd	Master of Education
AMS	Association of Muslim Schools
SMT'S	School Management Teams

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION
FROM CURRENT CHALLENGES TO FUTURE
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Introduction and Rationale for the Study

I am a 45 year-old female who embarked on my own journey of professional development at the age of 28, when I began studying at a teachers' training college in 1996, during the dawn of the Democratic South Africa. 1 am currently employed at an Independent Muslim school and have been teaching in and managing the Foundation Phase (Grade 00-3) in this school for almost 13 years. During this period, I have moved from "novice to expert" (Kelly, 2006, p. 516) as I have re-professionalised my teacher self with a Higher Diploma in Education and an Honours Degree. I have also taken advantage of other teacher professional development opportunities and am currently completing a Master of Education Degree (MEd).

Since my initial teacher training, the South African school curriculum has changed rapidly and continually and I have battled to cope with the challenges and needs of a rapidly changing curriculum and have sought many avenues to keep abreast of the changes. The impact of globalisation on our education system, together with the continued changes in our South African curriculum, demands that we teachers attain a new level of expertise. Teaching in our post-Apartheid South African context is undergoing a continuous process of transformation. Teachers are faced with re-skilling and re-professionalising ourselves to deal with the current changes, especially our multicultural classrooms. This continued change makes it necessary for teachers to engage in continued professional development activities to harness and enhance our pedagogical skills and knowledge, enabling us to be better equipped to handle curriculum changes in a manner that will benefit ourselves and learners within our contexts. We have to keep abreast of changing times and the demands of a global economy.

The challenges and needs facing teachers in Independent schools have been intensified as many of the Department of Education's professional development initiatives targeting the changes in curriculum have not reached us in Independent schools. Therefore, as a Foundation Phase Head of Department in an Independent Muslim school, an important part of my role is to seek out

professional development strategies and initiatives in order to help teachers to learn ways and means of understanding and implementing the ever-changing curriculum.

As a Foundation Phase Head of Department, I supervise 16 teachers, three assistant teachers and oversee 270 learners from Grade 00-3. In a small-scale study that I did as part of my MEd coursework, I conducted face to face interviews with two Foundation Phase teachers in my current school about their experiences of teacher learning through professional development in and out of school. The interviews revealed that teacher learning in our Independent school context is difficult because of a lack of communication between the Department of Education and our school, as well as a lack of opportunities within our school context to promote and support professional development. The interviews also suggested that teacher learning takes place most often through informal discussions in the staffroom.

In the Foundation Phase at our school, formal professional development currently takes place weekly in the form of staff meetings, which focus on the running of the school, for example, examination procedures and discipline. In addition, on one Saturday per term, about five hours are allocated for professional development. However, topics for this are not pre-planned or democratically decided upon based on a survey of teachers' needs. Yearly, teachers attend a conference for schools affiliated to the Association of Muslim Schools (AMS), which takes place over a whole weekend. These conferences focus on value-based education, for example, how to integrate the value of responsibility in lessons.

Other teacher development initiatives are held at school when the need arises, however, in my experience, these are not enough to assist teachers to cope with the challenges and needs of teaching and learning. There is insufficient support in assisting novice and experienced teachers with delivery of programmes, such as, how to teach reading, phonics and mathematics, science and technology. From my observation, most teachers work in isolation and rely on their own experiences with the learners to enhance their facilitation. In my experience, there is hardly any networking and collaboration besides our weekly staff meetings and informal discussions in the staffroom or break times. Peer support and mentoring takes place minimally.

The school does not currently have a fully planned teacher professional development programme. There have been many attempts made for teachers to meet in their respective grades to plan collectively so that teachers can learn from each other, as well as to provide support to each other. However, to date, there is no comprehensive professional development structure in place, as monitoring of teachers has failed due to past teacher evaluation methods, which created animosity in their implementation procedures, and have now been scrapped (see Chapter Three for more detail). Hence, presently, there is minimal support provided to teachers through professional development initiatives.

The purpose of this study is therefore to explore how I, as a Foundation Phase Head of Department, can think of new strategies to better guide and support teacher learning through professional development initiatives in my Independent school context. Supporting teacher learning through continuing professional development is not only a priority in my school context. The Department of Higher Education and Training's (DoHET) new policy on minimum requirements for teacher education (2011, p. 5) highlights the importance of providing this kind of support to all practicing South African teachers. The policy (DoHET, 2011. p. 5) explains the need for continuing teacher professional development in three broad pathways: "A teaching and learning pathway, a management and leadership pathway and an educational planning, research and or policy development pathway". Thus, as teachers begin to develop expertise in their profession, there is an expectation for them to make contributions in supporting teaching and learning in their environment.

According to the DoHET's policy (2011, p. 31), continuing professional development initiatives should offer practicing teachers "opportunities to strengthen or supplement existing, or develop new, specialisations and interests, and in general improve their capacity to engage with, support and assist [others]". A Continuing Professional Teacher Development system is to be implemented as one of the policies for the Framework for Teacher Development (DoE, 2007) so as to improve teaching and learning. This policy emphasises and reinforces the professional status of teaching and aims to engage teachers in a variety of teacher learning initiatives. It also advises teachers as to what kind of professional development initiatives will contribute to their professional growth and how these initiatives can contribute to teacher learning.

For this research, I am adopting a personal history self-study approach (Samaras, Hicks & Berger, 2004). (I discuss my research approach in more detail in Chapter Two). According to Samaras et al. (2004, p. 905), this type of self-study can be used to "know and better understand one's professional identity, model and test forms of reflection, and, finally, push the boundaries of what we know by creating alternative interpretations of reality". Therefore, to achieve my research purpose, in this study I explore my lived experiences from infancy to adulthood, paying particular attention to my experiences of teaching and learning. In this way, I go back to significant experiences of my personal history and consider how each episode might have impacted on the teacher and Head of Department I am today. In addition, I investigate how I can use this deeper understanding of my personal history to enhance my understanding of my professional practice and thus to better support Foundation Phase teacher learning through professional development strategies and initiatives in my particular Independent school context.

My aim is for this personal history self-study research to enable me as a Head of Department to learn from my lived experiences to provide the necessary support to teachers in my Independent school context. As a Head of Department, I aim to be able to develop and seek out appropriate and innovative professional development strategies and initiatives (inside and outside school) to assist Foundation Phase teacher learning.

Presently, I am the Foundation Phase co-ordinator for the Association of Muslim Schools (AMS) in KwaZulu Natal. This position involves assisting Foundation Phase teachers with curriculum and other related issues. Currently, I am involved in a AMS steering committee in developing resource materials for the Foundation Phase in Muslim schools. With this in mind, my research aim is not only to use my self-study research to support Foundation Phase teacher learning in my school, but also to share what I have learnt with educators and managers from other Independent schools through the networks I am involved in.

My Research Questions

The first key question that guides my personal history self-study research is:

1. *How can I better understand the personal history that informs my practices as a teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department?*

To respond to this question, I reconstruct the memoirs of my educational life (with special reference made to my experiences of learning and teaching) from infancy, through all the milestones of schooling and ultimately to my present position as teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department. These memoirs are presented in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

The second key question that provides direction for my study is:

2. *How can I draw on a deeper understanding of my personal history to better support teacher learning in an Independent school through professional development initiatives?*

In exploring this question, I consider the significance of my memories of my past and present learning and teaching experiences. In doing so, I aim to identify appropriate strategies to better support teacher learning through professional development initiatives in my Independent School context. I present this analysis of my memoirs in Chapter Four.

My Understanding of Teacher Learning and Professional Development

The key concept that underpins this research is *teacher learning*. In this study, I draw on the theoretical perspectives of a *social theory of learning* (Wenger, 1998) and a *socio-cultural perspective on teacher learning* (Kelly, 2006) to reinforce and support my understanding of teacher learning in professional development initiatives.

Wenger (1998, p. 4) states that the primary focus of a "social theory of learning" is on "learning through social participation", which involves being "active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities". From this theoretical perspective, I understand teacher learning as an active, participatory process and an engagement with other people. According to Wenger (1998, p. 3), learning is "socially constructed and part of our lived experiences and participation in the world". Thus, I understand that teacher learning cannot be separated from our social context as it is socially constructed.

Similarly, Kelly (2006, p. 517) argues that teacher learning is "socially constructed" as it involves "collaboration between teachers, learners, higher education institutions and other stakeholders". According to Kelly's socio-cultural perspective, teacher learning also involves engagement with artefacts such as books and computers and is linked to circumstances that occur within and around the contexts within which teachers work. This social-cultural perspective is relevant to my personal history self-study as it emphasises the significance of the lived experiences that support and influence teacher learning and professional professional development. This perspective allows me to see how my lived experiences of learning and teaching have been socially constructed in particular contexts through interacting with others.

For me, these theoretical perspectives highlight three key themes that reinforce the importance of teacher learning through professional development as an ongoing, collaborative process and as a change mechanism:

Teacher learning as a process
Wilson and Demetriou (2007, p. 214) refer to teacher learning as a process of "reflection and action" and explain that, during this process, teachers develop "skills, acquire knowledge and expertise". According to Shulman (1997, p. 517), teacher learning is a "continuous, ongoing, constantly deepening process". Kelly (2006, p. 505) likewise states that teacher learning is a process "by which novice teachers move towards expertise". Furthermore, Evans (2002, p. 124), explains how she was involved in a "process that transformed [her] from a 'restricted' to an „extended' professional" through her own professional development. Therefore, I see teacher learning as a process that facilitates shifts both in teachers' pedagogy and their personal and professional histories. Additionally, Avalos (2011, p. 10) maintains that teacher professional development is about "teachers learning, learning how to learn, and transforming their learning into practice for the benefit of their students". Shulman (1997, p. 506) agrees that "teachers must learn from the experiences they create with their students". Thus, in my understanding, teacher professional development processes should be aimed at meeting the learning needs and challenges experienced by teachers and their learners.

Teacher learning in communities of practice

Shulman (1997, p. 516) speaks of teachers developing "communities of practice", which have "publicly visible outcomes [and] joint pursuit of tasks". He argues that these communities should "move from talk to action". Thus, in my view, all schools are potential "communities of practice" (Wenger, 2008, p. 6) for teachers and working collaboratively is an essential component of teacher professional development (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008). Wenger (1991) and Kelly (2006) both emphasise that working collaboratively is a crucial part of professional practice and development. Additionally, Fraser, Kennedy, Reid, and Mckinney (2007), together with Shulman (2004), highlight the need for ongoing collaboration and interaction between teachers. Thus, I understand that discussion, dialogue and sharing are the key components of teacher learning communities. Contributions of this nature will strengthen such communities, facilitating a 'basket' of ideas and skills for teachers to try out in their classrooms. Teachers will have other teachers to talk to about their problems and share the strengths and weaknesses of their pedagogies. Thus, teacher learning can be seen as a social process as teachers learn through sharing their experience within communities (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008). This brings in another essential component of collaboration, which is learning through sharing lived experiences. Samaras et al. (2004, p. 910) mention that one of the hallmarks of personal history self-study is its "collaborative nature", as it requires us to discuss our lived experiences with peers who can offer different perspectives and insights.

Communities of practice involve on-going collaboration and can be made up of school based communities, social networks and cluster groups (Lieberrnan & Pointer Mace, 2008). Learning communities can involve working collaboratively and collectively by means of peer networking through multimedia and other social networking technology (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2008). Hence, I see that there are diverse forms of teacher communities that can help teachers to learn and to be "active, reflective, collaborative, impassioned and communal" (Shulman, 1997, p. 51).

Teacher learning through sustained and continuous teacher professional development

Hargreaves (as cited in Day & Sachs, 2004, p. 8) states that "to improve schools an investment should be made in professional development". Lieberman and Pointer Mace (2008, p. 233) argue that for effective teacher learning to take place, professional development must be "sustained and continuous, rather than short term and episodic", and that professional development can also

take place "'inside and out of school" as well as within "communities". They maintain that this enhances teachers' learning, thinking and engagement with others. In addition, Knight (2001, p. 229) states that teachers' continuous professional development is important for the "well being of schooling", as initial teacher education is not sufficient to meet the needs of a challenging society. Fraser (2001, p. 153) supports Knight's view as he also claims that sustained and continuous professional development is necessary to meet the needs of teachers' changing "political and professional" context. Thus, I understand that consistent and uninterrupted teacher professional development is necessary to enhance teachers' expertise.

Background Information for the Study

An independent school such as the one I am working in is independent in does not rely on funding from the Department of Education. It is governed by a board of governors and is independent in operation. This school reports to UMALUSI (Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training), as well as the ISASA (Independent Schools Association). The school is registered with the Department of Education and complies with the quality standards set by UMALUSI and ISASA. The school is also affiliated to the Association of Muslim Schools in South Africa, and is one of the 80 Muslim schools in the country. Being Muslim, its focus is on promoting sound secular knowledge infused with strong Islamic teaching and learning. The aim of Muslim schools such as the one I work at is to deliver an islamically based-education of the highest quality and standard.

Overview of the Dissertation

In this initial chapter, I have explained the rationale for this study, which focuses on supporting Foundation Phase teacher learning through professional development in an Independent School context. I have articulated the key research questions and highlighted my methodological and theoretical approaches. I have not presented a compartmentalised literature review on the "scholarly conversations" (Clandinin & Conelly, 2000 p. 136) that enlighten and guide my study; instead I will integrate these conversations into the narrative of the dissertation. This is a common practice in personal history self-study research texts that integrate scholarly references "when they are directly applicable" (Nash, 2004, p. 7).

In Chapter Two, I explain the research methodology that frames this personal history self-study.

Relevant information relating to my school context, critical friends, data production, data representation and analysis is given. In Chapter Two, I also consider the limitations, trustworthiness, challenges and ethical issues of the study.

In Chapter Three, I address the first research question that underpins my study: *How can I better understand the personal history that informs my practices as a teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department?* To respond to this question, I recall my personal history as a South African Indian Muslim woman, with special reference to my experiences of learning and teaching.

In Chapter Four, I engage with the second question that underpins my study: *How can I draw on a deeper understanding of my personal history to better support teacher learning in an Independent school through professional development initiatives?* In exploring this question, I consider the educational significance of some indelible memories of my past and present learning and teaching experiences. In this analysis, I re-examine my personal history as presented in Chapter Three. In doing so, I consider how I can develop appropriate strategies and initiatives to better support teacher learning through professional development initiatives in my Independent School context.

In Chapter Five, the final chapter, I conclude this dissertation by presenting a reflective review of the dissertation, showing what I have learnt through writing each chapter of this personal history self-study. I also offer my personal and professional reflections on conducting a personal history self-study. I conclude the chapter by highlighting the contributions of the study, making recommendations for future practice and research.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY
MY PERSONAL HISTORY SELF-STUDY RESEARCH
JOURNEY

Introduction

Through this personal history self-study, I aim to think of new strategies to support teacher learning through professional development initiatives in my Independent school context. In the previous chapter, I give an overview of this study and express the need for this self-study. I highlight the key research questions, together with the methodological and theoretical approaches that underpin this personal history self-study. In Chapter Two, I concentrate on my personal history self-study research process and explain the methodology. I also discuss my professional context, the data generation and analysis process, limitations and challenges of the study, as well as issues of trustworthiness and ethics.

In this study, I am employing a personal history self-study approach (Samara, Hicks & Berger, 2004) to gain insight into my own experiences of learning and teaching with the aim of identifying strategies to support teacher learning through professional development initiatives in my Independent school context. In this personal history self-study, I explore my lived experiences from my childhood up to my current experiences as a teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department. Through delving into my past experiences, I aim to better understand the different perspectives and experiences I can bring to bear on teacher learning through professional development initiatives in my school context.

My Qualitative, Interpretivist Research Approach

I have chosen to use a qualitative approach in this research as the study focuses on understanding and learning from my lived experience. According to Niewenhuis (2010b, p. 50), qualitative research involves "understanding the world and constructing meaning out of experiences" and also "[focuses] on [people's] meaning and interpretations" (p. 51). In selecting this approach, my understanding was that the rich and in-depth data generated by exploring my

past and present experiences of learning and teaching would enable me to better understand and support teacher learning through professional development in my school context. The Interpretivist paradigm underpins this qualitative research as it focuses on understanding "people's subjective experiences" (Nieuwenhuis, 2010b, p. 59). In this case, the focus is on understanding my experiences of teaching and learning from my earliest childhood experiences to those as a teacher and the Head of Department I am today.

My Personal History Self- Study Methodology

For this research, I have chosen to use a personal history self-study methodology (Samaras, et al., 2004) to gain insight into my lived experiences, with the aim of better supporting teacher learning through professional development initiatives in my Independent school context. According to Samaras et al. (2004, p. 905), personal history self-study involves examining "the formative, contextualised experiences of our lives that influence how we think about and practice our teaching". This methodology focuses especially on how "the historical or life experiences related to personal and professional meaning making for teachers and researchers" (Samaras et al., 2004, pp. 909-910) impact on teaching and learning.

Samaras et al. (2004) explain that this form of self-study research is used to enable us to re-examine and re-imagine our professional selves, to look back, and to imagine how things could be different in the future. It also entails collaboration and analytical conversations with peers as critical friends who can offer different perspectives on our lived experience. Additionally, according to Samaras et al. (2004), engaging in personal history self-study involves a "connection between personal reflection and action". My aim is therefore that this study will also enable me to find purposeful strategies for supporting teachers' learning through professional development within my Independent school context. Through serious introspection into my past and present experiences and constant talk and collaboration with my critical friends, I aim to be able to better support a renewed personal and professional development of teachers within my school context.

My Professional Context

My personal history self-study research has been conducted against the backdrop of an Independent school that serves a middle class Muslim community in the city of Durban. The school is an English medium school that caters for learners from Grade 00 to Grade 12. There are approximately 1000 learners (95% Indian and Black Muslims and about 5% non-Muslims) and 75 teachers in this Muslim school. The teacher population is multi-racial (White. Black and Indian) in nature and the teachers are both male and female. The school is a well resourced school that has every luxury that a teacher could want. These include a small pupil-teacher ratio, air conditioned classrooms and 'smart' rooms with the latest computer and digital technology. Teachers are hand picked to meet the vision and mission of the school. The *vision* focuses on aspiring towards excellence in all endeavours and nurturing leaders whose actions are guided by the Qur'an and Islamic law, whereas the *mission* is committed to providing a holistic education in an environment of excellence infused with Islamic values. Most of the teachers in this school have a teacher's degree, whilst a minority is still pursuing an initial teacher's qualification.

My Research Role

I have conducted this research in relation to my own Independent school setting where I am a teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department. As well as being the researcher, I am also the main research participant in this personal history self-study which has implications personally for me and professionally as a teacher and Head of Department. As a researcher, I had the responsibility of designing, managing, conducting research, as well as interpreting readings and generating relevant data. Being a self-study researcher, I worked within my own school context. This allowed me to look at this particular context from the lens of a researcher and that of teacher and Head of department, enabling me to analyse the data generated and generate themes that would help improve professional development within this space. During this personal history self-study, I also encountered problems which I shared with my supervisor. One such experience was that I often cried as I uncovered experiences from my past. I further discuss the challenges I experienced in this dual role in the section in this chapter on Limitations and Challenges of the Study.

My Methods of Producing Personal History Data

Journal Writing

As the researcher and research participant, I have kept a reflective journal to diarise all my thoughts, feelings and occurrences since embarking on this personal history self-study. Lyons and LaBoskey (2002, p. 126) stress the importance of keeping a journal in self-study research. They emphasise that reflection is crucial and that if you are not reflecting or taking a thoughtful look at what you have done or are doing, you cannot make changes. Throughout this study, I have continually made journal entries about indelible incidents that have occurred in the past and about those that have continued to occur as this study evolve. These journal entries are important as they have helped me to make sense of the past, the present and the future, as well as to see how I can make changes that would benefit teacher learning within my Independent school context.

In my research journal I have recorded and reflected on my "feelings, interpretations and judgements" (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 123), about my past and present experiences, relating to learning and teaching. Some of these journal entries involved careful reflection and others were a more spontaneous record of ideas, thoughts and feelings about my past and present experiences.

My entries in a hardcover notebook have been both happy and sad. For example, I wrote:

> *At a wedding he brings tears to my eyes as he begins to tell me how he says a special prayer for my family, and how proud he is of me, I am indeed blessed. (Journal entry, 16 September 2011)*

> *Friday afternoon, in a busy Mall. I am approached by a Principal to go to Welkom in the Free State to provide professional support to an already existing Muslim school. 1 am overwhelmed, but took it as a challenge. (Journal entry, 24 June 2011)*

> *As 1 recall this incident I begin to cry. As a Head of Department I was expected to professionally evaluate the teachers under my care. (Journal entry, February 2011)*

Entries such as these have allowed me to reflect on both the joys and sorrows of my past and current experiences. Each one of these journal entries has allowed me to grow as a teacher and as a Head of

Department.

Memory Work

In embarking on this personal history self-study, it has been important to recall and reflect on memories of incidents that have influenced the teacher and Head of Department I am today. Onyx and Small (2010) explain that memory work helps the individual to tap into and better understand his or her past and how it may affect the present. Furthermore, Samaras, et al. (2004) point out that memory work is an essential component of personal history self-study as it helps the researcher to recall life experiences as well as helping to open up hidden or unexamined instances of the past. Mitchell (2011, pp. 44-46), explains that memory work allows for "deliberate remembering" of events. It can start off as a free recall and then move to a more serious form of interrogation (Mitchell, 2011). In this study, I have used memory drawings, artefact retrieval and memory writing as memory work methods.

Memory Drawings

Weber (2008, p. 44), explains that visual images such as drawings can "help to access those elusive, hard-to-put into words, aspects of knowledge that might otherwise remain hidden or ignored". Thus, memory drawings are used in self-study research "as a method for recollecting, representing, and examining significant lived experiences" (Pithouse, 2011, p. 38). For example, Makhanya (2010) states that the use of memory drawings in her study was aimed at triggering and capturing images of untold stories of experience that might be hard to put into words.

In recalling my lived experiences, I have drawn pictures that have prompted or added to the expression of my memories (see, for example, Figures 3.2 and 3.5 in Chapter Three). These drawings were not masterpieces, but gave a good representation of specific experiences that I was unable to fully describe in words. I underestimated my capabilities and initially wanted one of my colleagues to draw for me, but I found that it was difficult for her to draw what I wanted to express. Doing the memory drawings myself enabled me to access my past experiences, identifying significant episodes that have shaped me into the teacher and Head of Department I am today.

Artefact Retrieval

Marshall and Rossman (2006) state that artefacts are tools which help us to reminisce about our past, about our principles, ethics, standards, morals and ideals. In looking for personal history artefacts, I tried to retrieve artefacts that are sentimental, emotional and significant to my lived experiences. It was important that these artefacts be re-discovered to enrich my portrayal of my lived experience.

According to Nieuwenhuis (2010c, p. 82), in using "*documents* as a data gathering technique [the researcher focuses] on all types of written communication that may shed light on the phenomenon [that is being investigated]". Documents that I have selected as artefacts for this personal history self-study include report cards, hospital documentation, university documentation, letters of commendations, and appointment letters (see, for example, Figures 3.1 and 3.7 in Chapter Three). I obtained these artefacts from an older sister as well as through my own portfolio of evidence of my professional development. I have been very proud of every achievement of mine and have kept all my academic and professional artefacts in portfolios, albums and in a box.

In this study, many photographs of my lived experiences have been also used as artefacts to elicit and authenticate my memoirs of my lived experiences (see, for instance, Figures 3.3 and 3.4 in Chapter Three). According to Mitchell (2011, p. 120), using personal photo albums in research can "lead to social action", and similarly I have used various photographs from my own album to re-examine memories that might help me to better understand my own experiences in order to take action in my own school context. Mitchell, Weber, and Pithouse (201I, p.121) also emphasise that using visual artefacts allows for "social critique". Likewise, the use of photographs has helped me to reflect critically on my past lived experiences from a socio-cultural perspective (Kelly, 2006; Wenger 1998) and furthermore show how the narratives that have unfolded about the photographs have impacted on my own personal and professional development. The use of family photographs has allowed me to reflect on my experiences within an extended family and to draw on these experiences to consider how each member of my family has contributed in shaping my development as the teacher and Head of Department I am today.

This retrieval of documents and photographs as artefacts has enabled me to connect with sometimes deliberately forgotten memories, as well as to help explain the teacher and Head of Department I am today. Revisiting artefacts has also enabled me as a teacher and Head of Department to look at what went wrong in the past as a learner, and as a teacher, and to look at how we dealt with issues and what we are doing right or wrong at this moment, or could do better in the future. The main aim of the artefact retrieval was to elicit, complement and extend the memoirs of my lived experience (as presented in Chapter Three). In my critical friends' meetings (as explained below), we looked at each others' artefacts, discussing and giving feedback and making meaning of experiences through these artefacts. Lyons and LaBoskey (2002) highlight the importance of having self-study research conversations in a group. Our meetings allowed us as critical friends to speak about our experiences as represented by the artefacts and to share them with each other.

Memory Writing

In generating data on my lived experiences, I have written narrative descriptions of significant memories in my journal. Pithouse, Mitchell and Weber (2009, p. 50) explain that "writing descriptions of remembered educational experiences can help teachers (and teacher educators) to review their experiences from diverse perspectives and to think about them in new ways". This memory writing has helped to generate data (as portrayed in Chapter Three) of my early experiences of learning and teaching, my experiences of being a novice teacher and, finally, my journey of re-professionalisation and supporting professional development within my Independent school context. I have written about the frustrations of learning in environments that promoted teacher centred learning, about experiencing corporal punishment, about lack of teacher support and other learning experiences under trying circumstances where resources were minimal and demands on teaching and learning were huge. These memory narratives afforded me an in-depth view into deep-seated issues that were unresolved. Some of the memory writing was exciting, emotional and challenging and assisted me in understanding the person I am today.

My Discussions with Critical Friends

Critical friends have been an important element in the fruition of this study. According to Costa and Kallick (1993, p. 50), a critical friend is a "trusted person who asks provocative questions,

provides data to be examined through another lens and offers a critique of a person's work as a friend". A critical friend is also someone who "understands the context of the work presented and the outcomes the person is working towards" (Costa & Kallick, 1993, p. 50).

As advised by Samaras et al. (2004), in this personal history self-study, I have worked with a group of three critical friends to look at my study with a critical lens. These critical friends are all women in their 40's and speak both IsiZulu and English. Each one of them is a current Master's student in her final year of study. These women are all doing personal history self-study research on different aspects of teacher learning. All members of the critical friends' group are Heads of Departments or Senior Management members at schools within their own contexts. Collectively, they have an average of 25 years of teaching experience.

My critical friends and I have met regularly, approximately every second week, for a year. We have also met sometimes with our shared Master's supervisor and sometimes without. Initially, we met to discuss and describe our experiences of teaching and learning. We shared these experiences with each other and also identified problems and challenges in our professional contexts. We also helped each other to formulate our research topics. We then met to listen to each others' work and give the necessary critique and ask "provocative questions" (Costa & Kallick, 1993, p. 50) in relation to the data generated about our lived experiences. Each one of us had the opportunity to offer our valued judgement on the others' studies. Further meetings were geared towards discussing key themes that emerged from data generated about our lived experiences.

Throughout this study, we have engaged in intense, heated and often challenging conversations as we discussed our past experiences of learning and teaching. These discussions kept us on track, enabling us to look at our individual experiences, think through our problems experienced and draw comparisons between our unique and common experiences. Thus, the discussions took us away from simply accepting our past experiences and allowed us to think critically, paving a pathway for intervention and inquiry. This collaborative nature of personal history self-study enabled me to look at my past experiences and my personal and professional growth from my critical friends' perspectives as well as my own (Samaras et al., 2004). Hence, Samaras et al. (2004. p. 910), refer to

collaboration as a "hallmark" of personal history self-study.

Representing and Making Sense of my Personal History Data

The process of data analysis in this study involved an ongoing process of making sense of the data, through continued reflection and a search for deeper understanding. Cresswell (2009) explains that data analysis and interpretation involve asking analytic questions and writing memos that may be used in the final research report. In this case, 1 used the data generated from my lived experiences and through the critical friends' interactive discussions and I interpreted this data to make sense of my past experiences. Although the data was purely my own, I made use of my critical friends to ask challenging questions of my data generation and interpretation process. Clandinin and Connelly (1990) support this collaborative process as it helps to give added meanings to our personal history stories.

In Chapter Three, I represent rich data produced through deliberately recalling my past experiences from childhood to the person I am today. As explained above, the data was generated through the use of journal entries, memory drawings, artefact retrieval and memory writing. Once I had decided on my methodology, I began to look for valuable data that represented various milestones of my memoirs that I had safely stored away in my ,,memory box'. Some of the data brought back painful memories that I found very difficult to express, while other data brought a smile and sometimes a sigh of relief. These diverse data sources helped me to construct my memoirs as presented in Chapter Three.

I examined my personal history as portrayed in Chapter Three and coded it using colours. According to Niewenhuis (2010a, p. 105), coding is a "process of reading carefully through the transcribed data, line by line, and dividing it into meaningful analytical units", as well as identifying themes that emerge. In interpreting my memoirs, I used an inductive procedure. This means that, as I looked at my personal history memoirs, I carefully analysed them for coding to appear as there was no prior identification of codes (although my analysis was influenced by my theoretical perspective, as explained in Chapter One). According to Niewenhuis (2010a, p. 107), inductive codes are "developed by the researcher by directly examining the data". Niewenhuis (2010a, p. 107) also explains that when working inductively you let "codes emerge from the data". Thus, in

the interpretation of my personal history, I searched for "emerging patterns, associations, concepts and explanations" (Niewenhuis, 2010a, p. 107), so as to construct meaning and understanding to fulfill the purpose of my study. This process of inductive coding was challenging as I had to read and re-read my memoirs many times to make sense of them and identity the key themes that emerged. I actively worked with my memoirs to reveal how my past and present teaching and learning experiences have impacted on the teacher and Head of Department I am today, and how I can use this information to better support Foundation Phase teachers' learning within my context. During this process I found that I had left out some significant information about my experiences. I then began to add in these missing parts to my memoirs, which helped me to make sense of relevant episodes of my personal history. This to and fro process helped in ensuring that the themes I identified were based on my memoirs as portrayed in Chapter Three. In the analysis of my memoirs, many emotions were unveiled through the deliberate re-examination of my personal history. Samaras, et al. (2004) mention how paying attention to emotions in personal history self-study can help us to learn something new. In my case, my oversensitive disposition was transformed to deal with challenges of teaching and learning and this helped me to identify strategies to better support professional development within my school context. The themes that I identified through the inductive coding process are presented in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

Limitations and Challenges of the Study

This is a small scale, in-depth, personal history self-study. The data generation was limited to just one person, me; however, I drew on other perspectives through the discussions with my critical friends. The findings from this study cannot be generalised to teachers and school managers in all Independent schools. Nevertheless, the study can prove to be a useful examplar for teachers and school managers in other schools within similar or different contexts, who are interested in understanding how their own personal histories might have influenced their personal and professional development, as well as how they might learn from their personal histories to enhance their work as teachers and managers.

The biggest challenge in conducting this research was my dual position as researcher and main research participant. Throughout this personal history self-study, I have shared my own

personal and professional experiences. Some of these experiences were sensitive and unleashed many hidden feelings and thoughts. In remembering these memories, I experienced a good cry which made me feel better. However, I have also realised that some of the issues that emerged through my personal history remain unresolved and are still emotionally and professionally challenging for me.

Trustworthiness

In keeping with the principles for establishing trustworthiness in self-study research, in this chapter I have given very clear and detailed explanations of what data sources have been used and how data has been generated, represented and analysed (Feldman, 2003). In Chapters Four and Five, I also give evidence of how my educational understanding has been enhanced through the study (Feldman, 2003) and how I plan to use this understanding to better support teacher learning through professional development in my school context. In self-study, it is also important to use multiple methods to gain a variety of different perspectives on what is being studied (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Thus, as explained in this chapter, a range of methods have been used to elicit data on my own lived experiences. Original artefacts, photographs and documents have been used to verify remembered data for authenticity. I have also sought the perspectives of my critical friends to gain diverse perspectives on my personal history (Samaras et al., 2004).

Ethical Issues

Permission to conduct the study has been obtained from my school principal. A letter informing the principal about the nature of the study was given to him for his approval. Permission from my critical friends to participate in the study was also obtained and a letter informing them about the nature of the study was given to them to sign (see Appendix A). Permission from my critical friends to write down their responses to my drawings, artefacts and discussion was also obtained. My critical friends were also made aware that they had no obligation to participate and could withdraw at any given time. They were also assured that anonymity and confidentiality would be maintained. A letter was also given to people pictured in the photographs presented in Chapter Three, for their approval of these photos to be used. However, it proved to be extremely difficult to contact many of the people in the photographs as most have re-located, passed away or are otherwise unable to be contacted. Nonetheless, wherever possible, permission was obtained and a letter informing them about the

nature of the study was given to them to sign (see Appendix, B-C). They were also made aware that they had no obligation to agree and could withdraw consent at any time, prior to the completion of this dissertation. They were assured that the names of those pictured in the photographs would not be used in the dissertation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, Chapter Two, I have concentrated on the research methodology that underpins this personal history self-study. Relevant information relating to my school context, critical friends, data production and analysis has been given. In Chapter Two I have also considered the limitations, trustworthiness, challenges and ethical issues of the study. In writing this chapter, I have aimed to give a detailed and frank account of my research process so that this chapter might serve as an exemplar for others who are interested in doing personal history self-study research. This chapter highlights that engaging in personal history self-study allows the researcher to analyse critically every experience and subsequently use this analysis to guide and support teacher learning through professional development.

In the next chapter, Chapter Three, I approach the first research question that guides my study: *How can I better understand the personal history that informs my practices as a teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department?* To provide a response to this question, I reconstruct my personal history (with special references made to my experiences of learning and teaching) from infancy, through all the milestones of schooling, and, ultimately, to my present position as teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department. I indulge the reader through the passages of my early experiences of schooling, my training as teacher and my practices of being a teacher, and of being a Head of Department at an Independent School.

CHAPTER THREE:

MEMOIRS OF MY JOURNEY FROM NOVICE TO PROFESSIONAL

Introduction

In this personal history self-study, I am aiming to understand and interpret my lived experience of learning and teaching in order to think of alternate ways to better support Foundation Phase teacher learning through professional development in my school context. In the previous chapter, I discuss my research process, explaining the research methodology of this personal history self-study. I present information about my professional context and my role in the study. I also give a detailed description of my discussions with critical friends, who have formed an integral part of the data generation and analysis process. I explain my methods of producing personal history data and my method of inductive reasoning used for data analysis. Limitations and challenges of this study, trustworthiness and ethical issues are also acknowledged.

In this chapter, I address the first research question that underpins my study: *How can I better understand the personal history that informs my practices as a teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department?* To respond to this question, I recall my personal history as a South African Indian Muslim woman (with special references made to my experiences of learning and teaching) from infancy, through all the milestones of schooling and, ultimately, to my present professional position as a teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department. I guide the reader through the passages of my early experiences of schooling, my training as teacher and my practices of being a teacher, and a Head of Department at an Independent School. The memory journey experiences portrayed in this chapter are important for this study as they represent the data for the personal history self-study research I am engaged in. This data was generated through reflective journal writing, memory drawing, artefact retrieval and memory writing. (I discuss these data generation methods in more detail in Chapter Two).The process of becoming a teacher and a Head of Department is no easy task for any individual. Throughout this chapter, I highlight significant memories that have left an indelible mark on my self as a teacher and a Head of Department.

My Personal History Memoirs

A spoilt "*laat lammetjie*"

My birth in the middle 60's was quite traumatic for my lovely mother. I was born with both arms broken and had to have them in a cast. I underwent extensive surgery and therapy at a local hospital until the age of five. I was a "*laat lammetjie*" (a late little lamb) the youngest of six children, born seven years after the sixth sibling and I was „molly coddled' by my older sisters and parents. I lived in an extended family of my maternal great grandmother, my maternal grandmother, my paternal grandparents, my grandfather's second wife and my three uncles with their families, all living together in one big house.
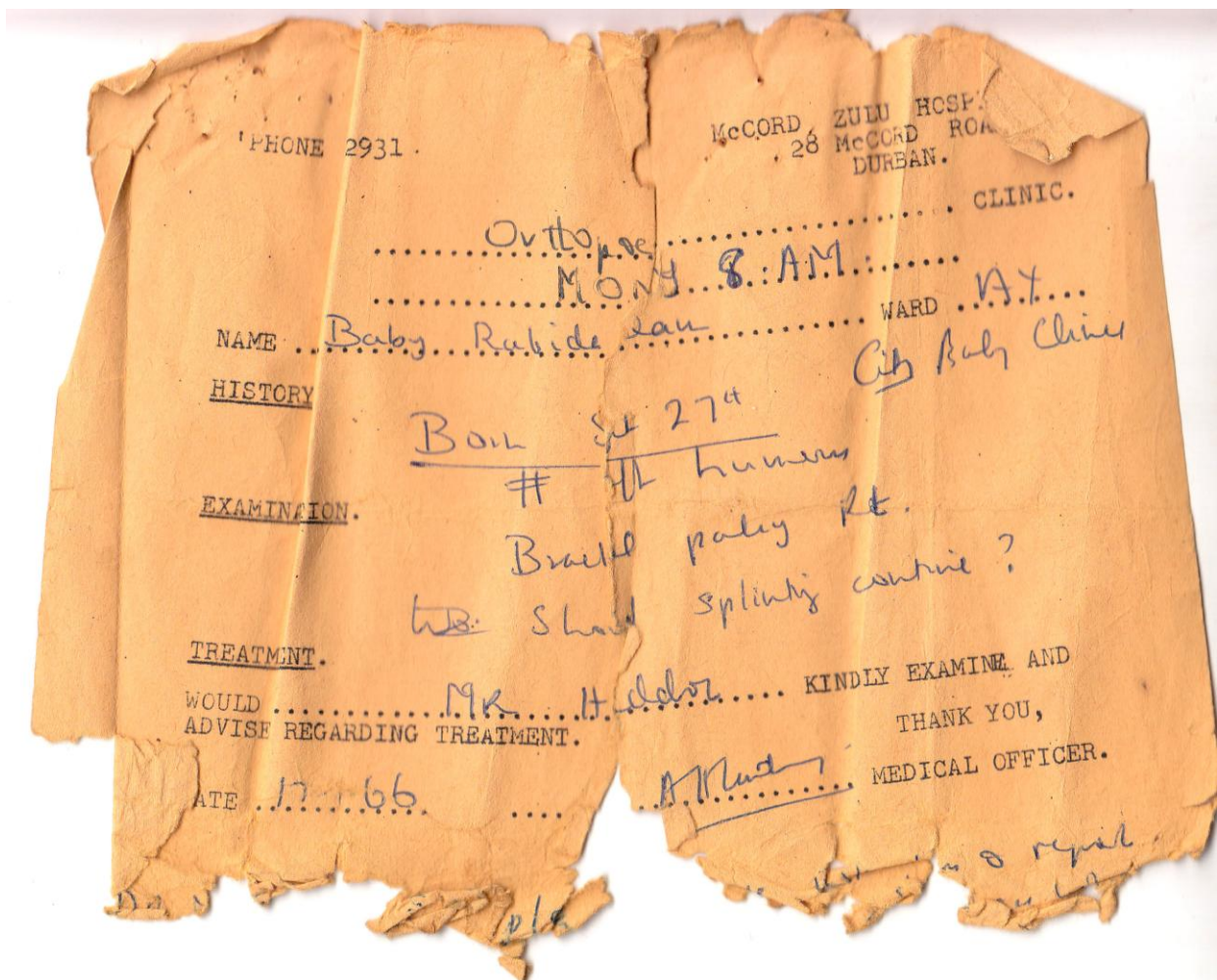
Figure 3.1: This is hospital documentation showing evidence of my visits to hospital for remedial therapy of my arms

Growing up in this extended family home afforded me the opportunity of developing in a nurturing environment that was filled with love and family values that shaped my life as a little girl, as well as cementing the values of family relationships. These values included watching out for each other, spending quality time, taking care of the elders in the family, as well as caring and sharing within this extended family environment.

Being born into a conservative Muslim family also shaped my life experiences as I was forced into culturally accepted forms of behaviour, for example, the wearing of a head scarf and long pants and going to a Madressa (an Islamic afterschool, where elements of the Quran were taught and learnt). This conservative socialisation began to shape my childhood from the moment I was born.

Due to my so called abnormality (being born with two broken arms), I always wanted to give of my best in whatever I did, thereby setting myself high standards. I always felt different from the others as everyone around me felt sorry for me and this contributed to my low self-esteem in my years as a child, as well as in my adolescent years. I worked hard and fought many social barriers trying to prove myself so that I would be accepted by others, especially my friends and teachers. In school, for example, I excelled in netball and was made part of the school team; however I was not allowed to play because I refused to play in "shorts" (an un-Islamic dress). I felt violated and humiliated that I could not be respected for who I was and that my cultural beliefs were disrespected. Consequently, I hated my Physical Education teacher with a passion.

I also studied Music as a subject until Matric (now Grade 12). This choice allowed me a little freedom from my cultural impositions where any form of music, especially the use of musical instruments, was not allowed in our orthodox Muslim community. My father became progressive in his thoughts within the confines of our home and allowed me the freedom to choose a subject that I liked and did well in. This was a move away from some cultural impositions and proved to be beneficial in evolving my sense of myself.

My paternal grandfather, white friends and patriarchy

We were raised with a strong patriarchal hand as my paternal grandfather was the head of the house and his voice was „gospel'. No one dared speak against his cultural and traditional patriarchal powers. Patriarchy and authority imposed by the elders in our extended family context began to make me a victim of culture and tradition. To an extent, this also influenced my choice of career as a Foundation Phase teacher, as being a teacher in our community was the only occupation many Muslim women contemplated because it was considered the best profession to be in if you were married and had children. It was also regarded as a highly respected and noble profession (prophetic) and highly paid profession. However, my father did not restrict us from pursuing a career of our choice.
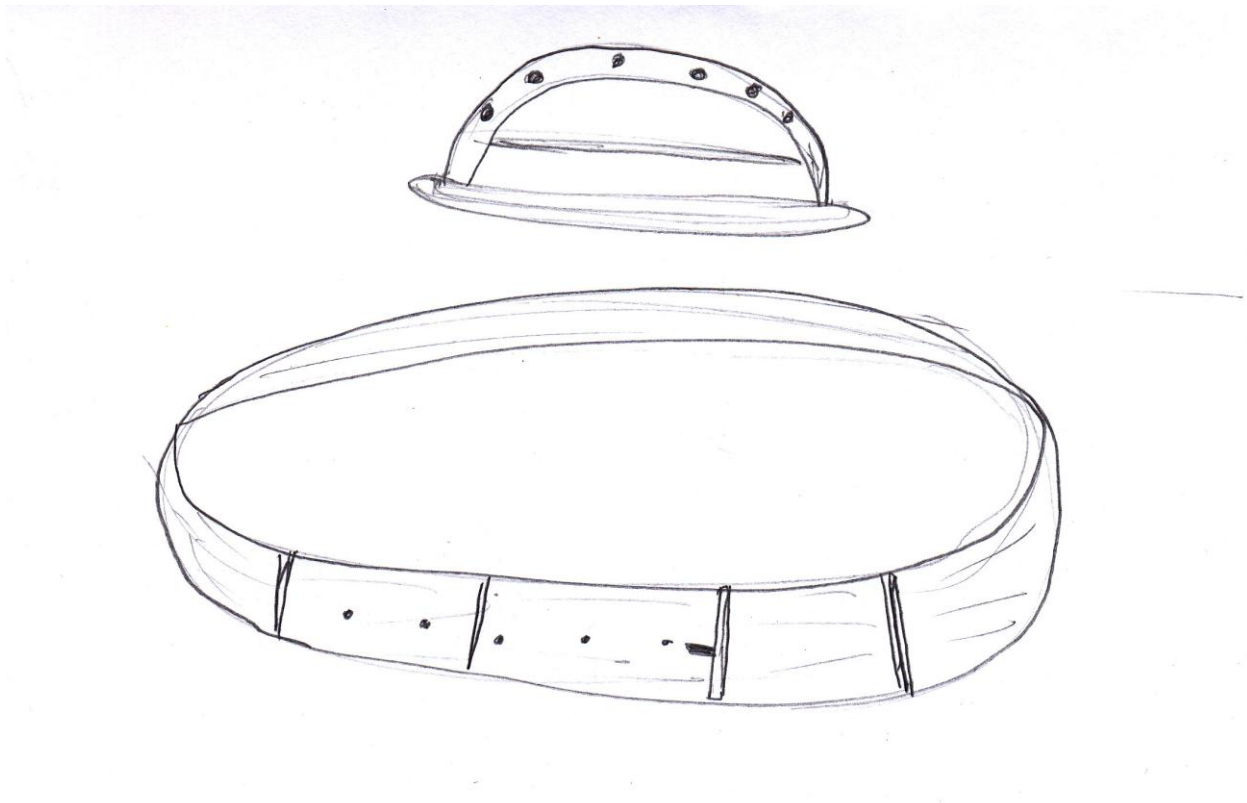
Figure 3. 2: This drawing shows my grandfather's Salvation Army belt and helmet

During the period of 1930-1950, my paternal grandfather was a soldier in the Salvation Army, where he was involved in protecting people in his neighbourhood, as well as providing help to the destitute. He later worked as an assistant to white medical doctors in a local urban clinic for Indians. As this was the era of Apartheid (racial segregation), he was one of the few Indians that worked with white medical doctors. He had many white friends and I recall the

annual visits made to our home by these doctors before Christmas. We eagerly awaited their visits as they would bring gifts of "Quality Street" chocolates and lots of biscuits that came in tins. I do not recall the names of the biscuits as the contents were more important and, as an infant, all I wanted to do was eat them. To this day, Quality Street is my favourite brand of chocolates.

Having „white' family friends began to shape my life experience even further as our family had to conform to socially accepted forms of behaviour such as good manners and a clean home as well as being subservient. These behavioural expectations were jointly as a result of my upbringing and our white friends. We had to obey every command that came from my paternal grandfather and his white friends.

Figure 3.3: This photograph (taken in March 1965) shows my paternal grandfather assisting doctors in a clinic. This was even before I was born.

The presence of our white friends afforded us racial superiority and everyone in the community looked up to us. My lived experience was influenced by the role my family played in the local community. Thus, race and class issues in our local community began to shape my sense of who I was or should be. Pressure was placed upon all my siblings as we had to become somebody important in the so called Indian community because of our ties with „white' people. Almost all the children in our extended family context contemplated careers

(as entrepreneurs and professionals) so that we could keep up with the socially and culturally imposed expectations.

Extended family, extended ties

Figure 3.4: This photograph represents part of our extended family in our working class brick house. This picture was taken when my uncle got married sometime in the early 70's.

Living in an extended family was not easy. Each one of us had to find ourselves within this structure. The multiple characters of my extended family added to the intensification of socialisation forces towards the shaping of my character as a person and my choice career for the future. All the members in our extended family were career orientated. Some engaged in economic activity (a great risk, as they only sold fruit and vegetable and their sale depended on good weather) and others in administrative fields. My father and one of his brothers worked with my paternal grandfather in his fresh produce business. His other brother worked as a legal secretary (a highly superior job at that time).

My mother worked in the family business and this had a significant impact on my life as very few Muslim women in the 60's and 70's worked. Looking back, I now realise the sacrifices that my working class mother had to make so that she could put food on the table even though it deprived her of spending quality time with my five sisters and brother; however, we were never deprived of her great love. My mother was a very fair person as when it came to giving

us our weekly allowance she would give all children in the household (including children of extended family members who came to live with us) the same amount. She treated us fairly in all her encounters. Her presence in the business contributed to our successes as many of us are now financially stable.

My uncles placed enormous traditional and cultural impositions on the children and encouraged us to study, thus shaping our identity and professionalism. They may have secretly hoped for us to fulfill their unachievable dreams. I recall a past conversation with one of my uncles:

> *At a wedding, he brings tears to my eyes as he begins to tell me how he says a special prayer for my family, and how proud he is of me, I am indeed blessed. (Journal entry, 16 September 2011*)

My Indian pre-school experience in a busy Kasbah

The memory of my adult sisters holding my hand and dropping me off at an Indian preschool in central Durban established in the early 70's is vivid. The school was small and resources minimal. It seems that little importance was given to pre-schools for Indian children during the Apartheid era as I remember writing on scraps of paper with any writing equipment I could get my hands on. I cannot recall writing in a good enough exercise book or being taught by an experienced teacher that impacted on my life as a toddler. I cannot even remember my teacher going for workshops, networking with other teachers or taking part in other professional development initiatives.
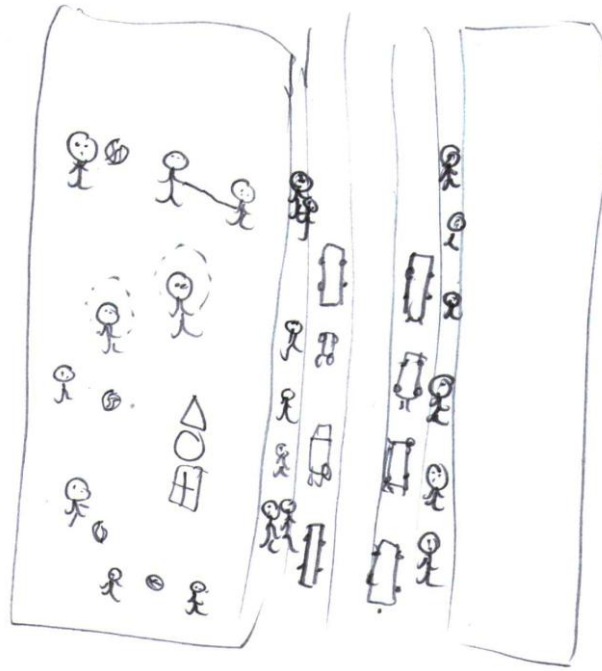
Figure 3.5: This drawing reflects my first experience of going to school

The bustle of the busy streets below and the continual blowing of the horns of buses still echo in my ears. During our breaks, I recall playing on the roof- top of the school. A clear view of people drying their washing and making home made *papadums* (an Indian rice cake) on the roof tops was a daily sight. My teacher was more interested in selling peanuts and chickpeas to us than in teaching us basic knowledge, skills and values. The year went by without any significant memory that left an indelible mark. It seems that going to school was not important back then.

My foundation schooling experience in an urban Indian Muslim school

In the early 70's, I recall the journey to school with my elder cousins and friends. Sometimes the bus used to break down and we had to wait or walk to our destination of about two to three kilometres. This was hard for a six year old.

For my first four years of schooling, I attended an urban Muslim school. In this school, we followed the curriculum that all Indian schools followed in the Apartheid era; however, the integration of Islamic Studies and Arabic (which is symbolic of the Muslim faith) took place within the school day. This school was an affluent school very closely linked to the Muslim

community. The community had a huge influence on the viability of the school as many children from influential families attended this school. The environment was beautiful with well maintained grounds and gardens. Resources and the infrastructure were good. All learners paid a small school fee. My formative years were thus spent within a „mono-cultural' school society which was very homogeneous. This school was a combined school for boys and girls from Grade 1-12 (then class 1 to standard 10).

Attending a Muslim only school shaped my sense of myself even further as I was compelled to wear long pants and head scarf, not that I objected to it because that was the only attire I knew to be the best for me. Looking back, I see that this somewhat influenced all my decisions in life, such as early marriage, taking up a job in a Muslim private school, sending my own children to a Muslim Independent school and networking and supporting other Muslim schools. This cultural and traditional attire gave me a sense of pride and belonging as a learner as it symbolised my roots. This impacted on my lived experience as it gave me the idea that I should only socialise with Muslim children. However, this proved to be wrong as later on in my life as a teenager and adult many non Muslims became my good friends and many of them still are.

My exacting first teacher

My first teacher was a male and I recall him being very rigid and meticulous as he made sure that we knew our flash words, which he taught in rote fashion, insisting that we remember the words in their correct order. I used to memorise and recall everything as it was given to us. Our teacher was also very strict and ensured that we all read and did our maths. If we did not get the correct answers, he would hit us with a ruler on our knuckles. This made me feel scared and put immense pressure on me, making sure that I learnt my words. I began to feel intimidated by yet another male figure displaying his power. Once again, the feelings of incapacity and low self-esteem began to subsume me and I began to be passive in all lessons for the fear of not knowing the correct answer. I also recall him asking girls to go on errands to the tuck shop, therefore according no importance to education for females and thus, looking back, my childhood impression of him being a „good' teacher has now changed.

Figure 3.6: These are copies of my Grade 1 report. Back in the early 70's, it was called an „Infant" report.

Looking at the above reports through the eyes of an experienced teacher, I see that they fail to reflect on assessments in detail; this is evident of how little time was spent on teaching, learning and conducting assessments. The report was very general in nature and did not specify recommendations for improvement; it just gave a summative summary of my progress.

The indelible memory of Grade 3

The culmination of my Foundation Phase experience was the best ever. The finest teacher in my personal history entered the door to my learning and changed my perceptions of teaching and learning.
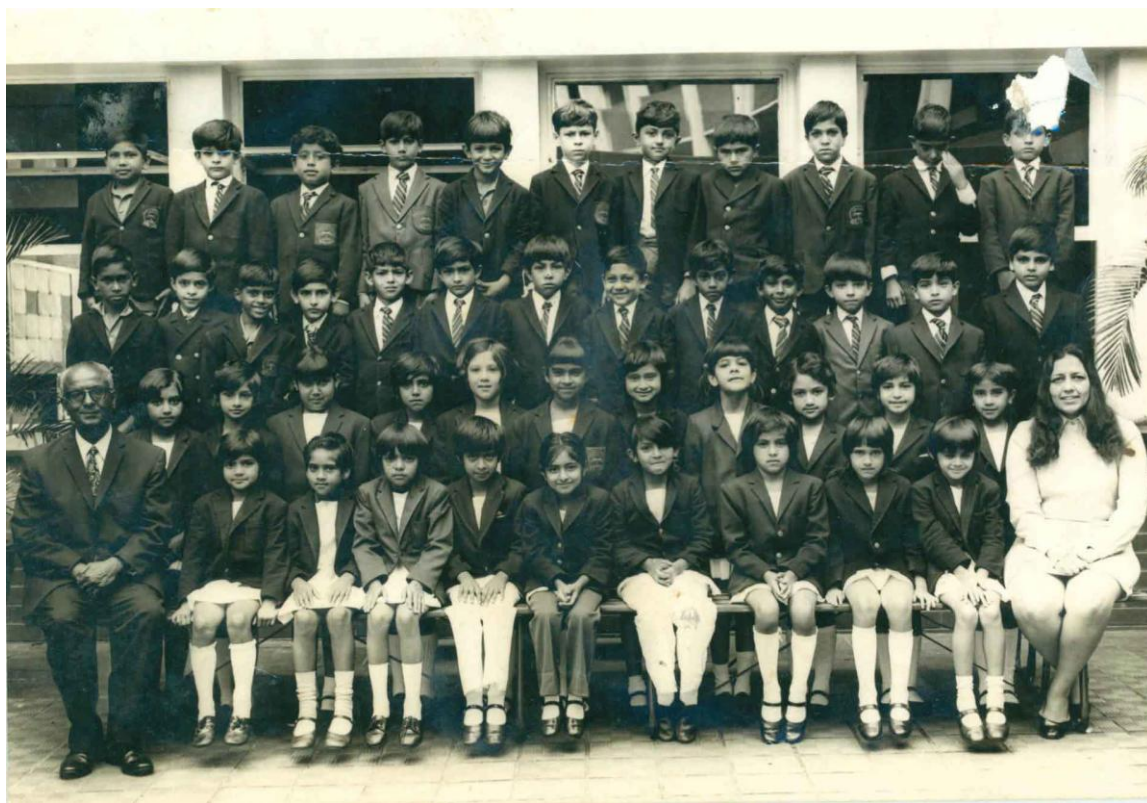
Figure 3.7: This photograph is of my Grade 3 class, then Standard One, taken in 1974.

Upon close analysis of this photograph (Figure 3.7), the homogeneity of race in a South African Apartheid-era Indian school can be seen. Our class size was large and this photo reflects a 1:44 ratio typical of the kind of „spending' that was designated for the Indian race group at that time. The adherence to a prescriptive uniform confirms the rigidity with which education in South Africa was controlled during Apartheid.

My Grade 3 (Standard 1) year in this Indian urban school was most rewarding, as I had the best teacher. I enjoyed every moment of it. Surprisingly, my teacher belonged to the white race group and this confused me. It was odd as I did not understand what she was doing teaching in an Indian school. Her sweetness and humanistic nature left an indelible mark on my early learning experiences. She was always motivating and found fun methods of teaching and getting us to learn. Humanistic teachers, according to Allender and Allender (2006, p.14) are those teachers whose "highest priority is the needs of the students". This teacher of mine always made us the priority in all her teaching and learning. This Grade 3 teacher crossed my path again after about 20 years when she came to a school where I was a teacher, offering her services for a staff member who had to go on leave. How very noble of her.

Oppression and home away from home

The year 1974 was tragic for us as we were forced to re-locate due to the Group Areas Act 41 of 1950 (Kallaway, 2002). We left the comfort of our home in one suburb (non-white, however there were predominantly Indians amongst the Black and Coloured neighbours) and moved to an Indian only suburb, called Shallcross (to many, an elite area for Indians at that time).

With the implementation of the Group Areas Act, my father's brothers and their families moved into their own homes. The „old people', my grandparents, both maternal and paternal, were distributed between my father's youngest brother and my father, who live next to each other in the Indian Township of Shallcross.

Figure 3.8: This photograph shows our new home in an Indian township taken in the early 70's.

Due the forced removals of all Indians, we were relocated to an Indian suburb. Pillay and Govinden (2007, p. 2) speak about "uprooting, dislocation and relocation" and this is what my family experienced as we had to pack our belongings and move to a home away from home. I felt like an outsider in this new home. I also felt unsafe as it was no longer a familiar environment. However, our family adjusted well and we formed a new circle of friends. The good that came from this move was that we all gained a little independence as we lived in different homes that were in close proximity to each other. For the first time, we ate meals

together as a nuclear family. My parents could spend quality time with each one of us, getting to know us personally for the first time.

Nevertheless, our family still experienced limited freedom as all major decisions had to be passed by my father and his father who were the elders in the family. I lived in a very orthodox family, where family, family values and culture and cultural impositions were very important. Although we had gained a little independence, we still had to conform to strong patriarchal ruling forces. Strong cultural and traditional values were imposed on us. Our home had to be the safe haven to many family members. This shaped my understandings of family responsibility and I realised that, wherever I went or whatever I did, I would have to always put family first, just as my father and his father did.

My unsettled primary school experience in an Indian township

Having to adjust to a new home was not my only worry. I was also forced to attend a new school in Shallcross. My new learning environment began to overwhelm me as I struggled to adjust to a new school, new experiences and the formation of new friendships.

Figure 3.9: This drawing represents my „platoon class', Grade 4 experience.

During this time, there was only one Primary School and one High School that served the needs of the community in Shallcross. I attended the Primary School where I was part of the „afternoon' or „platoon' classes because there was a shortage of schools in our area. We would start school at eleven o' clock, and most of our teaching and learning took place in the

open fields, irrespective of the weather conditions. When it was very hot, our teacher used to say, "Imagine you are sitting on the banks of the river and picture the cool waters flowing." If we were lucky, we would get to use the space under a tree. We had to wait until about one o' clock, and only then start our formal schooling. We were treated like „outsiders' by the existing learners in the school.

Figure 3.10: This photograph shows my Grade 4 class, sitting outside, with our „afternoon' school form teacher.

The photograph above (Figure 3.10) substantiates that even our school photograph was taken out in the open space. I now realise that there was insufficient funding to meet the needs of our Indian community. Our schooling resources were stretched to the limits. Moreover, teachers did not use innovative ideas and resources to enhance our learning. Hence, a conducive environment for learning in the school was not facilitated. Once again, this is evidence of how Apartheid- era education failed to deliver essential services such as school infrastructure. We would sit in the open fields in the scorching heat, writing in a book on our laps. Teachers found it difficult to teach and would 'kill' time by making us sing songs and say rhymes. This impacted heavily on us learners as it became even more difficult to adjust. As far as teaching and learning was concerned, it was limited, as the better part of the day was

wasted, and the year went by, without making any lasting impression of teaching and learning.

In the next year (1975), we joined the rest of the school in the mainstream as another Primary school was built in this area. My primary schooling years were quite an experience. Lessons were content based and fostering of skills, values and attitudes were not given the prominence that they now have in our school curriculum. Classes were large, 1:36, and all curricular and co-curricular activities took place with other Indian learners from neighbouring schools. Unlike my early school years, for the first time I began to notice a few teachers working together informally.

Assemblies were conducted in military fashion and every one would say a universal „Christian' Morning Prayer, although it was an Indian school with a mixture of Hindu, Christian and Muslim students. The school song would then be sung. My friends were a few „Muslim' girls with whom I had been friends from my previous school. I was too afraid to make new friends and was stuck in my comfort zone. Evident from the above photograph (Figure 3.10) is that we learnt in a mono-racial environment. Diversity and a multi-racial environment for me were alien until my studies in a Higher Education Institute such as the Teachers' Training College

Secondary school, student boycotts and apartheid activities in an Indian township

In the early 80's, I attended a somewhat multi-racial (we had one White learner and a few Coloured learners, who probably were the products of a mixed Indian marriages, we never questioned their genealogy), Secondary school in the second half of my schooling career. My Secondary school experience allowed me move beyond my friendship with a few Muslim girls. I forged new friendships with other Indian girls who were not Muslim. This experience shaped my perception of people that were not Muslims. It allowed me to acknowledge them for who they were and, later on, I developed strong friendships with some of them. My engagement with them also cleared up the misunderstandings or misconceptions that they had of Muslim people. Diversity amongst our friends encouraged mutual respect for each other so much so that we still are in touch with each other. I had found friends for „life'.

I now realise that being an „Indian Muslim' and receiving a racially differentiated curriculum restricted the way I viewed the world. For example, as Indians, we learnt that we should make do with the bare necessities that the Apartheid government afforded us. Inferior infrastructure,

lack of service delivery (water, lights, and sanitation) and a lack of resources should be accepted and not contested. Being a Muslim had a significant impact in shaping my life experience as I was only supposed to make friends with people from my religious group. I was not allowed to express my views freely for the fear of being victimised. As a girl, I had to listen to and obey all men, as men were seen as being superior and only their views mattered while women were seen as there to „serve' their men. In my experience, gender discrimination and not challenging male domination were the accepted norm in an Apartheid society and especially, in an Indian Muslim community. I was not allowed to be seen in the presence of men, the only male contact would be my father and brother. As a Muslim student, I had to dress in a particular way and behave in a socially accepted manner.

My sense of myself as a learner was shaped in many ways, some painful and some joyous. The experiences, both positive and negative, left an indelible memory that shaped all my future experiences and interactions. The only teacher that I remember fondly in high school was my Home Economics teacher, who made our learning fun with her use of the „hands on approach'. I also remember the other teacher who taught me music and was cruel and used to hit us with the blackboard ruler if we did not play a piece of music correctly.

My very own understanding of student protest began in 1979 when I was in standard 6 (Grade 8). I was the product of an emerging anti-apartheid movement. Often we would notice army vehicles and the police, who would cordon off the roads, sometimes making it impossible to enter school. When student protest began to escalate, conflict between police and students plagued the school grounds and pavements. Rubber bullets and tear gas were used to repress student protests. Many students became more violent. I clearly recall myself singing freedom songs such as "We shall overcome".

This experience broadened my mind. As a student, I began to question the racially differentiated curriculum which stereotyped the way we were taught and allowed to learn. This awakening and realisation came as I watched the news on television and read the daily newspaper. As I recall and reflect on it now, the Apartheid education system was compartmentalised and it placed many restrictions on learners' career choices. With protest and emerging teacher movements, teachers and students began to question who they were and what part they played in this Apartheid education system. These protests began to encourage Black, Indian and Coloured learners to find ways and means to change their circumstances. Students also began to question the race distinction (racism) in school. Teachers and student

wanted anti-Apartheid schools that would allow entry to all race groups. Thus, the political actions of resistance movements impacted upon my education and my personal history.

My early marriage and a secret yearning to be professional

I always excelled in mathematics because we were constantly exposed to counting money and helping my dad do the books for the family business. In Grade 11, I was asked by my teacher, "How do banks count money?" I answered "By using a scale". My teacher was impressed and looked at me differently, as having potential, not realising how my family stimulated, encouraged and shaped my learning. As a scholar, I could afford almost anything and did not realise the value of things.

My father encouraged me to study and I went to University somewhat still immature. When I attended the University of Durban Westville (UDW) in 1984, student protest escalated. Due to unforeseen circumstances, I left UDW at the height of political unrest. I fell in love with my husband and married after a year, leaving my studies for wedded bliss. I had a break for eight years and had two children.

This experience was a turning point in my life. My husband was the kindest soul. To an extent, he helped me to reshape my destiny, and to liberate and emancipate me from the pressures of the strong socialisation forces of a traditional and cultural family. I did not discard my values, but now began to question the rationale of certain ideologies. We developed a close bond and he made me come to terms with the real world and encouraged me to think for myself and to speak authoritatively. I slowly began to realise the cost of living and tried new ventures to contribute to the family income. I started my own catering business and took orders from shops and business companies for finger foods and Indian savouries such as samoosas and pies.

During this period, the saddest and most significant thing took place. My mother fell seriously ill and suffered from renal failure. I recall the days when I used to accompany my father to the Nephrologist, taking mother for her weekly dialysis. Her conditioned worsened and I secretly thank the Lord for giving me the opportunity to care for my ailing mum. My understanding of love that exists between spouses was epitomised in my parent's relationship. After my mother's dialysis my father used to rub her head as she would suffer from severe headaches (a side effect of dialysis). After a few years, my mother passed on. To me this was a big loss as I

was still a 28 year old baby myself. My father took on the role of mother and father and did not make us feel as if we did not have a mother. My father did not attend school at all; he was a self-made businessman, who through his active engagement with the newspaper, other businessmen and the television became very successful. He became my friend and we would spend many hours talking about his businesses and other family affairs. I used to look forward to my Friday afternoons, as this was when my father and I had our special one-on-one moment.

My mother's death was my biggest loss. My parent's relationship was something to strive for. My parents served as a good role model and their relationship helped shape my identity towards love and care. This relationship also served as a yardstick for us children to acquire with our spouses as, irrespective of the material belongings that my parents had, it did not alter their relationship with each other. To this day, many of my siblings live in a happy relationship with their spouses.

After the loss of my mother, the realisation dawned upon me that I had to be someone, and that someone was a teacher. Within the same year (1995), I applied to Edgewood Teachers' Training College and was accepted for a Junior Primary Diploma in a post-Apartheid South Africa. This loss was also a turning point in my own career, as I realised that I had to educate myself so that I could help others and make a difference in society. My father and husband were very supportive. I felt that being educated would also help in breaking the barriers of subservience and that I was entering a world of opportunities that could be used to support others in my context.

Becoming professional and a democratic Teacher Training College experience

My experience at the Teacher Training College was quite an experience. It was another turning point in my life. I was a full time student with two daughters and, at the same time, balancing my life as a student, mother and a wife. I was more committed than before because I did not have time and finances to waste. Every day of my life as a student was a professional journey and I wanted to know more. Every experience at the College was an enriching professionalisation experience. I was part of a multi-racial and multi-cultural group of students. Over the three years, I forged many good relationships with students from mixed racial and cultural groups. The lecturers also belonged to a multi-racial and multi-cultural group. This experience was exciting, as each day unfolded a new experience. I was recognised

by some of my lecturers as someone who had potential. My excellent performance and accolades (see Figure 3.11) confirmed my decision to seek a professional career.

10 December 1998

Rashida Khan
3JP

Dear Rashida

RECTOR'S COMMENDATION
_____

Edgewood instituted a Rector's Commendation for those students who have achieved an outstanding academic record over the past year and who have attained a Higher Grade pass in Practice Teaching.

Your results for 1998 were of a particularly high standard and it is therefore my special pleasure to inform you that you have been awarded a Rector's Commendation for outstandingly good work.

Congratulations on your commendable success and best wishes in your future endeavours.

Figure 3.11: This certificate verifies my pursuit towards excellence.

My graduation was most memorable as I was the first of my siblings to graduate. My father was overjoyed and shed a tear of joy when he congratulated me at the awards ceremony. This was a motivating force in me acquiring further professional development. I used this as a benchmark and contemplated studying further, and thereafter achieved cum-laude for the Higher Diploma in Education through University of South Africa.

 My self-understanding moved from unprofessional to professional and this boosted my self-esteem. I was the envy of many because they did not believe that after a break of eight years with multiple roles and two children I could complete my studies. This de-professionalised me to a certain extent; however I did not let it stop me from seeking further professional development and, as the years went by, I successfully completed an Honours Degree in Early Childhood Development. Later, many of the others in my circle of friends and family embarked on similar professional journeys.

My first democratic elections, start of a professional career and deliberate internship

The first two years at the Teacher Training College were spent assistant teaching at schools in the morning and attending lectures for the Pre- primary and Junior Primary modules in the evenings. My husband, father and father-in-law were very supportive. They would do the dropping off and fetching of my two daughters from school. My sisters would cook for me and send my meals home. I could never have done it without the support from my family members.

My experiences as an assistant teacher at both the Pre-school and the Primary school were some of my best; however it was a culturally different experience. As this was a deliberate apprenticeship, I was one of the few Indians in 1995 to teach in formerly „White' schools. Both schools were located in Pinetown and were strongly supported by a newly established multi-racial, working class parent population. I needed to prove myself as a Muslim Indian and, in doing so, I moved from orthodox Muslim, dressed in my cultural attire, to a „wannabe white'. I struggled to fit in this new environment which promoted a different lifestyle and freedom of expression. I abandoned the scarf, cut my hair and dressed like the white teachers. I was totally accepted by the teachers, learners and parent community. I was treated with much love and respect. It was an experience full of love and feeling. My education gave me a sense of freedom. Hooks (1994) speaks of education as enabling us to „transgress' and she refers to it as the most important goal of teachers, allowing them to seek freedom through their pedagogy.

My on-going development towards being a professional began to shape my life. The many accolades that I received at the College of Education increased my motivation. I thrived in the achievement of excellence and looked for opportunities to further professionalise myself. I was the envy of many family members, especially the ones who had never had faith in me, and I soon became a role model to others.

Being a novice Grade One teacher

This journey of becoming a professional did not stop. I started my teaching career at a Primary school in Durban North. I first started teaching in the dawn of the new millennium. The school was Independent, and situated in Durban North. The working conditions were very difficult as there was no professional support in any aspect of teaching and learning. This

school was „controlled' by a group of directors that were not teachers. Interference in curriculum issues occurred daily and there was a strong mono-cultural monopoly over the running of the school. My experience in this predominantly Hindu environment showcased a lifestyle that has its own unique culture. All activities were based on song and dance. The spirit of Hinduism permeated the lives of the children.

It was rare to network with teachers from other schools or even attend Department of Education workshops and meetings. The management failed to create any opportunities for continued and sustained professional development. I began working in isolation and did not know how to measure my skills as a novice teacher. The support from management towards pedagogy of my Grade 1 class was nil. My life of teaching and learning was difficult as I began to teach subjects that I was not trained for, such as Computers. Frustration soon set in and I began to apply for other Foundation Phase vacancies in the Durban area. I became restless and stifled by the strong cultural impositions made upon my pedagogy and, luckily, I was head-hunted by another Independent school. During this year, I befriended a colleague from the same school and she encouraged me to enroll for a Higher Diploma in Education. I recall her words; ...*"You should study now, so that you can get an M+ 4 qualification, it will increase your salary as well"* and this is what I did. This was another boost to my professional journey.

Moving from novice to experienced professional

I moved schools and began teaching at my present school. I worked hard and soon built up a reputation of being an excellent teacher. My Principal must have seen some potential in me and exposed me to almost every opportunity that arose. I was recognised as a mentor teacher and passed with a 90% average in a mentorship course.

My experience at this school was a life changing one. I worked very hard to fit in this new home which consisted of mainly Indian Muslim teachers and a few White teachers. As a newcomer, everyone was scrutinising my work. The need to be accepted by my colleagues made me work harder. I began to increase the circle of friends in my new environment. There began a mutually caring and respectful professional relationship that created a sense of belonging in this new home. During the transition from novice to experienced I slowly sought out opportunities to empower myself. I engaged with the curriculum documents extensively,

understanding almost every requirement in the Foundation Phase curriculum. I also sought out experienced professionals from other well established schools and began to network and collaborate on my own, in my own time. This relationship with other experienced professionals afforded me the opportunity to be mentored and developed into becoming an experienced professional. I would call on these experienced professionals (some of them were high school teachers) to assist me whenever I did not understand concepts to be facilitated. This collaborative practice made me confident in being a Foundation Phase teacher and helped to develop me as a person and as a professional.

This new supportive space slowly encouraged me to go against the norms and standards of a prescriptive curriculum. I gradually introduced innovative ideas about teaching and learning. I began to implement new teaching methods. I made learning fun and hands on and introduced fun activities such as a „fun walk', market day, and a Foundation Phase sleep-over. I began to include parents in my activities and they took advantage of this innovative opportunity. Yearly, parents requested for their children to be in my class. But, those that did not understand, referred to me as a „window dresser', as well as making comments such as „blue eyed girl' and „favourite'. These comments began to slowly de-professsionalise me as I sought acceptance from a wealthy community of parents and pupils. My innovative ideas began to die down as I wanted to be friends with the staff. This further shaped my sense of myself and added to my de-professionalisation.

This independent context was to an extent controlled by mostly male management members. Both the Principal and senior management members were men, and their word was final in any decision. Freedom of expression as a Muslim female was restrictive, and this impacted heavily on my self-esteem.

Becoming a mentor teacher

As a somewhat novice teacher, and a teacher who displayed lots of potential, I was honoured with the privilege of being a mentor teacher to an ex-pupil of this school. During this period the mentee followed my every move and shadowed my teaching, curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular duties within school so that she could gain first hand experiences. I also supported and guided the mentee in understanding her role within the school community, study requirements (understanding the assignments and conducting lessons) as well as in preparation for the exams. Apart from this, I also assisted the mentee in planning, preparing, facilitating and assessing lessons. This experience was rewarding to both the mentee and me

as it gave us fulfillment in that we could ask each other anything. This strengthened and built trust in our relationship. During this four year period I attended a mentoring course through the Education, Training and Development Practices-Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP- SETA) on mentoring students in the Further Education and Training Band. This was run by the Independent Examination Board (IEB). I spent four years mentoring this student teacher who made me proud by completing the Bachelor of Education in record time. After a few years, I was honoured with having a second student to mentor. During this time of mentoring, I was involved in networking with other teachers involved in the same programme. We met regularly to discuss our sorrows and joys of being involved in such a programme. Some of the problem issues were time management, the excessive amount of paper work and the constant feedback to students. This mentoring experience boosted my self-esteem as I was now confident to communicate in cluster meetings. The platform of belonging to a group of mentors helped cement my teaching and learning experiences within a challenging context.

After this, I successfully completed a course run by CLASS CONSULTING on planning, designing, developing and conducting assessments for all types of learners (in school and tertiary institutions). Fortunately, I obtained the highest score in the country at that time.

My promotion to Head of Department
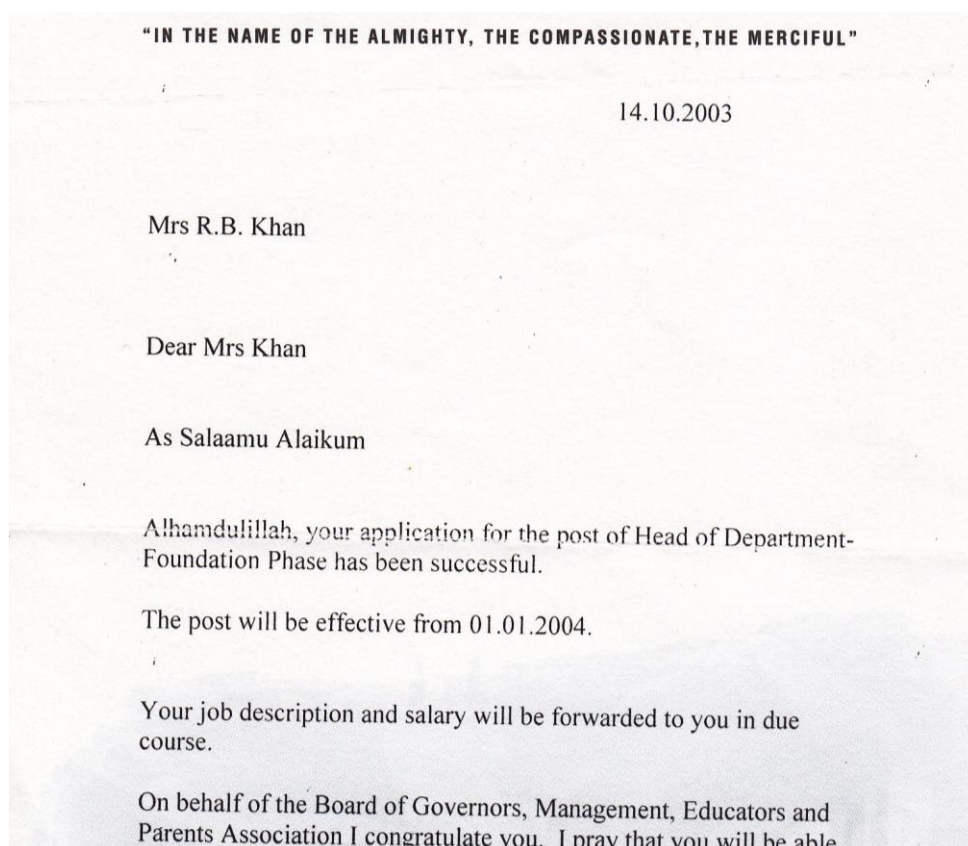
Figure 3.12: This letter is evidence of my appointment as Foundation Phase Head of Department.

My promotion to Foundation Phase Head of Department affirmed my commitment towards teaching and learning and encouraged me to support the teachers in my phase in their own professional development. I wanted to use this as an opportunity to create a path for supporting teachers' learning through professional development.

I soon began to make sense of my life as a Head of Department. However, when I became Head of Department I experienced the most dehumanising and de-professionalising episode. *As I recall this incident I begin to cry (Journal entry, February 2011*). As a Head of Department, I was expected to professionally evaluate the teachers under my care. An evaluation instrument called Performance Related Pay was used. This evaluation was salary based and teachers were given increases according to their performance. Honesty was the

negating factor as the truth of the scores made my so called friends or colleagues become my enemies. Teachers began to caucus and collaborate against the Heads of Departments and friends stabbed each other in the back as they refused to share ideas because they wanted to get the highest scores and qualify for the highest pay increase, which initially was 20% of the teachers' salary. Teachers used to watch me and the other managers and talk. The moment we went near, they kept quiet. This behaviour of the staff towards me demoralised and de-professionalised me. I moved from being a bubbly person to a highly stressed professional.

My private and professional life as a teacher could not be separated. I would often confide in my husband and children about daily incidents of teaching and learning in a trying context that would affect me. This is illustrated by a recent conversation with my husband, as I recorded in my journal:

> *As I discuss important school related conflicts, he will say, "I told you, you need to speak up for yourself and not be afraid".* (*Journal entry, February 2011*)

The learners in our school suffered to an extent as the majority of teachers who did not receive the highest score inevitably lost their passion for teaching and learning. This stress took its toll on my personal life and many times I thought of giving up my position. However, just then an executive director was appointed and he banned this kind of salary related appraisal.

During my years as a Foundation Phase Head of Department, I have assisted the Department of Education in conducting workshops such as „unpacking' learning programmes and facilitating the Grade R curriculum and facilitation of the HIV/AIDS curriculum. I am currently the Foundation Phase coordinator for the Association of Muslim Schools. This entails the scheduling of regular meetings, giving curriculum support, as, well as providing the necessary support towards professional development in the Muslim Independent schools.

With many successes to be proud of, recently my contributions to teaching and learning were reaffirmed when I was approached to conduct a two day support workshop for teaching and learning in the Limpopo province. I reflect on my entries for that experience in my journal as I remember this achievement of mine:

Friday afternoon, in a busy Mall. I am approached by a Principal to go to Welkom in the Free State to provide professional support to an already existing Muslim school. I am overwhelmed, but took it as a challenge (Journal entry, 24 June 2011).

I leave for a two day staff development to Welkom. My husband, now a Principal joins me. (*Journal entry, 7 September 2011*)

This was the most fulfilling experience as I still engage in ongoing support to all teachers in this school. I arrived back home on the 9 September 2011 and attended a staff development programme at my present context. What a stimulating three days I had experience.

My present situation of trying to support teacher learning through professional development initiatives within my Independent School Context

One of the problems facing teachers and myself in my current school environment is that teacher learning through professional development is not taking place successfully as there is very little time to provide this kind of support as I also teach 22 lessons. Further impacting on my providing support is that this school has an integrated curriculum (religious education is taught within the school day). Overseeing 16 staff members and about 300 learners and parents also makes it difficult to find enough time to adequately support teacher learning through professional development in this Independent school context.

Professional development in the Foundation Phase is episodic, not continued nor sustained. Teacher learning in my present context takes place once a term for approximately five hours. The topics for these staff developments are based on customer service and other unrelated aspects of school management. However, I strongly feel that the five hours spent on that day could be better used to assist teachers with facilitation of the curriculum, so as to enhance teacher learning and eventually student performance:

> *As I sit in this staff development programme I begin to notice how there is lack of collaboration, networking and communication as teachers engage in activities. I recall the findings of my pilot study, as the participants made clear the lack of these aspects, and the struggles of working in isolation. The two participants from my pilot study also shared their sentiments of not receiving enough support with regards to professional development, in facilitation of phonics, mathematics, and other, aspects taught in the Foundation Phase. (Journal entry, 9 September 2011)*

Continuous professional development in a context like mine will enable teachers to enhance our existing skills, reprofessionalising ourselves. Professional development at our school is

only school based; no initiatives are held in outside school venues. All professional development initiatives are compartmentalised in this context. Our school lacks a clearly planned and mapped out continuous and sustained professional development programme.

In our school, there are changes taking place on a continuous basis. In order to keep abreast of technological, curricular and international trends affecting teaching and learning, these changes have made it necessary for teachers like me and the others within this unique context to sharpen our teaching skills. I continually see the need to be reprofessionalised, as yearly we are presented with a new lot of learners who are to an extent „smarter' than the previous lot. Within this Independent context there are specific subjects such as smart board technology, computers, mathematics, science and second and third languages (such as Arabic. Afrikaans and IsiZulu) that need continuous and sustained support. Unscheduled and continued curriculum changes make it imperative to change teaching and learning within this context to ensure the success of our students.

I have noticed that the teachers in the Foundation Phase seldom participate in collaborative practices. In this school, teachers seem to prefer working in isolation when it comes to curriculum. There is a lot of competition between the teachers. We rarely meet within school time to discuss issues relating to teaching and learning and therefore lack communication with each other. Professional development amongst colleagues is used by the Grade R teachers, who meet to share the activities planned, and the Grade 3 teachers, who meet once a week to plan learning and teaching. However, they do not meet teachers from other grades or other schools to collaborate and share. Teachers also do not verbalise their problems relating to teaching: however they often share their good practices and successes. The positive part of working in this particular context is that teachers often rally around each other providing support in co- curricular activities. They seem to enjoy working in collaboration in all aspects other than teaching.

I have observed that many teachers in this Independent school context still facilitate by means of telling, the way we were taught as learners. Learner centred teaching is lacking. I have noticed that many teachers use the same teaching style and resources from year to year. To this day, I find some of the teachers within my Phase using archaic methods of teaching. I often ask myself if they are to blame, and whether they have been given adequate support for incorporating learner centred pedagogy. Teachers are also reluctant to use new resources such as workbooks, worksheets and computer technology such as the „smart board'.

Teacher support in the Foundation Phase, with regards to the teaching of basic skills such as phonics, reading writing and mathematics science and technology, takes place only occasionally. Providing

pedagogical support to 16 teachers is difficult, as each one of them has different needs and there is not enough time within the school day to support teacher learning through professional development. In my Independent school context, mentoring and teacher support happens minimally. These occur when a new teacher joins the school, and when a complaint comes from parents about a teacher's pedagogical style. In an Independent school context like mine, teachers are usually thrown in the deep end, and have to develop survival tactics to overcome their inadequacies in teaching and learning.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have engaged with the first of the key research question that underpins my study: *How can I better understand the personal history that informs my practices as a teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department?* To respond to this question, I have recalled the memories of my personal and professional life (with special references made to my experiences of learning and teaching) from infancy through, to my present position as teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department. Through this deliberate remembering, I have unearthed many hidden experiences of my early learning, and of my becoming a professional, which have impacted on my present position as teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department.

In the next chapter I respond to the second question that underpins my study: *How can I draw on a deeper understanding of my personal history to better support teacher learning in an Independent school through professional development initiatives?* Through exploring this question, I aim to identify appropriate strategies to better support teacher learning through professional development initiatives in my Independent school context. I re-examine my lived experiences to identify key themes that emerge from the memoirs of my educational life. Through re-examining these memoirs, I aim to better understand and explain the teacher and manager I am today, how these past experiences have impacted and shaped my own practice within my context, and how they might inform my future practice.

CHAPTER FOUR:

MAKING SENSE OF MY PERSONAL HISTORY

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I recall my personal history in an attempt to answer my first research question: *How can I better understand the personal history that informs my practices as a teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department?* I take the reader through the passages of my early childhood experiences, my schooling, and my training as a student teacher and my practice of being a teacher and a Head of Department at an Independent Muslim School. My memoirs show that throughout this journey I have often stumbled over „speed humps, dead ends and freeways', to achieve my current destination in becoming a teacher and Head of Department in my present context. They also reveal that I am still facing challenges in my efforts to support teacher learning through professional development initiatives. These memoirs are important for this study as they represent the data for the personal history self-study research I am engaged in. This data was generated through reflective journal writing, memory writing, memory drawing and artefact retrieval. (I discuss my data generation methods in more detail in Chapter Two). Through this process of deliberate remembering, I uncovered many hidden experiences of my early learning, and of becoming a professional, which have impacted on my present position as teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department. Furthermore, this process has allowed me to revisit my existing practice, in a desire to enhance teacher learning and be better able to support professional development in my Independent school context.

In this chapter, I engage with the second question that guides my study: *How can I draw on a deeper understanding of my personal history to better support teacher learning in an Independent school through professional development initiatives?* Exploring this question allows me to look at the educational significance of some indelible memories of my past experiences. In this analysis, I re-examine the memoirs of my lived experiences portrayed in Chapter Three.

Through introspection, I have reflected on the many learning experiences that have contributed to the shaping of my personal and professional life as a teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department. The interpretation and reinterpretation of memories of significant events within my personal history has enabled me to see how each one of them has impacted on my professional self and practice. Through re-examining my memoirs, I have sought to better understand and explain the teacher and manager I am today and how these past experiences have impacted and shaped my own practice within my professional context. I have also considered how they might help to improve my own practice in supporting the Foundation Phase teachers in my Independent School context in the future. This reflection on the memoirs of my lived experiences has been a tool in making sense of my professional context, especially my relationships within this context. In my analysis of my lived experiences as presented in Chapter Three, I have engaged in a process of inductive reasoning, as evidence from artefacts, memory drawings and memory writings of my lived experiences have continually come under the microscope (I discuss my data analysis process in more detail in Chapter Two). As explained in Chapter Two, my critical friends have also contributed to this inductive interpretation. Together, we looked carefully at our diverse lived experiences, exploring how these experiences have contributed to the shaping of our selves and practices as the teachers and Heads of Department we are today.

In looking at my memoirs, key themes emerge from the story of my personal history. These themes emerge as a result of my interpretations of my personal history as portrayed in Chapter Three. *The key themes that I have identified are: a) guidance and inspiration from family; b) evolving from teacher centredness to learner centredness; c) deep-rooted intrinsic motivation; d) teacher mentoring and collaboration; and e) developing greater self-esteem and freedom of expression.* These themes do not appear in isolation as there are many overlaps between them. I present each one of them together with relevant supporting data from Chapter Three. Furthermore, I demonstrate how my exploration of these themes has allowed me to develop questions to spur me on in "pushing the boundaries" (Samara, Hicks & Berger, 2004, p. 907) of supporting teacher learning through professional development initiatives in my school context.

Themes that have Emerged through Deliberate Re-Examination of My Personal History

Guidance and inspiration from family

The first major theme that emerges from introspection into my lived experiences is that of the role family members, mother, father, uncles, grandparents, husband and extended family members, have played in promoting and supporting my learning and professionalisation. As I look back into the past, I notice how my ongoing progress was encouraged by members of my family, especially my father and husband and, to an extent, my uncles and my paternal grandfather. Boggs and Golden (2009, p. 216) maintain that "families, mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, cousins, brothers, sisters, grandmothers, grandfathers, and even stepparents" play a vital role in teachers' early learning experiences and thus their later development as teachers. Likewise, through reflection on my experiences of learning and teaching, it is clear that my immediate and extended families have played a crucial role in supporting my journey to becoming the teacher and Head of Department I am today.

From my childhood onwards, promotion of a career has been an important aspect of my family life. Each family member and his or her special characteristic has somehow influenced my professional journey. My paternal grandfather and his affiliation with white doctors and colleagues from the Salvation Army allowed me the privilege of being connected to people with professional careers. I recall stories told to me by my older siblings, who said:

> *"As this was the era of Apartheid (racial segregation) he was one of the few Indians that worked with white medical doctors. He had many white friends and I recall the annual visits made to our home by these doctors before Christmas. We eagerly awaited their visits as they would bring gifts…* (Personal history, Chapter Three, p. 25-26)

My personal history illustrates how my paternal grandfather's lifestyle began to subtly influence my career choice as I began seeing the benefits of a career and watched his continued liaisons with his professional colleagues. My memoirs also reveal how his career also afforded us the opportunities of ownership of fine luxuries, such as a telephone and electricity supply to our home, which was a rare privilege in our neighbourhood in the early 60's. This luxury was enjoyed by all neighbours and extended family members who had access to these privileges. This

was subsequently a tall order for us as grandchildren to emulate. However, through sheer hard work, together with determination and encouragement from my immediate family members, I was able to achieve some of my secretly wished for dreams. My continued and never ending professional development strategies supported this personal goal and brought it to fruition.

In addition to the role played by my grandfather, extended family members, such as my fathers' brothers, cajoled and encouraged us to become somebody. I recall:

> *My uncles placed enormous traditional and cultural impositions on the children and encouraged us to study, thus shaping our identity and professionalism. They may have secretly hoped for us to fulfill their unachievable dreams.* (Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 28)

My uncles working in administrative fields exposed me to an environment of seeing people working in an office, as well as dressing in smart attire such as a suit and tie (for a white collar job). Seeing the benefits of jobs like this made me realise that I needed to pursue a career. One of my uncles in particular had an exceptionally positive attitude towards learning and encouraged all children in our household to go to school, study and become someone. Through his encouragement and love for education, his son is now a principal at a primary school in Phoenix, North of Durban. His words echo in my thoughts as I remember a recent interaction:

> *At a wedding, he brings tears to my eyes as he begins to tell me how he says a special prayer for my family, and how proud he is of me, I am indeed blessed. (Journal entry, 16 September 2011*, as cited in Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 28)

My family's religion has also played an important role in my becoming the teacher and Head of Department I am today. My personal history illustrates my attendance at an after school Madressa (Quran School). Here, we were taught verses of the Quran with understanding, the history of Muslims, as well as how to write the Arabic language. This curriculum was value based and set firm foundations and has influenced all my decisions to date. The values of patience, tolerance and respect were deeply embedded into our daily lives as children, as we read our Quran and prayed our five daily prayers. Looking back, I can see how these inculcated values became the cornerstone for all learning and teaching experiences within my context as well as engaging with

colleagues outside my context. Similarly, Variathaiah (2010, p. 51) highlights how religion shaped her identity as a teacher in developing a "positive self esteem, respect, patience and influenced her interaction with learners and colleagues".

An upbringing that promoted values was thus inculcated in our orthodox Muslim lifestyle. My paternal grandfather's authoritative and patriarchal character was influential in the development of many of my values, such as strong family ties, honesty, hard work and respect. He set firm foundations for all members of my extended family. All those around him, including neighbours and extended family members, tried to emulate his exemplary character in that they looked for social acceptance by modeling some of his personality traits. I now realise that I, myself, must have picked up on his supportive, diligence and nurturing characteristics as I continually try to engage my teachers at school in some sort of professional development activities and to offer words of wisdom. My paternal grandfather's personality invited people to love him and reward his selfless efforts. This strong personality trait of his also afforded us status in our community. I remember the stories passed down by my siblings:

> *During the period of 1930- 1950, my paternal grandfather was a soldier in the Salvation Army, where he was involved in protecting people in his neighbourhood as well as providing help to the destitute.* (Personal history, Chapter Three, p. 25)

My memories also highlight how my father, father-in-law and husband were the pillars of strength during my initial studies as I tried to re-professionalise myself. Each one of them, through their little and sometimes subtle remarks, nuances and nudging, encouraged me along over the speed humps in my professional journey:

> *My husband, father and father-in-law were very supportive. They would do the dropping off and fetching of my two daughters from school. My sisters would cook for me and send my meals home. I could never have done it without the support from my family members.* (Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 41)

My father was a pillar of strength through the joys and sorrows of my professional journey. As I remember:

My father encouraged me to study and I went to University somewhat still immature…. My father took on the role of mother and father and did not make us feel as if we did not have a mother…. He became my friend and we would spend many hours talking about his businesses and other family affairs. I used to look forward to my Friday afternoons, as this was when my father and I had our special one-on-one moment. (Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 38-39)

Although my father was uneducated, he always encouraged me to continue studying, telling me that I should become someone so that one day I could fend for myself. My father himself was self-educated through reading the newspaper and watching the news, and through this, he became very literate and ran an extremely successful business. His own professionalisation through intrinsic motivation became a bench mark for me, as I emulated his thirst for knowledge and followed in his footsteps in intrinsically wanting to re-professionalise myself.

My personal history also reveals that my husband was the stimulus that ignited the fire to get me studying; his continued encouragement and support, have, to an extent, determined the teacher and Head of Department I am today. My children and I have been constantly encouraged to pursue a profession, as well as to express ourselves articulately, especially me. I have moved from being an introvert to being a professional who can express myself appropriately in varied contexts. This is illustrated by a recent conversation with my husband that I wrote about in my journal:

As I discuss important school related conflicts, he will say, "I told you, you need to speak up for yourself and not be afraid". (Journal entry, February 2011, as cited in Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 45)

Throughout the past two years while I have been studying for my Masters, my husband has been encouraging and supporting my every effort. Our home is one full of collaboration, discussions and arguments. The dinner table and our drive home after school generally focus on daily happenings in teaching and learning. These experiences within my home have encouraged me to exhibit the same attitude and behaviour towards the Foundation Phase teachers within my

Independent school context. Through every milestone, encouragement, nurturing, inspiration, deliberations and congratulatory remarks have been my daily support. I now realise that my husband's collaborative practices inspire me to want to do the very same with the teachers in my context.

In Varathaiah (2010, p. 35), a South African teacher explains how she imbibed the characteristics of "hard work, perseverance and motivation" from her parents, and this determined her academic success. Similarly, it is clear from my personal history that the qualities of diligence, consistency and perseverance were instilled in me by my immediate and extended family members. I recall the words of encouragement from my father and husband as I embarked on my professional journey, and remember the joy in their faces when I received my first professional qualification. This image was all I needed to continue my professional development.

Boggs and Golden (2009) also emphasise the influence mothers have in teachers' lives. Likewise, I must highlight the influence my working class mother played in determining the teacher and Head of Department I am today. Her nurturing quality, perseverance and contribution to the family income made her my role model. I recall:

> *My mother was a very fair person as when it came to giving us our weekly allowance she would give all children in the household (including children of extended family members who came to live with us) the same amount. She treated us fairly in all her encounters. Her presence in the business contributed to our successes as many of us are now financially stable.* (Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 27-28)

My mother's gentle nature and fairness in dealing with most people have certainly rubbed off on me as I continually try to emulate some of her remarkable characteristics in my own practice as teacher and Head of Department by showing the same kindness, compassion and understanding to those whom I teach and supervise.

Thus, from my mother's example and my continuing professional development, I have learnt that teachers' professional learning involves "both intellectual and emotional processes" (Day & Gu, 2010, p. 425). Sergiovanni (as cited in Day & Gu, 2010, p. 428) explains that good teaching involves the "head, the hand and the heart, [and is] essentially founded upon both intellectual

curiosity and emotional investment". With regard to my own emotions and intellect, I have found that being a very emotional person has sometimes been a disadvantage in my role as a Head of Department, as I am sometimes overwhelmed when learners, teachers and parents share their sorrows with me. A few teachers have exploited this sensitive nature of mine, and often make excuses when they are unable to fulfill their intellectual obligations.

My mother's determination to make the family business a success spurred my own motivation to professionalisation. Likewise, Varathaiah (2010, p. 48) speaks of how her academic success was fostered by the "encouragement she received from her mother". However, I cannot echo these sentiments as my mother had passed away during my years of study. Nevertheless, continued support and guidance from my other family members allowed me to relook at my own continued and sustained professional development, which allowed me to develop from an inexperienced novice teacher to a mature, confident and capable teacher and Head of department in an Independent School context.

The question that emerges from this first theme of guidance and inspiration from family members is, how can I, as a Head of Department, guide and inspire teacher learning through providing the kind of support family members do? In attempting to answer this question, it is clear that, firstly, I would have to push the boundaries (Samaras et al., 2004) and make teachers feel that they belong in an environment of teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase that is similar to their own family environment, and that each one of them would need to be treated with respect and understanding. I would need to encourage all the teachers in this phase to work democratically, allowing them to engage in healthy discussions. All teachers would need to be spurred on to work and behave like family members in providing support in personal and professional matters. I would need to inspire each one of them to support and guide one another in professional development initiatives that would ensure success, just as I was supported as a child, when I was growing up. Varathaiah (2010, p. 51) acknowledges that "the lessons of our lives are [carried into] the classroom and staffroom" and this in turn influences how we engage with learners and colleagues. In pushing the boundaries, I would also have to speak to the teachers in the same way a mother speaks to her children, with empathy, dignity, compassion and understanding.

Additionally, in my middle class school context, many pupils come from broken homes, and homes where the television and the helper are ‚in loco parentis', making it necessary for the teachers within this Independent context to use emotion work in their teaching to manage learning. At school, all role-players can be active in facilitating programmes that include members of the nuclear and extended families. Presently, in my school an annual programme for exiting learners (Grade 12) is held to guide and support learners in aspects of marriage and choice of suitable life partners. Regular parent development programmes are held for mothers and fathers to encourage good parenting skills. Activities such as a mother and daughter and father and son day are held annually to promote family relationships. Teachers are encouraged to co-ordinate and attend these functions. In my school, teachers are also encouraged to attend programmes like these. Motivational speakers are brought in to enlighten teachers about the value of family in promoting professional development, especially in supporting teachers in their professionalisation. As I recall from my own experience, my family, immediate and extended, heavily influenced and supported my journey of professionalisation. People like me can be used as an example to other teachers by delivering motivational speeches within and out of my context on how family members can influence, guide and support their own professional development.

Evolving from teacher centredness to learner centredness

The second theme that emerges from my memoirs is that of evolving from teacher centered to learner centered pedagogy. Paris and Combs (2006) explain that learner centred teaching should focus on learners' talents, perspectives, capacities and experiences, aiming to make the process of learning meaningful and developmentally appropriate. Paris and Combs (2006, p. 576) also state that learner centredness involves making the student the "starting point of the curriculum", and that student and teacher become "co-participants" in the learning process. As well, they argue that teachers should strive towards "intense student engagement with the curriculum" (Paris and Combs, 2006, p. 576). In reflecting on my own schooling experience as presented in Chapter Three, I am inundated with unpleasant memories of some teachers who encouraged learning by using the stick (corporal punishment), teaching by ‚telling', memorisation and not allowing us to engage in critical thinking and participation in ‚hands on' learning experiences. Through re-

examining my early childhood experiences, I see my initial learning experiences as being insignificant and somewhat boring as many teachers failed to provide exciting opportunities for teaching and learning. Active learning and learner centred pedagogy were not practiced in my pre-school, where learning should have taken place through play. The use of puzzles, concrete apparatus and other toys to stimulate learning was non-existent. As I recall:

> *The school was small and resources minimal. It seems that little importance was given to pre-schools for Indian children during the Apartheid era as I remember writing on scraps of paper with any writing equipment I could get my hands on. I cannot recall writing in a good enough exercise book or being taught by an experienced teacher that impacted on my life as a toddler.* (Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 28)

Through active discussions with my critical friends, I have learnt that only one of them attended a pre-school and she had similar experiences. As I reflect on the street scenes during my pre-school days, I realise that more emphasis was placed on economic activities than on promoting and supporting learning. I remember:

> *My teacher was more interested in selling peanuts and chickpeas to us than in teaching us basic knowledge, skills and values.* (Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 29)

From my personal history, I can see how most of my learning experiences in primary school were compartmentalised and teacher centred. Opportunities for receiving a holistic education were limited. My Grade 1 teacher did not use any concrete apparatus to teach, and all learning was abstract. We were expected to recall all the facts during tests and examinations, whether it made sense to us or not. He used the stick to punish us if we did not get the correct answers. I cannot recall reading for pleasure or as a group. Freire (1972) refers to this as the "banking" concept of education. In Chapter Three, I explain:

> *My first teacher was a male and I recall him being very rigid and meticulous as he made sure that we knew our flash words, which he taught in rote fashion, insisting that we remember the words in their correct order. I used to memorise and recall everything as it was given to us. Our teacher was also very strict and ensured that we all read and did our*

maths. If we did not get the correct answers, he would hit us with a ruler on our knuckles.
(Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 30)

My memoirs show that other teachers in high school failed dismally to make any impact on my learning experiences. They failed in being role-models whom we could emulate. My personal history reveals that, in high school, I had another negative experience with my music teacher. If we did not play the music piece correctly, he used to hit us with a black board ruler. I was afraid to report this, as back then the teacher was an important figure who knew „everything'. Morrell (1992) argues that this beating of children naturalised the use of force, and promoted the idea that „might is right'. Thus, no one dared to question this irrational and unbecoming behaviour. According to Harley, Barasa, Betram, Mattson and Pillay (2000, p. 10), "corporal punishment has been a pervasive feature of life in South African schools", and this was a reality of my early experiences of learning.

Varathaiah (2010) highlights how her development as a teacher was to an extent determined by positive and negative experiences with teachers during her schooling. Similarly, I can identify with her as I also experienced both positive and negative teacher influences, and these have certainly had a hand in determining the teacher and Head of Department I am today.

My Grade 3 teacher was the opposite of my Grade 1 teacher. This teacher taught me that learning and teaching could be fun, as she used the „hands on approach' for all her lessons. My memories of her show that she was truly a learner centred teacher. I recall:

> *My Grade 3 (Standard 1) year in this Indian urban school was most rewarding, as I had the best teacher. I enjoyed every moment of it. Surprisingly, my teacher belonged to the white race group and this confused me. It was odd as I did not understand what she was doing teaching in an Indian school. Her sweetness and humanistic nature left an indelible mark on my early learning experiences. She was always motivating and found fun methods of teaching and getting us to learn…. This teacher of mine always made us the priority in all her teaching and learning.* (Personal history, Chapter Three, p. 32)

By contrast, I have observed that many teachers in my Independent school context do not promote learner centredness in their facilitation of lessons. Most of the teachers within this

context facilitate by means of telling, the way they themselves were taught as learners. In South Africa, teachers often resort to archaic pedagogy and blame large class sizes and different learning abilities for continuing with teacher centred approaches (Kunene, 2009). Kunene, (2009, p. 141) highlights that "class size, shortage of teachers, lack of teaching and learning aids, poor infrastructure, and lack of parental involvement" are barriers to the practice of learner centred pedagogy in rural contexts; however, this cannot be said of my Independent school context. I refer to Chapter Two (p. 3), where I describe the context of my school:

> *The school is a well resourced school that has every luxury that a teacher could want. These include a small pupil-teacher ratio; air conditioned classrooms and „smart' rooms with the latest computer and digital technology.*

According to Paris and Combs (2006), it is important for teachers to move away from teacher centred pedagogy, and to develop teaching practices that encourage learner centredness. However in the Foundation Phase in our school, not all teachers use differentiated activities to allow for learners to engage in group work and hands on participation. Learners are often all given the same activities, therefore stifling their critical thinking abilities, making lessons boring and divorced from real life issues. Through my personal history self-study, I have come to see that the reason for this archaic teaching method might be because many of my fellow teachers were, like me, exposed to teacher centred methods of teaching during our own schooling. My critical friends also mentioned in our discussions that they too experienced similar learning experiences in their early schooling.

The question, therefore, that arises from this theme is: How I can stimulate creativity amongst teachers in order to create a shift from teacher centred learning to that of learner centredness? Simplicio (2000, p. 680) claims that creative teachers are "perpetually curious as they constantly seek new ways to improve abilities and explore alternative avenues that lead to greater insights". Likewise, Horng, Hong, Chanlin, Chang and Chu (2005) maintain that teachers in all contexts should promote creativity by developing self confidence, humour, and use of imagination through the use of self-created games, stories and brainstorming in all lessons.

Our school has many resources, including small class sizes and state of the art technological equipment such as computers and smart boards, that novice and experienced teachers could use to stimulate learning. However, in my experience, many teachers lack creativity, and prefer 'spoon feeding' learners. I think that teachers are afraid of exposing learners to these 'hands on' learning experiences that encourage critical thinking, as they look upon this as a challenge and insolence. Hence, children in this middle class context are not given enough opportunities to interact with the 'state of the art' resources that this school has to offer.

I have realised that all teachers need to be encouraged to engage learners within this Independent school context in interacting with the innovative technology that the school offers. The use of smart board technology should not be restricted to the computer teachers, but all teachers should receive professional development to assist them in using technology. Presently, the Foundation Phase teachers are not sufficiently equipped in facilitating technologically based lessons. As a result of my research, I have now requested that the service providers come to school and provide the necessary support to many of the Foundation Phase teachers.

In reflecting on my own role in supporting these teachers in developing a more creative teaching style, it is clear that they have not been given enough support by me as well as the other school management members. When I look back at my own practice, I see that my own pedagogy also sometimes lacks learner centredness. For example, I engage in whole class teaching and have limited group work opportunities for learners. I can trace this back to my own experiences as a learner. Personally, this study has allowed me to look critically at my teaching, encouraging me to move from teacher centred to learner centred learning. In reflecting on my own schooling experience, I am plagued with negative memories of teachers who promoted learning using the stick, teaching by "telling', memorisation and not encouraging us to engage in critical thinking and participation in hands on learning experiences.

I now realise that as Allender and Allender (2006, p. 14) explain, "an influence that has been actively part of our formation as teachers is our experiences as students". These early experiences of teaching and learning severely impacted on my past and present practice as a teacher and Head of Department, and for the future, I pledge to myself never to allow my own learners, in whatever context I teach, to experience any of these negative practices.

With teacher centred experiences shadowing my own teaching and that of many other Foundation Phase teachers within my Independent context, I aim to embark on strategies to improve my own practice and that of other Foundation Phase teachers, by modelling, guiding and supporting learner centredness together with the implementation of new improved methods of facilitation. I can encourage daily experiences of learning opportunities that afford learners the use of technology, puzzles, readers, and other valuable resources accessible in this context. I can continually take part in and encourage other teachers to attend staff development programmes that can enhance our teaching skills. I can encourage all service providers to support teacher learning by providing demonstrations of resources purchased for the school. Teachers within our Independent context can be encouraged to network with other teachers within similar or different contexts, to share their challenges and successes of learner centred teaching.

According to Day and Gu (2007, p. 424), teaching is "one of the most stressful professions" and therefore it is essential to create the appropriate learning conditions for teachers. Day and Gu (2007, p. 427) also argue that schools are "primary [sites] for teachers' professional learning", and should therefore provide a conducive environment that will enhance and motivate teacher learning. Likewise, in my Independent School context, all role- players will have to create these conditions within the institution that will foster and promote teacher creativity.

I have now taken it upon myself to appeal to our School Management Teams (SMT'S) to support teachers to develop teaching strategies that are geared to cope with the 21st Century pedagogical inventions. As school managers and Heads of Department, it is essential that we encourage learner centred pedagogy, by promoting professional development opportunities that encourage learner centredness. In doing so, teachers should aim to become proactive so as to initiate student thinking. Teachers must be allowed to observe other teachers teach so as to get ideas that they may use in their own classrooms. These initiatives must firstly be promoted in school and, later on, out of the school context, where teachers could learn through networking and collaboration. Similarly, Simplicio (2000) describes that the "key foundations" for creativity in classrooms are "shared perspectives, shared knowledge and shared experiences", and this can be achieved by encouraging teachers within this Independent context to network with other teachers within similar or different contexts. This would allow teachers to share their success stories as well as ask for help with problems experienced in the classroom. Teachers should aim

to take learning beyond the classroom walls and bring classrooms to life. Learner centredness could also be encouraged by taking field trips to places of interest.

In my present context, a shift from teacher centredness to learner centredness can be made by incorporating ideas that Simplicio (2000) presents. These include the incorporation and use of technological inventions such as the internet and computer, new resource materials relevant to the changing curriculum, extensive planning and preparation, changing one's teaching approach, as well as getting rid of old methodologies. Teachers in our context should aim to create a learner centred classroom environment that "piques curiosity" (Simplicio, 2000). My aim as a result of this study is to build a maths laboratory for the Foundation Phase teachers and learners to assist teaching to evolve from teacher centredness to learner centredness. This maths laboratory would be situated in the close proximity of the Foundation Phase learners and teachers. This laboratory, through sponsorship from well-wishers, would consist of computer aided maths games, puzzles, as well as construction toys that promote hands on learning together with critical thinking and problem solving opportunities.

Deep-rooted intrinsic motivation

The third theme to come to light from my lived experience is that of deep-rooted intrinsic motivation. As I recall, this deep-rooted intrinsic motivation began in my early childhood:

> *Due to my so called abnormality (being born with two broken arms), I always wanted to give of my best in whatever I did, thereby setting myself high standards. I always felt different from the others as everyone around me felt sorry for me and this contributed to my low self-esteem in my years as a child, as well as in my adolescent years. I worked hard and fought many social barriers trying to prove myself so that I would be accepted by others, especially my friends and teachers.* (Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 24)

Looking back at my personal history, I see that my initial Teachers' Diploma, Higher Diploma in Education, Honours in Early Childhood Education, Mentor Teacher and Assessor Course, Association of Muslim Schools Co-ordinator and other professional development achievements reflect my intrinsic motivation, in pursuit of a continuous and sustained professional

development. Although my initial professionalisation was supported by members of my close family and a friend during my novice teaching experience, it is clear to me that all other professional development opportunities throughout my life have also been to some extent intrinsically determined. I recall my past learning experiences:

> *Every experience at the College was an enriching professionalisation experience…. I was recognised by some of my lecturers as someone who had potential. My excellent performance and accolades confirmed my decision to seek a professional career…. I used this as a benchmark and contemplated studying further, and thereafter achieved cum-laude for the Higher Diploma in Education through the University. My self-understanding moved from unprofessional to professional, and this boosted my self esteem…. I successfully completed an Honours Degree in Early Childhood Development. Later, many of the others in my circle embarked on similar professional journeys.* (Personal History, Chapter Three, pp. 39-40)

My memoirs reveal that I worked hard to re-professionalise myself, making many sacrifices along the way, such as being away from my children. I often suffered from separation anxiety and would have to pull myself together. Nevertheless, I did not give up.

My personal history brings to light how, during my initial years as a teacher, I worked hard to improve my pedagogy and bring in new ideas in my classroom. I spent many a day working hard to forge strong and positive relationships with my learners and their families. I bring to mind:

> *Yearly parents requested for their children to be in my class.* (Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 43)

During that period, the new Outcomes-Based Curriculum was introduced. I took it as a personal challenge to unpack this new and continually changing curriculum. My memories show how I did not let the paper work stifle my capabilities and began to try out new ideas that encouraged collaboration and networking and ensuring student success:

> *I made learning fun and hands on and introduced fun activities such as a „fun walk', market day, and a Foundation Phase sleep-over. I began to include parents in my*

activities and they took advantage of this innovative opportunity. (Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 43)

I now see that part of my intrinsic motivation was that I was determined to go beyond the confines of the new curriculum, and I therefore also took it upon myself to provide support to other teachers. I remember:

> *During my years as a Foundation Phase Head of Department, I have assisted the Department of Education in conducting workshops such as unpacking learning programmes and facilitating the Grade R curriculum and facilitation of the HIV/AIDS curriculum. I am currently the Foundation Phase co-ordinator for the Association of Muslim Schools. This entails the scheduling of regular meetings, giving curriculum support, as well as providing the necessary support towards professional development in the Muslim Independent schools.* (Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 45)

Unlike many of the Foundation Phase teachers to whom I was exposed in my early teaching experiences at my current school, there were a few white teachers in this context that went the extra mile, but were never really taken ‚seriously', as their innovative ideas, loudness, freedom of expression and flair were regarded as being un-Islamic. Hence, I was determined to make a difference. I worked harder and contemplated other professional development opportunities so that I could bring about a change in teaching and learning within and beyond the confines of this Independent school context. Similarly, Evans (2002, p. 124), explains how she was involved in a "process that transformed [her] from a ‚restricted' to an ‚extended' professional" through her own teacher learning and professional development.

My personal history illustrates how, with completion of several professional development opportunities under my belt, such as two degrees, the Mentor and Assessor Course and Planning and Conducting Assessments, my principal began to see my ability as a "Master Teacher" and encouraged me to continue this re-professionalisation journey as I contemplated the Master's in Education Degree.

According to Avalos (2011, p. 10), professional development is about "teachers learning, learning how to learn and transforming their knowledge into practice for the benefit of their

student's growth", as well as attending formal structures such as courses and workshops that will harness their pedagogical skills. However, in my school, the only teachers that I know of who take advantage of professional development opportunities are the under-qualified assistant teachers' (under graduates) who have a thirst for new knowledge and are embarking on obtaining their initial teacher qualifications. Intrinsic motivation within my school context seems to be almost non-existent, as teachers continually ask why they should study or seek professional development, when there is no financial gain for them.

The question that emerges from this theme of deep-rooted intrinsic motivation is: How can I assist teachers to unleash their hidden potential? Schools like my own are prime sites that can promote intrinsically determined professional development, to ensure that teacher learning is taking place continually and that it is sustained to ensure proper functionality of teaching and learning. As Knight (2001, p. 230) states, such "professional development is important for the wellbeing of schooling".

Leading by example and intrinsic motivation, as reflected in Chapter Three, are key features to managing and leading a group of dynamic teachers in the Foundation Phase. I now realise that before I contemplate new ideas of teaching and learning, I should put them into practice in my own classroom and lead by example, offering novice and experienced teachers opportunities to witness and critique my teaching and then try it out in their own classrooms. I could also devise assessment tasks and instruments together with the other teachers. In all the encounters of teaching, learning and supporting in the Foundation Phase, I will aim to be a role model for the teachers within my Phase, hoping that each one of them will imbibe some of my intrinsic motivation for teaching and managing in the Foundation Phase.

In moving forward, I will encourage all School Management Team members in this context to identify appropriate opportunities in and out of school that will encourage teachers to engage in a process of lifelong learning. Some ideas that could be looked at to enhance teaching in this context are: time-tabled programmes to re-skill teachers, a professional development plan that awards teachers incentives in the form of subsidising teachers' fees for courses and workshops, awards for teachers who continually upgrade their practice, special recognition in the school newsletters, broadcasts in community radio stations and other initiatives that would promote

teacher learning as a means to improving schools in a fast changing global society, (Lieberman and Pointer Mace, 2008).

Through this study I have also put into place an action plan to ensure that all teachers within this context will receive an equal opportunity to attend workshops. Teachers in the Foundation Phase will attend meetings, workshops and other professional development initiatives on a roster basis, ensuring that all within this Phase are re-skilled.

As a result of this study, I have now, together with the School Management Team, embarked on a deliberate attempt to encourage continued professional development. In meetings as well as in memos, I have started giving congratulatory messages to teachers who contemplate any form of professional development. However, this is not sufficient and I now look for initiatives in the newspaper, cut them out and give them to the teacher who I notice to require some sort of professional development. Incentives (not financial), reward systems and other ideas of acknowledging teachers should also be put in place to encourage a continued professional journey. Some methods of acknowledging teachers that could be experimented with are: a cup of tea with the Head of Department; a free lesson where the Head of Department does the lesson for the teacher; and many other innovative, non monetary ideas could be further researched to reward teachers.

As a way forward, Heads of Departments, like myself and other School Management Teams should try to be role-models of professional development, so that teachers in their schools can emulate their example. We should also try to "stimulate self-directed professional development within formal [and informal] professional development programmes" (Mushayikwa & Lubben, 2009, p. 176).

Teacher mentoring and collaboration

The fourth theme that emerges from reflecting on my personal history is the need for mentoring and collaboration for novice and experienced teachers. According to Awaya et al. (2001, p. 49), mentoring is a "constructive partnership between two people". In the case of teachers within my context, this is about their relationship with each other as colleagues as well as mentor and mentee. However, this partnership appears to be limited, as illustrated in the following extract:

In my Independent school context, mentoring and teacher support happens minimally. These occur when a new teacher joins the school, and when a complaint comes from parents about a teacher's pedagogical style. (Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 48)

Through discussion with my critical friends and examination of my own personal history, it is clear to me that the teachers and Heads of Department we are today are influenced by our former experiences of teaching and learning. As I go down memory lane into my experiences of early teaching, I recall my novice teacher experience where I received no mentoring as a newly qualified Foundation Phase teacher:

It was rare to network with teachers from other schools or even attend Department of Education workshops and meetings. The management failed to create any opportunities for continued and sustained professional development. I began working in isolation and did not know how to measure my skills as a novice teacher. The support from management towards pedagogy of my Grade 1 class was nil. (Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 42)

This made teaching and learning difficult, and I was miserable as a novice teacher. As in the case of my critical friends' input into this self-study, similarly, we all need inputs from colleagues to look at our own teaching and learning with a different lens to help to support good practices and remediate incorrect pedagogy. Mentoring and support have been absent in my Independent school context to assist me to gain expertise. However, personally, I took advantage of all opportunities, formal and informal, that enabled me to engage in a process of continued and sustained teacher learning. The opportunities presented to me were sometimes self initiated and a few were initiated by the school. I grabbed every opportunity to re-skill myself to make my own practice as a teacher beneficial to learners within my context.

My experiences of mentoring teachers are reflected in my memories of a more recent teaching experience:

As… a teacher who displayed lots of potential, I was honoured with the privilege of being a mentor teacher to an ex- pupil of this school…. I spent four years mentoring this pupil who made me proud by completing the Bachelor of Education in record time. After a few

years, I was honoured with having a second student to mentor. During this time of mentoring, I was involved in networking with other teachers involved in the same programme. We met regularly to discuss our sorrows and joys of being involved in such a programme. Some of the problem issues were time management, excessive amount of paper work and the constant feedback to students. (Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 43)

However, this mentoring programme was short lived and was discontinued because of the animosity it created amongst staff members in this Independent school context.

Eisner (2002, p. 377) argues that "we need a conception of schooling that makes possible teachers' access to one another in helpful and constructive ways". Thus, mentoring can help to alleviate ignorance of each other's pedagogy as well as to enhance learning and teaching. Mentoring provides excellent opportunities to share work, to describe problems and to describe achievements (Eisner, 2002). Similarly, Shulman (2004, p. 516) acknowledges that "discussion, dialogue and sharing" leads to the proper functioning of schools. This collaboration is not currently taking place within my school context, as in my experience, teachers in this context share these components with their "friends" only, and is often done in isolation or in confidence. There are no formal measures put in place to support mentoring within our Independent school context.

In looking at my personal history, it is evident that minimal mentoring opportunities were created and developed to promote continuous professional development. My own professional development and, to an extent, those of my critical friends, was largely determined by our own intrinsic motivation as well as by encouragement from members of our families.

According to Wenger (1998), learning is part of our interaction and engagement with the world. However, in the case of my learning and teaching, it has often been isolated and limited to my classroom, unlike my home which has been full of collaboration. With this in mind, I reflect on Kelly (2006) who refers to teacher learning as an active, social practice. With regards to my own novice teaching experience, active engagements with colleagues and peers were non existent. By

contrast, Lieberman and Pointer Mace (2010, p. 78) assert that "teachers who planned and worked together over time built commitment not only to each other but to further learning".

Teaching, according to Vescio, Ross and Adams (2008, p. 85) has been described as "isolationist", as many teachers have a habit of working by themselves, and therefore a shift is required from working in isolation to that of mentoring partnerships. In my view, the introduction of a structured mentoring programme within my context is essential to bring about a change in this Independent context as well as dealing with challenges facing teaching and learning.

Nieto (2003) highlights that the "greatest inspiration comes from other teachers". This brings me to the question of how I can encourage mentoring and collaboration for teachers within my Independent school context. According to Awaya et al. (2001), mentoring is a "unique relationship between the mentor and the mentee". This is characterised by "trust, sharing of expertise, moral support and knowing when and when not to help" (Awaya et al., 2001). This relationship also involves facing challenges, collaboration, encouragement, freedom of expression and the ability to take chances. In a context like my own, this could be encouraged by co- planning and teaching as well as team planning to develop personal and professional growth. Mentoring relationships should „support and guide and not fail, and should not be clinical" (Awaya et al., 2001, p. 52). This should allow for professional renewal, moulding and shaping of teaching style.

Mentoring in an Independent school like mine should be an important feature as it builds relationships between novice and experienced teachers, as well as between experienced peers. This positive relationship will enhance teacher learning and support. Similarly, a context such as my Independent school should indentify master teachers who could take on this collaborative role, thus ensuring a development in confidence and competence in novice teachers. As I look back at my past experiences of teaching and learning, I can clearly state that many schools fall short of providing enough support to teachers, whether they are novice or experienced. With a dynamically changing curriculum, strategies need to be put into place to support teachers in a variety of contexts.

Presently the teachers within my Independent context receive an initial support and no official mentor. As a result of this study, I have now started to put in place a mentor and support plan for novice and experienced teachers. This year, upon the appointment of new or novice teachers in the Foundation Phase, I have teamed them up with mentor teachers who will personally take them under their wings, providing the personal and professional throughout the year. All teachers, whether novice or experienced have been given an educator manual that highlights all they need to know as a teacher within this phase. This manual covers the A-Z of working in this context, such as duties, to class-list and other professional matters. In the beginning of this year, I shared a cup of tea with the new teachers, getting to know them better, and as the year progresses I will offer an intensive support programme for teachers which is done on a one to one basis. I have also improved my supervision of teachers as I do not go on a fault finding mission but rather focus on how I could better support the teachers within the Foundation Phase.

In taking initial steps in establishing a mentoring programme, I will need to firstly ask both experienced and novice teachers about their mentoring needs. I then need to democratically draw up a mentoring programme to incorporate all teachers, as each teacher has some talent and expertise to share with their team mates. This mentoring programme will need to be monitored regularly to gauge its value. On the personal level, through engaging in this study, I have been inspired to take another 3rd year BEd student teacher in my school as a mentee.

Developing greater self-esteem and freedom of expression

Lastly, the most significant theme that has emerged through my personal history as reflected in Chapter Three is that of developing greater self-esteem and freedom of expression as a Muslim female working in a Muslim Independent school context, where the senior management consists mostly of males. As I recall the memories of my early childhood, I uncover how I lacked self-esteem due to certain unforeseen circumstances:

> *I was born with both arms broken and had to have them in a cast. I underwent extensive surgery and therapy at a local hospital until the age of five…. Due to my so called abnormality (being born with two broken arms), I always wanted to give of my best in whatever I did, thereby setting myself high standards. I always felt different from the others as everyone around me felt sorry for me and this contributed to my low self esteem*

in my years as a child as well as in my adolescent years. (Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 24)

I worked hard to prove to the teachers that I could do well despite my so called abnormality. I now realise that this experience has shaped my determination to give all children an equal opportunity, despite their special needs. This has strengthened my character as a teacher today and encouraged me to provide pastoral care that will make a difference to learners and teachers within my context. Pastoral care, not only in the form of a hug or a pat in the back, but rather a genuine concern for learners with special needs is reflected in my memoirs as it continues to shape and re-shape my identity.

My personal history reveals that that another important factor that has contributed to my current freedom of expression and development of a positive self esteem has been the democratic nature of my present home environment and my relationship with my husband. I recall:

> *I did not discard my values, but now began to question the rationale of certain ideologies. We developed a close bond and he made me come to terms with the real world and encouraged me to think for myself and to speak authoritatively.* (Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 38)

Discussions, arguments and collaboration are the key element to all our activities. I can speak my mind and express myself confidently.

In my view, my years as a toddler, when we lived in an extended family also contributed to my present collaborative nature. There were lots of consultations with all adult members within this extended family context. Important decisions were discussed, and made democratically, (although my paternal grandfather had the final word). This practice instilled in me the importance of working in collaboration and in consultation, and therefore impacts positively on my practice as teacher and Head of Department I am today. As a Head of Department, I am confident in the way I conduct myself in meetings with the Foundation Phase teachers, with the Primary school management team and the joint management committee meetings, which involves about 11 members, seven of whom are males. My past and more recent experiences have allowed

my character to evolve, making me confident and able to express myself eloquently with regards to sensitive issues. My own self-esteem has developed as I have evolved from an introvert to a confident teacher and Head of Department. I am now able to conduct discussions confidently and disagree when the need arises. I am no longer intimidated by male managers in this Independent context as I feel that I have the desired academic knowledge to engage in all debates that concern teaching and learning.

Nevertheless, being a female and working in an Independent Muslim school has many moments of frustrations and challenge, as often brilliant suggestions and ideas mentioned by female middle managers like myself are misconstrued as defiance, or disrespect. Similarly, Moletsane (2009) highlights that although women are a large majority of the teaching population in South African schools, men predominantly occupy positions of power. In my experience, females are often marginalised in managerial positions in an Independent context like mine. It has been a long road for me to understand the demeanour of working amongst Muslim men, as a few of them still operate in their stereotypical imaging of Muslim females together with "oppressive fixed religious identities" (Ahmed, 2001, p. 138). This is illustrated in my personal history:

> *This independent context was to an extent controlled by mostly male management members. Both principal and senior Management members were men, and their word was final in any decision. Freedom of expression as a Muslim female was restrictive, and this impacted heavily on my self- esteem.* (Personal History, Chapter Three, p. 43)

However, now slowly, female managers like myself are accorded intellectual respect, as many of the male managers themselves have girl children and are now beginning to recognise the need for them to "succeed both academically and professionally" (Ahmed, 2001, p. 149). Over the years, I have received many commendations from senior male managers at school for handling discussions confidently. These commendations have shown that my withdrawn, sensitive and somewhat intimidated professional self has evolved, making me confident and deserving of the respect and commendation of other managers around me. These commendations also illustrate that these male managers' autocratic and stereotypical characters evolved as a result of engagements with women managers. My first male teacher was unlike the present male managers, as he did not accord any respect to the need for the females in his class to learn as he

would send them on errands to the school tuck shop. Nieto (2003) explains that teachers "exert a great deal of power and influence in the lives of their students". Thus, my Grade 1 teacher contributed to inequalities in education for boys and girls. Similarly, Moletsane (2009) highlights how women (both teachers and learners) in South Africa have experienced gender bias in schools with regards to accessing learning opportunities.

The question, therefore, that emerges from this theme is: How can I, a female Head of Department, encourage and enhance females to succeed both academically and professionally, in order to build self esteem and enhance freedom of expression?

With this in mind, as a teacher and Head of Department, I will encourage female teachers and learners to pursue academic and professional qualifications. At parent evenings and consultations, I will encourage parents to promote academic pursuits for their daughters, within the confines of Islamic law. I will also improve my own practice first by encouraging all female teachers in the Foundation Phase to express themselves confidently. I will also encourage other female managers in contexts like mine to come up with a similar plan of action that would support freedom of expression. However, there is no immediate solution to this question as it requires further research, in an endeavour to guide and support teacher learning in an Independent school context. This theme of the development of greater self-esteem and freedom of expression of Muslim female teachers and managers is an ideal topic to be further researched.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have re-examined my memoirs of my past personal and professional lived experiences. Through introspection into the milestones that left an indelible mark in shaping me as a teacher and Head of Department, I have reflected on the themes of: *guidance and inspiration from family, evolving from teacher centredness to learner centredness, deep-rooted intrinsic motivation, teacher mentoring and collaboration and developing greater self-esteem and freedom of expression.* My interpretations of my personal history have allowed me to identify the challenges of supporting Foundation Phase teachers' learning and to consider appropriate strategies for supporting teachers' professional development within my Independent school context.

I have come to realise how my image as a teacher and Head of Department has been influenced by incidents and relationships in my personal history. Peer support in my initial teaching years helped to change my own interaction with novice teachers. Interactions with members of my extended and immediate families and their continued support strongly influenced the teacher and Head of Department I am today, and will continue to influence my future decisions with teachers' professional development. My understanding of teachers' work and their commitment is clarified through introspection into my own teaching and learning.

This personal history self-study brings out the complexities of my early experiences and of my experiences as the teacher and Head of Department I am today. Through my self-study, I have come to realise that experiences of teaching and learning vary from person to person, and context to context, and that these have different implications for teaching and learning. I have come to see that, as teachers, we need to understand each others' life experiences, and not ignore them. We should rather analyse these past experiences to enhance our future experiences, as well as to understand that the issues of the past cannot be ignored as they still prevail in the present, and will continue to prevail in the future.

There is no definite solution to this question of guiding and supporting teacher learning through professional development. However, this can be further researched so that Heads of Departments like me and other School Management Teams can provide the necessary guidance and support that teachers in contexts such as mine and other contexts need.

In the next chapter, I conclude this dissertation. I offer a reflective review of the dissertation. I also consider how my theoretical understandings have influenced my learning in this study. In addition, I offer my personal and professional reflections on conducting a personal history self-study. I then explain the contributions of the study and my recommendations for enhancing teacher learning through professional development. I also identify a key area for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

MOVING FORWARD IN SUPPORTING TEACHER LEARNING THROUGH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore how I, as a Foundation Phase Head of Department (HOD), could think of new ways to better support teacher learning through professional development initiatives in an Independent school. Therefore, to achieve my purpose, I have explored my personal history from infancy to adulthood. This has enabled me to reflect upon significant experiences of my personal history and to consider how each episode might have impacted on the teacher and Head of Department I am today. I have employed a personal history self-study methodology (Samaras, Hicks & Berger, 2004) to gain insight into the challenges and needs of teacher learning through professional development with the aim of improving my practice of supporting teacher learning through professional development initiatives in my Independent school context. This personal history self-study research has enabled me as a Head of Department to learn from my lived experiences and my discussions with my critical friends to think of new ways to provide the necessary support to assist Foundation Phase teacher learning within my Independent school context.

In the previous chapter, Chapter Four, I re-examined my personal history, as represented in Chapter Three, and discovered four key themes that emerged from my personal history. The themes that unfolded are: *a) guidance and inspiration from family; b) evolving from teacher centredness to learner centredness; c) deep-rooted intrinsic motivation; d) teacher mentoring and collaboration; and e) developing greater self-esteem and freedom of expression.* In analysing my lived experiences as represented in Chapter Three, I engaged in a process of inductive reasoning. Through re-examining these memoirs, I am now able to better understand and explain the teacher and Head of Department I am today and how these past experiences have impacted on and shaped my own practice within my context, as well as to consider how they might help to improve my own practice in supporting teachers in my Independent School context in the future.

In this final chapter, I conclude this dissertation by presenting a reflective review of the dissertation, showing what I have learnt through writing each chapter of this personal history self-study. I then revisit the key concept and the theoretical perspectives underpinning this personal history self-study. I also consider the contributions of the study, and recommend how the findings of this study can be used as a stimulus to support teacher learning through professional development within Independent schools, as well as how this study can initiate further research within similar contexts in South Africa.

A Reflective Review of the Dissertation

In the initial chapter, Chapter One, I presented the rationale for this study, which focuses on supporting Foundation Phase teacher learning through professional development initiatives in an Independent School context. I explained each of the key research questions and discussed the methodological and theoretical approaches. I did not present a compartmentalised literature review on the "scholarly conversations" (Clandinin & Conelly, 2000 p. 136) that enlightened and guided my study; instead I have integrated these conversations into the narrative of the dissertation.

In Chapter Two, I concentrated on the research methodology that underpins this personal history self-study. Relevant information relating to my school context, critical friends, data production data representation and analysis was given. I also considered the limitations, trustworthiness, challenges and ethical issues of the study. I also highlighted my research role and the importance of artefacts in personal history and how each one of them can contribute to understanding our personal and professional selves.

In Chapter Three, I responded to my first research question: *How can I better understand the personal history that informs my practices as a teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department?* The process of producing the memoirs that are presented in Chapter Three was emotional and joyous, as this focused my attention on my personal history experiences and allowed me to reflect on the personal and professional meaning these experiences have had for my present practice as teacher and Head of Department. The use of journal entries, photographs, memory drawings and memory writing allowed me to connect with many forgotten and buried

memories, each one of them helping me to understand why things happened the way they did and the impact of the past on the present and the future.

In Chapter Four, I engage with the final question of this personal history self-study: *How can I draw on a deeper understanding of my personal history to better support teacher learning in an Independent school through professional development initiatives?* In analysing my personal history, several key themes emerged: *a) guidance and inspiration from family; b) evolving from teacher centredness to learner centredness; c) deep-rooted intrinsic motivation; d) teacher mentoring and collaboration; and e) developing greater self-esteem and freedom of expression.* In the critical discussion of these themes, I was allowed to ponder over how my early experiences of being a learner, together with the impact my teaching experience, have influenced my journey of professional development. Writing this chapter also brought about a new awareness of re-thinking initiatives to support teacher learning through professional development within my Independent School context.

Theoretical Reflections

Teacher learning has been the key concept underpinning this personal history self-study. In this study, I have drawn on the theoretical perspectives of a *social theory of learning* (Wenger, 1998) and a *socio-cultural perspective on teacher learning* (Kelly, 2006) to reinforce and support my understanding of teacher learning in professional development initiatives.

Through the theoretical perspective of a social theory of learning (Wenger, 1998), I have understood that my learning as a teacher has been an active, participatory process and an engagement with other people. I have also understood that my learning cannot be separated from my social context as it is socially constructed. Likewise, Kelly's (2006) social-cultural perspective has been relevant to my personal history self-study as it emphasises the significance of the lived experiences that support and influence teacher professional development. This perspective has allowed me to see how my lived experiences of learning and teaching have been socially constructed in particular contexts through interacting with others. For me, these theoretical perspectives reinforced the importance of teacher learning through professional development as an ongoing, collaborative process and as a change mechanism. Although my analysis of my personal history was inductive, this theoretical understanding of teacher learning influenced the meanings that I have made of my memoirs. The themes that I have identified from my personal history (as discussed in Chapter

Four) revealed that my learning as a teacher is shaped and will continue to be shaped by the many milestones of my personal history. It is clear that our experiences of teaching and learning cannot be compartmentalised from the teacher we are at present. These themes have also shown me how I can better support teacher learning in my context through professional development initiatives. The themes have allowed me, the researcher, to revisit my existing practices as teacher and Head of Department and come up with strategies and initiatives to better support teacher learning through professional development, and to enhance my pedagogical and managerial capacity.

Personal and Professional Reflections on Conducting a Personal History Self-Study

Embarking on this personal history self-study research has allowed me to analyse the impact of my memories of my past learning and teaching experiences and on my personal and professional development. In looking back at my early experiences of being a pupil, novice teacher and now an experienced professional, it is clear that these early and recent experiences have shaped and reshaped my personal and professional self as a teacher and Head of Department. This research has empowered me in developing my personal qualities as a human being, together with the ability to harness my pedagogical and managerial skills as teacher and Head of Department, within my Independent school context.

This personal history self-study has afforded me the opportunity to look at my own practice as teacher and Head of Department through a critical lens, enabling me to scrutinise areas of concern in professional development that could be developed, guided and supported within this context. This study also gave me the confidence to identify areas of strengths and weaknesses of professional development in my Independent school context, enabling me to seek appropriate strategies to assist teachers in all aspects of their professional development. It has also enabled me to look at how my own learning as a teacher could be enhanced through continuous and sustained professional development within my Independent school context.

Professionally, as a result of engaging in this study, I have evolved as a teacher and Head of Department. As a teacher, I became aware of the shortcomings of my pedagogical skills and embarked on a renewal of my practice. Due to the middle class nature of our school, there are changes taking place on a continuous basis. In order to keep abreast of technological, curricular and international trends affecting teaching and learning, these changes have made it necessary for

teachers like me and the others within this unique context to sharpen our teaching skills. Professionally the recollection of my memoirs of past experiences of teaching and learning allowed me to enhance my role as Head of Department by thinking of new ways to support teacher learning through professional development initiatives within my Independent school context. Personally, my own character, my self-esteem and freedom of expression have evolved as a result of undertaking this personal history self-study.

Principals and Heads of Departments need to allow teachers to reflect on their personal history through a self-study methodology so that they can connect with how their past experiences have influenced and shaped the teachers they have become, as well as how a deeper understanding of these experiences can improve their teaching and learning. This form of self-study enables us to better understand our professional development, to look back and imagine how things could be different. It also encourages collaboration and analytical conversations with critical friends. Thus, according to Samaras, et al. (2004.) engaging in personal history self-study involves a "connection between personal reflection and action".

My Specific Personal Goal as a Head of Department in Response to the Study

In this self-study, recalling my past experiences of teaching and learning has been momentous as it gave me the opportunity to uncover many experiences that have impacted on my present role as teacher and Head of Department. In engaging in this study, I have been forced to think „out of the box' to unleash the many exciting opportunities that can support professional development within my context. The ideas I have developed for changing the face of teaching and learning are mentioned in this concluding chapter under the various themes identified; however, I have realised that the most important factor is to continually encourage teachers and other management members to reflect on their past experiences so that all their present and future practices are better that the ones they have experienced. I believe that such reflection will benefit the generation to come.

Contributions of the Study and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore how I, a Foundation Phase Head of Department, could find alternative strategies to better support teacher learning through professional development initiatives in my Independent school context. For this research I adopted a personal history self-study approach (Samaras et al., 2004). According to Samaras et al. (2004, p. 905), this type of self-study can be used to "know and better understand one's professional identity, model and test forms of reflection, and, finally, push the boundaries of what we know by creating alternative interpretations of reality". This study uncovered my areas of concern in my Independent context and suggests that teacher learning and professional development in Independent schools be looked at more seriously.

According to the Department of Higher Education (DoHET)'s new draft policy on minimum requirements for teacher education (2011, p, 28), continuing professional development initiatives should offer practicing teachers "opportunities to strengthen or supplement existing, or develop new, specialisations and interests, and in general improve their capacity to engage with, support and assist [others]". Through my personal history self-study, many shortcomings emerged that require all role players in my context to look closely at how teacher professional development can be better guided and supported.

I have realised that Independent schools like mine need to take ownership in building capacity of teachers. School Management Teams need to look at the challenges facing teachers working within these contexts and devise a plan of action that will provide professional development initiatives in and out of school with the aim of bringing about reform in teaching and learning.

Mentoring

Through this personal history self-study, I have become aware that teachers, novice and experienced, should be guided and supported in re-professionalising themselves as their initial or existing teacher education is usually not sufficient to meet the demands of an evolving learner community. Mentoring should take place at every level in our schools. Eisner (2002) advises that mentoring provides excellent opportunities to share problems and achievements. Likewise, Shulman (2004, p. 516) maintains that "discussion, dialogue and sharing" is essential to the proper functioning of schools. It is therefore essential for all Independent schools to come on

board and develop appropriate mentoring programmes that would benefit teachers, learners and the school. Mentoring in an Independent school, like mine, is an important feature as it builds relationships between novice and experienced teachers, as well as between experienced peers.

Evolving from teacher centredness to learner cerntredness

This study has made me aware that teaching strategies in Independent schools such as mine should be revisited as, given our own histories of schooling, it is likely that many teachers do not practice learner centred pedagogy. As Heads of Department, it is essential that we encourage learner centred pedagogy, by promoting professional development opportunities that encourage learner centredness. Professional development plans must be adjusted to incorporate learner centredness as a key feature to ensuring success in the classroom, as schools of this nature have the luxury of every resource to encourage learner centredness. Heads of Departments like myself should closely monitor teaching and learning and work with teachers to promote learner centredness. In doing so, teachers should aim to become proactive so as to initiate student thinking. Teachers must be allowed to observe other teachers teaching so as to get ideas that they may use in their own classrooms. These initiatives must firstly be promoted in school and, later on, out of the school context, where teachers could learn through networking and collaboration. Similarly, Simplicio (2000) describes that the "key foundations" for creativity in classrooms are "shared perspectives, shared knowledge and shared experiences", and this can be achieved by encouraging teachers within this Independent context to network with other teachers within similar or different contexts, to share their successes of learner centred teaching.

Independent schools should partner with other Independent schools, in an effort to share expertise and improve pedagogical strategies, thus ensuring that no one is left out of professional development opportunities. Schools in other contexts, such as those in which my critical friends work, should also partner with other schools with the aim of improving, guiding and supporting teacher learning through professional development initiatives.

Promoting intrinsic motivation

Through this study, I have realised that intrinsic motivation is an essential part of professional development. Therefore, the management of schools, together with the Department of Education, NGO'S and other key service providers should partner to encourage intrinsic motivation. Scholarships and bursaries should be used as a tool to excite and encourage intrinsic motivation that would in turn encourage sustained and continued professional development in Independent contexts such as mine. Leading by example and deep-rooted intrinsic motivation, as reflected in Chapter Three, are key to continuous and sustained professional development.

Developing self-esteem and freedom of expression of Muslim females

Developing greater self-esteem and freedom of expression as a Muslim female working in a Muslim Independent school context is a sensitive but important issue and has many moments of frustrations and challenges, as often brilliant suggestions and ideas mentioned by female middle managers like myself are misconstrued as defiance, or disrespect. In paving a way forward, it is imperative that Independent Schools like mine and others accord females the dignity, respect and freedom of expression. Only if these rights are upheld, then only will women feel confident to make valuable contributions to teaching and learning in an Independent context and other similar contexts. As I have engaged in this study, I have realised that this is a particularly important issue to be researched.

Conclusion

This personal history self-study has allowed me to look at my past experiences through an interpretive lens. It has developed me both personally and professionally, enabling me to look at significant episodes that have helped shape, and continue to shape, my practices as a teacher and a Head of Department. Through this reflection on my past experiences, I have learnt that every episode has had some significance, and contributed to encourage me as a teacher, Head of Department, and now researcher, to support teachers through professional development initiatives within my context. I have realised that the role of Head of Department has to undergo transition,

moving away from an authoritarian control to that of democratic collegiality. The portfolios of Head of Departments need to evolve and focus on meeting the challenges of supporting a dynamic community of teachers that can be continually developed to meet the challenges of globilisation.

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 10 October 2011

Dear Critical friend

REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO USE FINDINGS FROM DISCUSSIONS IN CRITICAL FRIENDS MEETING

Supporting Foundation Phase Professional Development: A self-study of a Head of Department.

The purpose of this study is to explore how I, as a Foundation Phase Head of Department (HOD), can better support teacher learning through professional development initiatives in an Independent school. To achieve my purpose, I reflect on the memoirs of my educational life (with special references made to my experiences of learning and teaching) from infancy through all the milestones of schooling and ultimately to my present job as teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department. These memory journey experiences are important for this study as they form part of my practice and thus form the data for the autobiographical self-study research I am engaged in. This data was generated through memory work (in the form of memory drawings and memory narratives).

Through re-examining these memoirs I aim to better understand and explain the teacher and manager I am today and how these past experiences have impacted on teaching and learning in my context. This will enable me to determine how we have engaged and are engaging in teacher professional development, as well as to better understand the different perspectives, interests and needs we bring to professional development initiatives in our school. In addition, I will investigate how I can use this deeper understanding of our lived experiences to improve my own practice to better support foundation phase teacher learning through professional development initiatives in my particular school context.

This study is supervised by Dr Kathleen-Pithouse Morgan who is a senior lecturer at the School of Education and Development, UKZN. Dr Pithouse-Morgan can be contacted telephonically at 031- 2603460.

In this study, I will use the following method to gather information: group discussions with critical friends. The critical friends meetings will take place during our group MEd supervision meetings and will not require any additional time from you. I will take notes during the discussions.

I hereby request permission from you to refer to our discussions of our critical friends' meetings in my study. I will only use this data if I receive written consent from you.

If I receive your consent, I will use this data in a way that respects your dignity and privacy. My notes on your inputs to the discussion will be securely stored and disposed of if no longer required for research purposes. Your name or any information that might identify you or your school will not be used in any presentation or publication that might come out of the study.

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, I hope that this study will make a significant contribution to research on teacher development.

I also wish to inform you that you have no binding commitment to the study and may withdraw your consent at any time if you feel the need to. If you withdraw your consent, you will not be prejudiced in any way.

If you have any questions relating to the rights of research participants, you can contact Ms Phume Ximba in the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Office on 031-260 3587.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely
Rashida Khan

_____

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF STUDY: *Supporting Foundation Phase Professional Development: A self-study of a Head of Department.*

I, _____
Here-by confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this study, and do consent to participate in the study.

I understand that I am free to leave/withdraw from the study at any time if I want to without any negative or undesirable consequences to myself.

I consent to the following data collection activities (please tick):

	YES	NO
Critical friends' discussions		

…………………………………………………………………………………………
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT   DATE

20 Biggarsberg Street
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4093

Tel: 0314092583
      0312087652
Email: rkrashida@gmail.com

10 October 2011

Dear …

REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO USE FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Supporting Foundation Phase Professional Development: A self-study of a Head of Department.

The purpose of this study is to explore how I, as a Foundation Phase Head of Department (HOD), can better support teacher learning through professional development initiatives in an Independent school. To achieve my purpose, I reflect on the memoirs of my educational life (with special references made to my experiences of learning and teaching) from infancy through all the milestones of schooling and ultimately to my present job as teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department. These memory journey experiences are important for this study as they form part of my practice and thus form the data for the autobiographical self-study research I am engaged in. This data was generated through memory work (in the form of memory drawings and memory narratives).

Through re-examining these memoirs I aim to better understand and explain the teacher and manager I am today and how these past experiences have impacted on teaching and learning in my context. This will enable me to determine how we have engaged and are engaging in teacher professional development, as well as to better understand the different perspectives, interests and needs we bring to professional development initiatives in our school. In addition, I will investigate how I can use this deeper understanding of our lived experiences to improve my own practice to better support foundation phase teacher learning through professional development initiatives in my particular school context.

This study is supervised by Dr Kathleen-Pithouse Morgan who is a senior lecturer at the School of Education and Development, UKZN. Dr Pithouse-Morgan can be contacted telephonically at 031- 2603460.

In this study, I would like to use these photographs of our family as a data source.

I hereby request permission from you to use the family photographs in which our paternal grandfather and other family members feature. I have tried to get hold of other family members, however they cannot be reached. I will only use this data if I receive written consent from you.

If I receive your consent, I will use this data in a way that respects the dignity and privacy of our family. Copies of our family photographs will be securely stored and disposed of if no longer required for research purposes. Individual family members' names or any information that might identify members of our family will not be used in any presentation or publication that might come out of the study. However, it is possible that people who know us will recognise family members in the photographs.

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, I hope that this study will make a significant contribution to research on teacher development.

I also wish to inform you that you have no binding commitment to the study and may withdraw your consent at any time prior to the completion of the dissertation if you feel the need to. If you withdraw your consent, you will not be prejudiced in any way.

If you have any questions relating to the rights of research participants, you can contact Ms Phume Ximba in the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Office on 031-260 3587.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely
Rashida Khan

_____

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF STUDY: *Supporting Foundation Phase Professional Development: A self-study of a Head of Department.*

I, _____
 Here-by confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this study, and do consent to participate in the study.
I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent prior to the completion of the dissertation if I want to without any negative or undesirable consequences to myself.

I consent to the following data collection activities (please tick):

	YES	NO
Photographs		

…………………………………………………………………………………………
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT   DATE

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10 October 2011

Dear …

REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO USE SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPHS IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Supporting Foundation Phase Professional Development: A self-study of a Head of Department.

The purpose of this study is to explore how I, as a Foundation Phase Head of Department (HOD), can better support teacher learning through professional development initiatives in an Independent school. To achieve my purpose, I reflect on the memoirs of my educational life (with special references made to my experiences of learning and teaching) from infancy through all the milestones of schooling and ultimately to my present job as teacher and Foundation Phase Head of Department. These memory journey experiences are important for this study as they form part of my practice and thus form the data for the autobiographical self-study research I am engaged in. This data was generated through memory work (in the form of memory drawings and memory narratives).

Through re-examining these memoirs I aim to better understand and explain the teacher and manager I am today and how these past experiences have impacted on teaching and learning in my context. This will enable me to determine how we have engaged and are engaging in teacher professional development, as well as to better understand the different perspectives, interests and needs we bring to professional development initiatives in our school. In addition, I will investigate how I can use this deeper understanding of our lived experiences to improve my own practice to better support foundation phase teacher learning through professional development initiatives in my particular school context.

This study is supervised by Dr Kathleen-Pithouse Morgan who is a senior lecturer at the School of Education and Development, UKZN. Dr Pithouse-Morgan can be contacted telephonically at 031- 2603460.

In this study, I would like to use our school photographs as a data source.

I hereby request permission from you to use the class photographs in which our class group of learners' feature. I have tried to get hold of other learners, however they cannot be reached. I will only use this data if I receive written consent from you.

If I receive your consent, I will use this data in a way that respects your dignity and privacy. Copies of our school photograph will be securely stored and disposed of if no longer required for research purposes. Names of learners or any information that might identify members of our school will not be used in any presentation or publication that might come out of the study. However it is possible that people who are familiar with those in the photographs might recognise them.

There are no direct benefits to you from participating in this study. However, I hope that this study will make a significant contribution to research on teacher development.

I also wish to inform you that you have no binding commitment to the study and may withdraw your consent at any time prior to the completion of the dissertation if you feel the need to. If you withdraw your consent, you will not be prejudiced in any way.

If you have any questions relating to the rights of research participants, you can contact Ms Phume Ximba in the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Office on 031-260 3587.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely
Rashida Khan

_____

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF STUDY: *Supporting Foundation Phase Professional Development: A self-study of a Head of Department.*

I, _____
 Here-by confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this study, and do consent to participate in the study.
I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent prior to the completion of the dissertation if I want to without any negative or undesirable consequences to myself.

I consent to the following data collection activities (please tick):

	YES	NO
Photographs		

…………………………………………………………………………………………
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT   DATE