

**EXPLORING COLLABORATIVE LEARNING: A
UNIVERSITY EDUCATOR'S SELF-STUDY**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

School of Education: College of Humanities

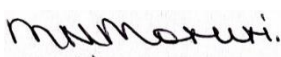
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South Africa

DECLARATION

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Signed: 

Professor Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan

ABSTRACT

I am a university educator involved in preservice teacher education. This thesis presents the self-study project that I conducted to explore my personal and professional history of collaborative learning and my understanding of how I could apply my new knowledge in a tertiary teacher education context. My first research question was, *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* To address this question, I went back over my personal history and looked for incidences when I learned collaboratively. My second question was, *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional practice?* For this question, I traced my choice of profession, my training, and my journey as a teacher/lecturer and lifelong learner to illuminate times of collaborative learning. As I engaged in this self-study project, I explored collaborative learning through the theoretical lenses of social constructivism and socio-culturalism. These perspectives on learning assisted me in recognising and acknowledging the power of the collective in raising children and in the classroom and university/school context as well. I also learned the importance of my culture, my upbringing, and my family history as drivers of my learning experiences. I used the personal history approach in this self-study project to gain an understanding of my learning and, through reflection, to improve my teaching practice. I couched my study thesis in a visual arts-based format using an extended curated photo album. Photographs assisted me on my journey back to my history, but they also helped me to paint mental pictures as I engaged in memory recall and reflective work during the study. The self-study methodology is collaborative, and I, therefore, needed my family and students for data generation and my critical friends to listen to my ideas and progress and give support by offering critique and help to broaden my point of view. I presented what I learned about collaborative learning in the form of guides, based on what I came away with from my personal history narrative. These guides emphasise indigenous socio-cultural understanding, values, uniqueness, teamwork, and the nurturing of self-confidence and self-esteem in collaborative learning.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the following people who supported me in various ways throughout my study:

- Professor Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan for your gently consistent, caring, supportive, motivational, and yet challenging support. I doubt I would have completed my study without you.
- To the late Professor Chris Kapp, your statement made me want to see how far I could go with this “brilliant brain”.
- To the original families, the Dhlulas and Nyangintsimbis, for providing my first collaborative learning spaces. I am because they were, and continue to be. “Doctor, My Cousin” Zen, thank you for letting me bully you, and becoming one of my best critical friends.
- To all my critical friends in the Eastern Cape TES, Total TES Support, the Critical Friends Support, and Kathleen’s PhD students’ groups, I am awed by your generosity of spirit in your collaborating with me in my study. This statement would not be complete without a special mention of Raj, with whom I was free to express my ignorance and who would always be ready to assist in finding my way, and Theresa, my midnight critical friend.
- To my institution of work, I thank the Management, the Research Directorate the Faculty, my Department, and the Library for affording me the chance to engage in this project through research funding, study leave/s, and general moral support. Myo Torres, thank you for the nudge and encouragement to get going and stay the course.
- To my 2015-2017 Year 3 students, who were eager participants and co-constructors of the knowledge generated from this project, I thank you and hope you will also follow in my footsteps by becoming lifelong learners.
- To my young colleagues who have been addressing me as Doc since I first registered for this qualification, I thank you for driving me to the end.
- To all the other families that were part of my families’ circles, on both sides of the Limpopo, you were part of the village that grew me, collaboratively with my parents.
- To all my friends, your patience with my being unavailable and uncommunicative, I thank you. Let the fun begin again!!!
- And to Him who is able to keep me from falling, I give glory.

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GLOSSARY OF NON-ENGLISH WORDS/TERMS

Note well:

The terms/words contained in this Glossary are from the different languages that I was exposed to as I grew up into my adulthood. I indicate the language of the particular word/term as follows:

Xh. stands for isiXhosa, a mainly South African language, but is also there in Zimbabwe

So. stands for Sesotho, a South African language.

Nd. stands for isiNdebele, a language spoken mainly in the south and west of Zimbabwe

Sh. stands for chiShona, a language mainly spoken in the east and north of Zimbabwe

Ts. Stands for Tswana, mainly spoken in Botswana and the north-west of South Africa

Zu. Stands for isiZulu, spoken mainly in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa

Ng. stands for a word that is common between isiXhosa and isiNdebele that are classified as Nguni languages.

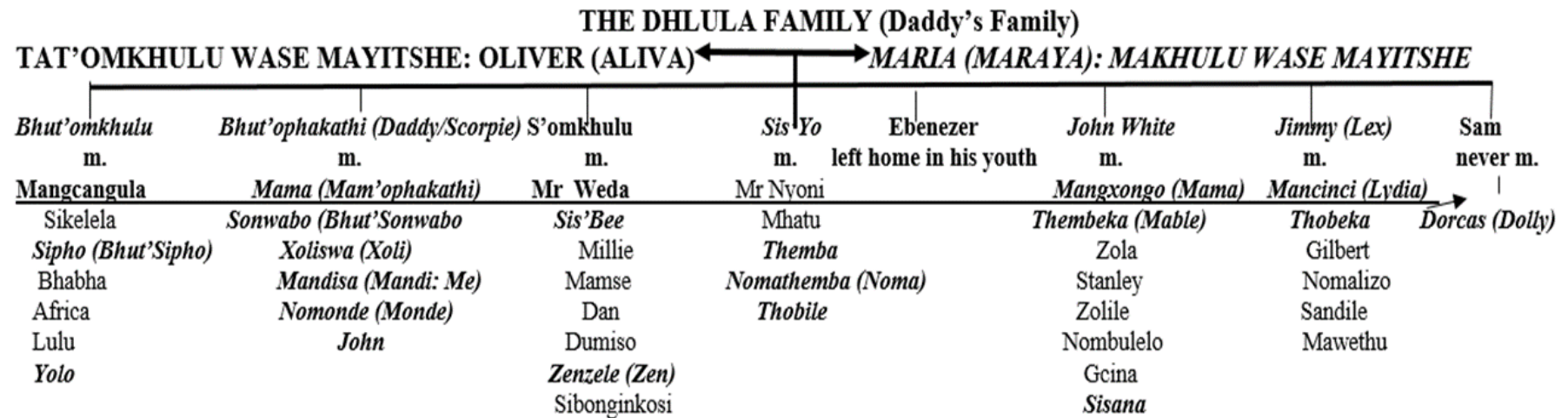
WORD/TERM	TRANSLATION
<i>Abana 'bakhe bakaSonwabo</i>	Sonwabo's younger siblings (Nd.)
<i>Abantwana bakoDhlula</i>	The Dhlula children (Nd.)
<i>Amandlwane</i>	Playing house (Nd.)
<i>Amanyhunyhu</i>	Newcomers to school (Nd.)
<i>Bantwana</i>	Children (Ng.)
<i>EKoloni</i>	The Cape Colony, now split into the East and the Western Cape Provinces in South Africa. Mama's home was in the current Eastern Cape Province (Xh.)
<i>Emagrosa</i>	The row of grocery shops that were near 179 BF (Nd.)
<i>Endlin'enkulu</i>	At the big house (Ng.)
<i>Ewe</i>	Yes (Xh.)
<i>Iintlanga</i>	Heathens, non-Xhosa speakers (Xh.)
<i>Imandi?</i>	It is delicious? (Xh.)
<i>Impi</i>	Army (Zu)
<i>Indlu enkulu</i>	The big house, the farmhouse at Mayitshe farm (Ng.)
<i>Intanga</i>	A grown-up son/daughter's room outside the main house (Xh.)
<i>Intsomi/Inganekwane</i>	A folktale (Xh./Nd.)

<i>Iphephezela</i>	A lacy frill, it could be on the front, neck and sleeve edges of a dress (Ng.)
<i>Isingqusho/isigigo</i>	The mortar and pestle set used to stamp mealies (Xh./Nd.)
<i>iTopiya</i>	The Orthodox Church (Xh.)
<i>Itshongo</i>	A miscellaneous mixture of cake and breadcrumbs together with whatever would make it into a loaf. We used it in place of a birthday or ‘wedding’ cake whenever we could not afford a sixpenny cake (Nd.)
<i>Jabulani</i>	Rejoice/be happy (Ng.)
<i>Kudzidza hakuperi</i>	Learning does not end (Sh.)
<i>Londoloza</i>	Keep (Nd.)
<i>Londolezela</i>	Care for, nurture, love... for example in a wedding song. (Nd.)
<i>Mafungwashe</i>	The eldest daughter in the home (Xh.)
<i>Makoti/ooMakoti</i>	Daughter-in-law/Daughters-in-law OR Bride/s (Xh.)
<i>Nathi ngokunjalo</i>	We too (Xh.)
<i>Ncinci/ooNcinci</i>	Mama’s younger sister/s (Xh.)
<i>Makhulu</i>	Grandmother (Xh.)
<i>Motswana</i>	A citizen of Botswana/a Tswana language speaker (Ts.)
<i>Nkhono</i>	Grandmother (So.)
<i>Nkom’iyahlaba</i>	Tat’omkhulu from Mayitshe Farm’s car. (Ng.)
<i>Olhobothi</i>	Robots/traffic lights-there is no ‘r’ sound in Nguni languages (Ng.)
<i>Qoarlane</i>	A very potent, illegal alcoholic brew made and drunk by people in the Rural Matatiele area. (So.)
<i>Sinixabisile</i>	We value you (Xh.)
<i>Siyanikhulisa</i>	We are growing you (Xh.)
<i>Tata</i>	Father/Dad (Xh.)
<i>Tat’omncinci</i>	Daddy’s younger brother, literally, a younger father (Xh.)
<i>Tat’omdala</i>	Daddy’s older brother, literally elder father (Ng.)
<i>Tat’omkhulu</i>	Grandfather (Xh.)
<i>uBaba</i>	Father (Nd.)

<i>UBhuti</i>	Brother, generally used as a prefix, e.g. <i>uBhut</i> 'Sonwabo (Xh.)
<i>UDad'obawo</i>	Daddy's sister or any female relative of his of the same generation (Xh.)
<i>UKanina'ooKanina</i>	The child/ren of Mama's sister/s – maternal siblings (Xh.)
<i>uKayise/ooKayise</i>	The child/ren of Daddy's brother/s – paternal siblings (Xh.)
<i>Ukusinda ngobulongwe</i>	To smear/polish a mud floor with soft cow dung mixed with water (Ng.)
<i>Ukukleza/ukukreza</i>	To have the cow's udder directed such that the milk from it directed to spray the milks straight into someone's open mouth (Nd./Xh.)
<i>UMakhulu</i>	Grandmother (Xh.)
<i>UMalume</i>	Uncle: mother's brother or any male relative of hers from the same generation (Ng.)
<i>UMalumekazi</i>	Malume's wife (Xh.)
<i>UMam'ophakathi</i>	Middle mother: what my paternal cousins called Mama (Ng.)
<i>UMancinci</i>	Younger mother: what we called Daddy's younger brother's wife (Xh.)
<i>Umbhaco</i>	Xhosa traditional attire (Xh.)
<i>UMkhumbi ka Noah</i>	Noah's Ark-the name we gave to Daddy's Chevrolet Biscayne based on a popular song in our teens. (Zu.)
<i>Umnawakhe/Abanabakhe</i>	One's younger siblings (Nd.)
<i>Umngusho</i>	Samp/stamped mealies (Xh.)
<i>Umnt'a ka Scorpie</i>	Scorpie's child (Ng.)
<i>Umtshana/Abatshana</i>	Niece/s or nephew/s: child(ren) of a sister as addressed by her/his <i>Malume</i> (Xh.)
<i>Umtshato</i>	Wedding/marriage (Xh.)
<i>UMvundla</i>	The Rabbit (Ng.)
<i>UMzala/abaZala</i>	Cousin/s: child/ren of my <i>Malume</i> or <i>Dad'obawo</i> (Xh.)
<i>UNkom'iyahlaba</i>	<i>Tat'omkhulu's</i> car (Ng.)
<i>UNteletsha</i>	The Hare (Nd.)
<i>USibali/ooSibali</i>	Brother/s or Sister/s-in law (Xh.)

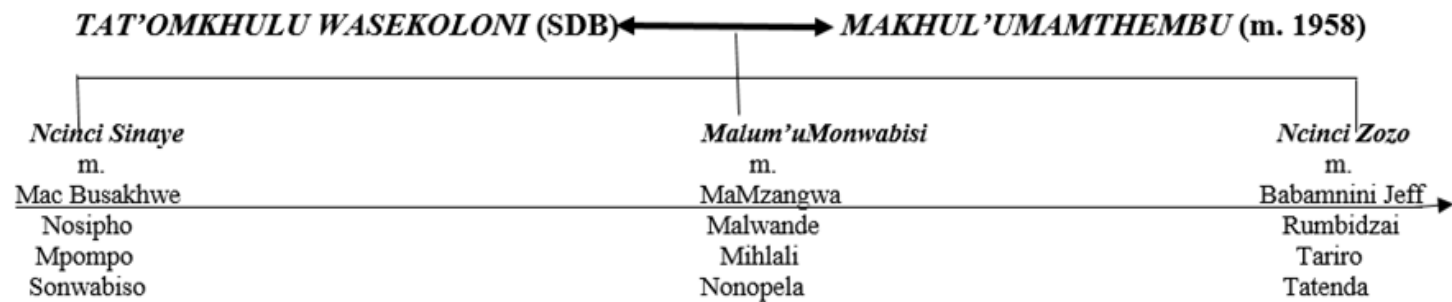
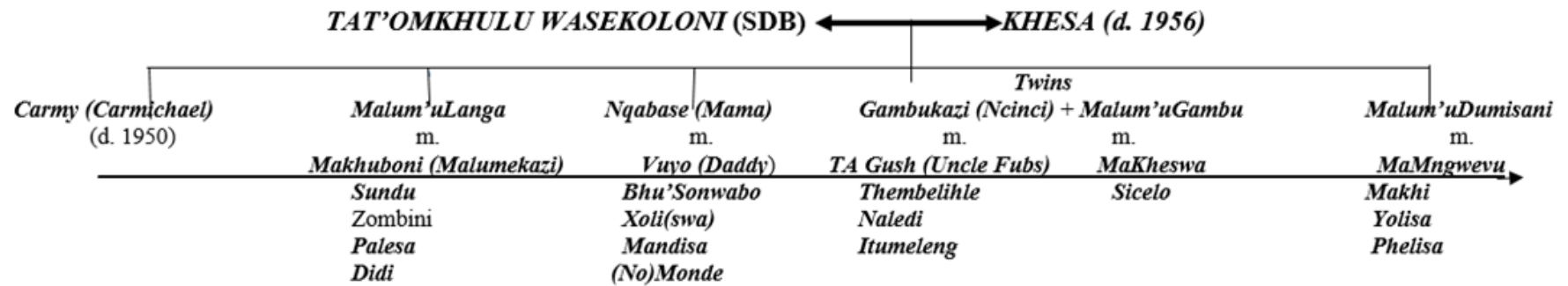
<i>UTat'omdala</i>	Elder brother/male relative to Daddy of the same generation (Ng.)
<i>UTat'omkulu</i>	Grandfather (Xh.)
<i>UTat'omncinci</i>	Younger brother/male relative to Daddy of the same generation (Xh.)
<i>Uyanikhulisa</i>	He/she is growing you (Xh.)
<i>Uzuka</i>	Sixpenny coin (Ng.)
<i>Wavuthwa</i>	He/she got cooked (Ng.)

MY ROOTS



Key: The names in bold italics are those I have mentioned in the extended photo album

THE NYANGINTSIMBI FAMILY (Mama's Family)



Key: The names in bold Italics are those I interacted with and mentioned in the extended photo album

CONTEXTUAL MAP SHOWING ZIMBABWE, BOTSWANA AND SOUTH AFRICA



*Map showing the places mentioned in the extended curated photo album: Courtesy:
www.google.com/maps*



Introducing my family which is the foundation of who I am. Artistic effects by SR Dhlula.

MY EXTENDED CURATED PHOTO ALBUM

CHAPTER ONE: *INTSHAYELELO* (INTRODUCTION)

1.1 Introduction

This thesis presents the self-study project that I conducted to explore my personal and professional history of collaborative learning and my understanding of how I could apply my new knowledge in a tertiary teacher education context. I start by looking back into my personal history to explore the times and events when I learned collaboratively. The focus was on my personal life while growing up as well as on my professional career. When growing up, I spent time with members of different branches of my family in different settings. I embraced the challenges of lifelong learning and heeded my calling to be a teacher and a teacher educator at a college of education and a university. Referring to both the latter settings, I utilised opportunities to reflect on my experiences of collaborative learning and the lessons I had learned about this type of learning and about myself during the various stages of my development in the context of teaching and learning. At present, I am a university educator involved in preservice teacher education.

I couched my study thesis in a visual arts-based format using an extended curated photo album. Weber and Mitchell (2004) aver that illustrations, performances and photographs are some examples of visual arts-based ways of presenting information. This form of research is receiving increasing attention as it is used in reflective studies such as memory-work in self-study endeavours. I used photographs to assist me on my journey back to my history, but they also helped me to paint mental pictures as I engaged in memory recall and reflective work during the study. Mitchell and Weber (1999) aptly explain this journey when they state: "...photographs can play a very important role in framing our sense of the past and shaping the course of our future" (p. 74), which is what the photographs also meant to me. Richards (2011) mentions the use of a photo book which, in this digital era, I understand to be an electronic presentation with brief information about each photograph, much in the style that tourism agencies compile their flyers to highlight places of interest. I compiled an extended curated photo album electronically and therefore it comes across as a mix of photographic images and discourse (or explanation). For lack of a more appropriate word, I use the term photo album because 'photo' refers literally to the photographs being used while 'album' denotes the extended nature of the project. Moreover, this curated photo album is not only extensive, but it is quite complex due to the nature of the information about the photographs which would not have been possible to present in an ordinary curated photo album.

There is generally someone in the family who takes an interest in making sure that the photographs taken by the family are kept in some aesthetic order, usually in an album. In my family my mother, or ‘Mama’, was that person. This person would write information about the photograph on the back: the photographer, the date, who/what is depicted in each photograph and the place/context of the photograph – this is referred to as ‘curating the album’, as explained by Mitchell and Allnut (2008) and Mitchell, MacEntee, Cullinan and Allison (2019). I use the adjective ‘extended’ to refer to the unusual length, content and scope that my curated photo album covers. It is therefore much larger than an ordinary curated photo album. Fortunately for me, I grew up in a family that has placed much importance on capturing moments that have been – and still are – deemed important. This love of family history and bonding was nurtured mainly by my Daddy, while Mama was good at curating the photographs that visualised this history and kept it alive.

1.2 Focus and purpose of the study

The overarching aim of engaging in this study was that I wanted to conduct a self-study about my professional practice while exploring collaborative learning. This included engaging in a self-study of both my personal and professional histories to highlight times and episodes of collaborative learning.

Self-study is a methodology where the general aim is encapsulated in the question that Whitehead (1989, p. 41) and Tidwell and Fitzgerald (2004, p. 78) propose should be asked: “How do I improve my...?” – and I wanted to improve my teaching practice. I thus engaged in a focused self-study with the purpose of learning about myself so that I could improve my professional practice. The question that was persistently at the back of my mind as I sought to achieve my goal was: *How can I improve my practice with reference to my history?* Asking this question contains an aspect of what Whitehead terms a “living contradiction” (Whitehead, 1989, p. 44) whereby one might find, through a systematic self-study of one’s practice, that one’s view of one’s practice is actually different from reality. When I conceptualised the study, I felt that I might not be as relevant as I wanted to be to the generation/s of students that I was teaching. The students in my class seemed to be getting younger by the year and I believed that, by engaging in this study, I would learn to understand and relate to them. One observation that flummoxed me was how they could be on their mobile phones while engaging in group work, but I quickly learnt that they were searching

for information that they needed at the press of a button. I remembered hours of research in libraries and books and their easy access to such materials made me feel old fashioned and just old.

Explaining the characteristics of self-study, LaBoskey (2004) mentions that, among others, it is “*improvement-aimed*” (italicised in the text) (p. 820), meaning that the teacher seeks to learn more about his/her practice with the aim of improving personal practice as well as the learning of the students. Self-study is also about the teacher engaging with students at both personal and professional levels (Samaras & Freese, 2006) and this requires an holistic approach that is expected to empower the teacher in a way that enables her to also view her students as whole beings. These observations summarise the reasons why I wanted to learn more about collaborative learning through a self-study project that focused on my own professional practice.

1.3 Background information

I grew up and trained as a secondary school (high school) teacher in the erstwhile Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). I only started working in South Africa after I had immigrated after my marriage. In 1978, which was my first year as a teacher, I taught in a deep rural area where there was no electricity or other modern amenities. The water that my family and I as well as the animals drank came from wells. We used candles or paraffin/kerosene lamps for lighting and a paraffin/kerosene primus stove for cooking.

From 1979-1983 I taught in a senior secondary school where there were centralised tap water and an electricity generator for lighting in the evening up to 10 pm. After a year there, I bought and used a gas table top cooker. I then taught in Mthatha which was the capital city of the Republic of Transkei (it now exists as a geographical region known as the Transkei which is part of South Africa). I taught in a semi-rural setting where there was electricity. We first lived on the outskirts of the town but, in 1987, we moved to the town where there is electricity.

I am currently lecturing at a tertiary institution. The one constant during my transition periods has been the context from which my students come, as the majority has always come from rural catchment areas where communities generally adhere to traditional customs. The language of learning of these students has been English, which has generally been their second, third, or even fourth language. However, I have lately had some students in my tertiary classes who took English as a first language (English Home Language) at high school.

I started teaching Home Economics/Consumer Studies in 1978 when I taught at a Junior Secondary School. I then realised that I was not gaining the experience I needed as I had trained as a secondary school teacher. So I was transferred to a Senior Secondary/High School where I worked for five years (1979-1983) before transferring to a Home Economics In-Service Centre for teachers who wanted to redirect their teaching specialisation to teaching Home Economics (as Consumer Studies was called then).

I worked there for four and a half years (1984 to mid-1988) before I went into pre-service teacher education. I first taught at a college of education (mid-1988 to late 2003), then at a Technikon (late 2003-mid-2005), and am currently (starting mid-2005) lecturing at a university. The majority of my teaching career has been in teacher education, although the experiences of my first seven years as a school teacher have remained alive in my memory. I remain a teacher, regardless of the level that I teach. During my time at the college of education, I also taught Home Economics/Consumer Studies at a night school for eight years (1989-1996).

I am currently teaching Curriculum Studies (Subject Didactics/Methodology) to Consumer Studies pre-service teachers at a university that came into being through the merger of two Technikons (currently universities of technology) and a university, which were all previously disadvantaged institutions (PDIs). The institution where I lecture is relatively challenged in terms of teaching facilities as well as teaching technologies. Its main catchment area is the Oliver Tambo Municipality (ORT), which is an area that has been identified as one of the most poverty-stricken areas by two South African past presidents (Mbeki, 2001; Zuma, 2013).

The institution of study is in the KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa and, although its undergraduate catchment area is not much different from that of my institution of work, the post-graduate studies module for which I was registered has an international catchment area. Moreover, it provides technologically advanced access for students (see Chapter Two).

The concern that manifested in my first year as a teacher (Chapter Eight) has always been about the learner at school. I have been plagued by questions such as what quality of learning and teaching our learners are exposed to inside and outside the classroom and in the educational context in general. Trying to address the gaps that are so obvious has always made me strive to be the best teacher educator that I could be for the new teachers that will stand in our classrooms. My purpose

has also been to ensure that my students will be the best teachers that they can be for the sake of their learners¹. This is also why, when I conceptualised this study, I felt that the self-study approach would be the most appropriate for my purpose (Samaras, Hicks, & Berger, 2004).

1.4 Rationale

My research topic was very important to me for a number of reasons. First, I was a Home Economics/Consumer Studies teacher for a period from 1978 and, from 1984, a teacher educator. Lately, my students² have been near my grandchildren in age and I have started to feel that I might not be connecting with them as well as I can. Moreover, my classes have been getting bigger and, because I have always thrived in groups throughout the years of my own teaching and learning, I have felt that I may only manage if I connect with my students in an appropriate manner. However, a feeling of inadequacy has plagued me as I always studied with my peers using only one kind of group work. I saw Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) in its original form come and go in schools and experienced it as a student in my Master's studies. I suddenly felt that I needed to learn more about this kind of group learning, which was also referred to as cooperative or collaborative learning in the days of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) in schools.

Furthermore, because my classes have been large for quite some time – varying from 45 to 75 students – and I have found myself using group work as a way of ensuring that my students learn from and with one another. This is because I have found learning in a group very helpful throughout my life. This prompted me to want to know more about group learning as a tool for collaborative learning. I felt that learning more about collaborative learning would get me to a point where I would feel that I was making a more positive impact on my students while, at the same time, contributing to the scholarly knowledge base of collaborative learning.

For my Master's degree (Dhlula-Moruri, 2011) I did a study on how first-year students experienced their living conditions and how these conditions affected their academic performance. Apart from living conditions, I found that some other factors that affected the students' academic performance were: student learning styles, emotional intelligence (EI), the language of instruction, as well as library, computer and internet services. The last three issues were also most relevant for my current

¹ In the South African context those who attend school from pre-school (Grade R) to the end of high school (Grade 12) are referred to as 'learners'.

² Those attending university/higher education institutions are referred to as students in South Africa.

(Doctoral) study as I wanted to better understand collaborative learning in relation to my personal history and my professional practice in order to improve my practice and nurture my students to become the best teachers that they can possibly be.

I envisaged that, by exploring my personal history and the times when I experienced collaborative learning, I would better understand the teacher that I am now. I also envisaged that, by looking at collaborative learning from my professional perspective, I would better understand myself and the current generation/cohort of university students. Through exposure to web-based information on collaborative learning, I was also hoping to contribute to a better understanding of this kind of learning and that this would help make me be a much better teacher.

Because self-study involves collaborative methodologies (Samaras, 2011), I also hoped that my critical friends would learn more about collaborative learning as they accompanied me on my study journey. Also, because I would share my findings with my student participants (Feldman, 2003), I hoped that they would learn to become teachers who would always seek to keep themselves relevant for the learners they will teach in the classroom. I also envisaged that I would motivate my colleagues in the department to want to look into their teaching for best practice, which in turn would help bring about a general improvement in the classroom practice of my department, faculty and, hopefully, in the whole institution eventually, so that the students would benefit as the throughput rate of the institution would also improve. This envisaged improvement with a ripple effect is supported by Ritter and Hayler (2019).

A teacher continually looks at and reflects on his/her teaching every time s/he prepares for class and after a class session with the view to improving practice. This is an activity that teachers generally engage in informally, but which usually leads to a change in teaching approach to make sure one's teaching practice gets better after one has reflected and planned for improvement (Korthagen, 2017; Pithouse, Mitchell & Weber 2009; Samaras, 2011; Van Woerkom, 2003). For me, this meant that what I had been doing informally for years was, in fact, an activity that I could engage in formally to improve my teaching.

For both informal and formal self-studies, the purpose is the same – to improve one's classroom/professional practice. Samaras and Freese (2006) refer to formal self-study, describing it as a way of conducting a self-study systematically. They further explain that a study – such as the one that I engaged in – is an example of a formal self-study. This means that I conducted my

self-study by using recognised research methods and by presenting it in thesis format, both of which situate the information in the public as well as the academic domains. The latter authors explain that informal self-study occurs when the teacher might opt to reflect on a problem for purposes of solving it practically without the rigour of data collection or publication. This reflection organically led to my choice of self-study as a methodology for my study.

1.5 Research questions

1. What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history? (Chapters Four to Seven)

To look at factors outside myself to address this question, I felt it was important to go back to my personal history – down memory lane as it were – and look for incidences when I learned collaboratively. This reflection is presented in Chapters Four to Seven. The collection of photographs and sketches assisted in jogging my memory. Sharing some of the photographs and discussing their meaning with family and critical friends also assisted in the elicitation of more memories and information. In some cases, some views and shared memories made me look at the photographs from a different perspective, which assisted me in my reflections and meaning-making. I could work from anywhere with this question because, when I did not have a photograph of a memory, I was able to ask my family if they had one. More often than not, I would receive electronic copies which were very helpful for my study. It was just a joy to collate my extended curated photo album.

2. What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional practice? (Chapters Eight to Ten)

This question was originally focused on my classroom practice. My supervisor advised me to change this focus to include events and experiences outside the classroom and I was invigorated to do so because I recognised that my students also needed moral support outside the classroom – which I felt was natural. I addressed this need in a special module that I decided to teach. At a critical friends' session after a presentation I had made came the consensus that, in reality, students are whole beings whose life experiences impact one another as well as their learning (see section 9.2). For this question, I traced my choice of profession, my training, and my journey as a teacher/lecturer and lifelong learner to illuminate times of collaborative learning. I also recorded

some lessons and analysed these to reflect on the experiences, lessons learned, and skills in dealing with my own and my students' experiences of teaching and learning as we went forward. I also learned from sessions offered as Transformative Education/al Studies (see section 2.2.2).

1.6 The theoretical perspectives informing my study

As I engaged in this self-study project, I explored collaborative learning through the theoretical lenses of *social constructivism* and *socio-culturalism*. Social constructivism is based on the view that learning happens as students are actively engaged in trying to jointly (collaboratively) make meaning of any new experience or knowledge they may have been exposed to (Beetham & Sharpe, 2013; Dooly, 2008). The emphasis in this process is on “learning-by-doing” (Beetham & Sharpe, 2013, p. 21), which means that one learns as one applies the learning/knowledge one has gained to practical situations/contexts. This is in contrast to the traditional methods of learning where the teacher teaches (the ‘talk and chalk’ method) and the students passively listen (Aziz & Hossain, 2010; Felder & Brent, 2007). Vygotsky stressed the importance of making meaning through social interaction, language and culture (Beethman & Sharpe, 2013; Fosnot & Perry, 2005), thereby promoting dialogue which is important in collaborative learning. Fosnot (1996) further explains that Vygotsky’s theory of social constructivism, which acknowledges the role of the individual’s inner processes in the process of learning, focuses on interest in the role of the adult and students’ peers in their making meaning through conversation, questioning, explaining and negotiating meaning collaboratively. Jonassen (1999) concludes that we learn through rich dialogue with other people with similar interests that are based on their different life experiences. In their discussion on cultural background, Chisanga and Meyiwa (2019) echo Vygotsky’s theory by acknowledging the importance of social constructivism when they traced how they came to be the professors they were living and working in their respective homes in different countries. However, they held similar values and engaged in similar ways of ensuring they would become who they were. The latter authors linked the sociocultural identities that they acquired when they grew up to the philosophy of *Ubuntu*, which was the order of the day, much like mine was. Their identities were formed at a time when every child was collaboratively raised by the whole village. Chisanga and Meyiwa (2019) thus support the notion that the Southern African perspective of social constructivism and socio-culturalism, and thus collaborative learning, should be enhanced in self-study projects.

During my study I wanted to learn more about collaborative learning from the perspective of my personal history as well as from an exploration of my professional practice. I understood that no learner or student comes into the learning context empty-handed. They come with their baggage of personal histories (both academic and personal) of family experiences as well as experiences and perspectives of school learning, and this understanding was a platform from which the collaborative interaction between my students and I could be launched. This process is described and discussed in Chapter Five.

At this point I must acknowledge that my grandparents (Photograph A in Figure 1.1 below) played a significant role in my learning when I was small. *Makhulu* (my grandmother) in particular always encouraged me to go to school and pass by openly boosting the concept of success. She also modelled her love for learning by attending adult literacy classes organised by Mama through the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and she also tried out her new learning on us. This concept is supported by Vygotsky (1930) when he avers that "...an individual only exists as a social being, as a member of some social group within whose context he follows the road of his historical development ... the composition of his personality and the structure of his behaviour turn out to be a quantity which is dependent on social evolution..." (pp. 175-176).

Based on the examples and references above, I found the *sociocultural theoretical perspective on learning* the best perspective on which to base my study on collaborative learning. This perspective speaks to social constructivism which emphasises the social aspect of learning. It is basic in that it looks at all the aspects of one's living, being and learning such as the historical and cultural aspects of students' learning in addition to the social aspects as they learn. Proponents of the sociocultural perspective argue that one's learning is not confined to the classroom, but that one comes into the classroom from a context made up of the social, historical and cultural contexts that one has been exposed to (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). The foundation of one's learning is the environment into which one is born and in which one continually interacts with others. From this environment, one learns about one's culture, rites, language, traditions and historical background, and this is how one's identity is shaped (see Fig 1.1 below). This view is supported by Chisanga and Meyiwa (2019) when they acknowledge that their cultural background shaped their work, research and identities. Vygotsky's theoretical learning perspective also underscores the reality that everyone in one's environment has a part to play in one's learning and, in the process, everybody also learns.

In the societies that I grew up and lived in, the statement that “It takes a village to raise a child” has always been strongly endorsed and practised. From where I stand now, this saying also applies to our schools and universities because the staff in an institution all work together to shape learners and students into mature adults by recognising that each student is a whole being (Kelly, 2006). Moreover, each institution – be it a school or university or even a family – has its own rules, values and ethos (culture) that its citizens/members have to abide by. In my experience, in the learning and teaching situation I have found that my students are quite happy and most animated when they engage in collaborative learning strategies.

My parents maintained our cultural values, ethics and practices contributed to our learning and that the most obvious way of identifying with our culture would be by wearing our traditional attire (Photograph B Figure 1.1). According to Gerdes (1998), recognition of and capitalisation on the knowledge that students/learners bring from their cultural background to the learning and teaching situation are important as the teacher/lecturer can then build on their prior knowledge and experiences to enrich their students’ knowledge. They could also encourage sharing for all to learn from one another and, most importantly, to help struggling students to gain self-confidence. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) further add that the sociocultural approaches to learning and development “are mediated by language and other symbol systems, and can be best understood when investigated in their historical development” (p. 191). This speaks to the way communication develops through time for the benefit of teaching and learning the values, ethics and principles of a group – in this case, my family and students. I learned who I was, and this greatly contributed to my identity setting. Furthermore, the prevalence of many other relatives in my extended family ensured that we learned about our culture – who we were, where we came from, which language we spoke (in a land where it was not spoken), and how and what we prayed and sang in our first language (Chapters Four to Seven).

A person’s development/learning is greatly influenced by the context of what happens in one’s community and in society, and this also underpins one’s learning. In the classroom, applying collaborative learning strategies means that the students in each group should regard one another as members of the same family, and they should thus strive to ensure that they all learn at the same level of understanding and competence. In their discourse on Vygotsky’s framework, John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) emphasise the point that “the power of Vygotsky’s ideas lies in his explanation of the dynamic interdependence of social and individual processes” (p. 192). Gerhard and Mayer-Smith (2008) aver that the socio-cultural learning theory views learning as a social occurrence

rather than a solitary one, which supports the notion of the use of collaborative learning strategies in the classroom. In my learning context I was surrounded by the society in which I was always situated. One of the societal practices I learned is the recognition and celebration of life's milestones, such as a birthday that I celebrated with friends and relatives in a restaurant (Photograph C, Figure 1.1). My tenth birthday was also celebrated with family and friends (Chapter Four). It was one of the family rituals that taught me the importance of society in my learning.

The values of *Ubuntu* mirror the sociocultural perspective of learning. In the classroom the use of collaborative learning reflects these values as well. The sociocultural perspective of learning is closely linked with the South African philosophy of *Ubuntu* (Dhlula-Moruri, Kortjass, Ndaleneni, & Pithouse-Morgan, 2017) which is reflected in a statement in the Nguni language, “Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu”, or “Motho ke motho ka batho” in Sesotho, which means “A person is a person because of other persons” in English (Letseka, 2012, p. 48; Khomba, 2011, p. 127). This is summed up in the English idiom, “No man is an island”. From the Southern African cultural point of view Ubuntu can further be explained as an expression of communal characteristics such as respect for another's dignity, humanness, reciprocity and caring, to mention a few (Khomba 2011; Luhabe, 2002). By learning collaborative one works at achieving the goal of learning for both the group's and one's own learning (Dooly, 2008). Thus one goes the extra mile to support one another whilst recognising that all participants need one another to succeed. In Photograph D (Figure 1.1) the Mamas in the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) played their respective roles in the organisation, but when it came to us children they all played the same nurturing role and never showed any favouritism. We were taken on excursions and picnics because they felt they had a part to play in bringing up all the children together with equal dedication. They were all our mothers.

The photograph of my graduation (Photograph E, Figure 1.1) indicates the achievement of the goal of learning. Here, as in other contexts, there are always other people who acknowledge achievement and reward one's labours in the learning situation. One gets to that point with support from different people (supervisors, peers, colleagues, family, friends) and structures (an institution of learning, the church). They all collaborate with others – some without knowing – by providing support in one way or another. Today, when interacting with my classes, I encourage my student teachers to always keep the end goal of their study in mind, which is graduation and life as

professionals after that. I also encourage them to be supportive of one another by always giving constructive criticism whenever the opportunity arises.

Below is a photo-collage that illustrates how I linked the sociocultural theoretical perspective of learning to my study in my attempt to address the research questions. A photo-collage is created when photographs are placed together to emphasise certain aspects (Sullivan, 2008) or, in my case, themes. I created my photo-collage with photographs that reflect the common theme of the sociocultural perspective on learning (Bianco, & Ciocca, 2015) while they were also a means of eliciting memories of times when socio-cultural values applied most specifically in my life.



Figure 1.1 The Sociocultural theoretical perspective on learning as illustrated by photographs of various contexts. Collage by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2019

NB: In the collage that is Figure 1.1, the photographs are arranged according to themes rather than timelines.

- A. *This photograph of my paternal grandparents (Makhulu and Tat'omkhulu) was taken by my dad, EVS Dhlula, around 1965 at their home, Mayitshe Farm (Chapter Six). In this collage, they represent my **historical context**.*
- B. *This photograph was taken by one of our family friends in November 2018 at Mama's funeral in Bulawayo at the township mission where we used to live when I was small (Chapter Four). In the photograph, I am with my cousins, some aunts and sisters, and my and my siblings' daughters. Both my paternal and maternal sides of the family are represented in this photograph. I am right at the back; my head appears just above that of my maternal aunt in the yellow attire (with a bag at her feet). Most are wearing imibhaco, which is a Xhosa traditional attire. This photograph represents my **cultural context**.*
- C. *Here we were in town (in a societal context) in a restaurant in a mall in Durban in February 2017. The photograph was taken by a friend who was also with us at the table. In the photograph with me are (l-r) my daughter Naleli, my friend, Kroza, Mandisa (Me), and my sister-in-law (an older Mrs. Moruri). The photograph represents my **societal context**.*
- D. *This photograph was taken around 1965 at the Khami ruins outside Bulawayo. My mother and her fellow YWCA members took us there for the day. We recognised our aunts as being part of the extended family and they supported our learning. Mama and her four children are also in the picture. The sociocultural perspective underscores the **African philosophy of Ubuntu**. In our society (informal learning context) as well as in the classroom (formal learning context) it takes a village to grow one (the term 'to grow' one comes from an expression Daddy liked using whenever we reported one of our older siblings would have played a practical joke on us to him. He would say "Uyanikhulisa" which always made me feel like a plant being grown.) Ubuntu is about society acting as a collective in many respects, such as treating all children in the village (the classroom/school) as one's own and taking ownership of the well-being and progress of the community (Khomba, May 2011).*
- E. *This photograph was taken by a professional photographer when I graduated with my Master's degree at a university in the Free State province in South Africa in June 2012. At this point, the Chancellor was conferring the degree on me. This photograph indicates the achievement of the goal of learning. Here, as in other **contexts**, there are always other people who acknowledge and commend the reward of one's labours in the learning situation.*

1.7 Key concepts

The key concepts that are used in this thesis are the following:

1.7.1 Collaborative learning

My understanding of this concept came from my experiences as a learner/student and a teacher as well as my readings about the current generation of students that seems to have digressed since our schooling days when we went to school, passively listened to the teacher and basically relied on our creativity to succeed. We were graded competitively (Aziz & Hossain, 2010; Felder & Brent, 2007) and without consideration of our diversity and needs. Students nowadays are vastly different from foregoing generations of students in terms of, among others, their technological abilities, teamwork skills, and openness to participatory methodologies (Garcia & Qin, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2003; Lancaster & Stillman, 2002). Mudaly, Pithouse-Morgan, Van Laren, Singh and Mitchell (2015) concur that students nowadays find technologies such as mobile phones very convenient. This makes it easier for them to engage in collaborative learning, bearing in mind that openness to participatory methodologies is identified as one of the characteristics of modern-day students. This point is further discussed in section 1.7.1.4 below. According to Dooly (2008), collaboration is about students working together to achieve a common goal. This involves several strategies where students learn from one another and from the teacher while the teacher learns from the students as well. I looked at *social networks*, *cooperative learning*, the *flipped classroom*, and *supportive networks* as possible modes of collaborative learning.

1.7.1.1 Cooperative learning

In simple terms, cooperative learning is when the teacher facilitates the learning of students by having them work in pairs and groups to attain common goals of learning as they enhance one another's learning. In this context each student is equally accountable (Dooly, 2008; Felder & Brent, 2007; Gillies, 2016) and, when this strategy is applied, the teacher is the one who drives it. Dooly (2008) differentiates between collaborative learning and cooperative learning as, in cooperative learning, the teacher leads while collaboration learning is student-initiated. According to Dooly, cooperative learning occurs in the classroom situation because of the teacher's involvement. However, there are others (Reeves & Reeves, 1997) who explain cooperative learning as having aspects within it that are/can be student-initiated and web-based in addition to being teacher-led and face-to-face. Gravett and Geyser (2004) also state that the learning strategies used by students are determined by the "learning facilitator" (p. 173) which is the lecturer or

teacher. Based on the foregoing, I shall refer to cooperative learning as a collaborative learning strategy.

Collaborative learning – by its very nature of ensuring that a group of students works together – also has the advantage that it promotes socialisation among the group members as they have to respect and listen to one another and take responsibility for the successful learning of each member of the group (Felder & Brent, 2007; Ryzn & Roseth, 2018).

1.7.1.2 Flipped classroom

Another form of collaborative learning is the ‘flipped classroom’. This differs from the traditional classroom in that the processes are reversed. In the traditional classroom, the teacher teaches and then gives homework to the students. In the flipped classroom, the students start with homework where they may read the material or watch videos on a particular topic, and then they engage in active learning strategies such as debates on the material that was observed or learned (Gilboy, Heinerichs & Pazzaglia, 2014; Contry, 2014). Gilboy et al. (2014) and Jantakoon and Piriyastrawong (2018) also explain that this encourages the use of the higher levels of Bloom’s taxonomy such as application, analysis and synthesis/creating, thereby promoting deep learning.

The teacher and her students can use any form of learning and teaching at home or in the classroom. I discuss this method of learning and teaching because whenever I use this method I encourage my students to engage in home learning in pairs or groups for better understanding. I also encourage collaborative learning when they work on their tasks in the classroom. The most common means by which students gain knowledge outside the classroom is by posting videos on the learning platform used, which Prensky (2003) recognises as a popular and preferred platform for learners/students to learn as they may play games in collaboration with others. Among other learning strategies, I tend to give my students a flipchart paper and request them to paste pictures on it that they took with their mobile phones showing how they prefer to learn (Chapter Ten).

1.7.1.3 Supportive networks

Making use of *supportive networks* is another strategy that can be used for collaborative learning. Supportive networks are about learning from other people who may have gone through a particular challenge. This is usually done through dialogue (East, Jackson, O’Brien & Peters, 2010). This

strategy is most commonly applied in health and related fields, but in my view it could be applied in any learning situation. For example, senior students may be requested to share their school-based (teaching practice) experiences with junior students who have yet to go out to schools. Also, as a teacher of many years' experience, I share my personal experiences with my students, where relevant (East et al., 2010). The above examples underscore the idea of supportive networks in teaching and learning as is expounded in the values of *Ubuntu*. In collaborative learning, one thus works at achieving the goal of learning for both the group's and one's own learning (Dooly, 2008), and one needs to go the extra mile to support others while recognising that all the participants need others to succeed.

1.7.1.4 Social networks

As early as 2006, Prensky (2006) cautioned parents and teachers against regarding the time that learners spend on cellular phone devices as merely playing that cannot contribute to learning. In essence, Prensky suggests that teachers could learn from these learners how to keep their attention span long enough to ensure that they learn what the teacher wants them to learn.

I also wanted to look at the use of new technologies for collaborative learning. This is referred to as web-based collaborative learning (Garcia & Qin, 2007; Prensky, 2001, 2005, 2006; Oblinger, Oblinger, & Lippincott 2005). Web-based collaborative learning happens on the World Wide Web (WWW)/internet exclusively. Among the internet/social networks my students and I use are the WhatsApp, Facebook and e-learning (Blackboard) platforms that are widely used at my institution of work. As a case in point, all the participants in an earlier study communicated on the internet without any need for them to meet (Jianhua & Akahori, 2001). Using digital technologies is most advantageous for distance learning, but they can also be utilised to great advantage in encouraging students to explore, break down and synthesise knowledge in groups where face-to-face contact and interaction also occur (Prensky, 2018). In some instances, the teacher (or tutor) can be in control of what goes on, but in other situations students themselves may be completely in charge of their learning where the internet server is the platform that brings the different members of the groups together on the web (Jianhua & Akahori, 2001). Goper et al. (2008) and Oblinger, Oblinger, and Lippincott (2005) also refer to some advantages in the use of web-based learning and teaching such as: (i) students find learning on electronic platforms advantageous in their mobile phone lives as they are accessible anywhere and anytime; (ii) these platforms are advantageous to those who might not be able to attend class; and (iii) class attendance patterns may change to the benefit of

students. I wanted to learn more about this mode of collaborative learning because sometimes I might be unable to meet my class, yet I would like to encourage my students to take charge of their learning. In such situations this mode of learning would be helpful. Goper et al. (2008) and Prensky (2005) agree that many students tend to feel more encouraged and motivated to learn on the internet on their devices than listening to the teacher the whole time. When I conducted the study, I anticipated that there would be those among my students who would find this kind of learning preferable as their devices are portable and can be accessed from anywhere. Mudaly et al. (2015), whose setting for their study was a South African teacher education programme, advocate for the “4 Cs” (p. 37), which means that students nowadays regard technology (mobile/cell phones, tablets, or laptops) as “cheap, convenient, collaborative, and creative”. This is because these young people are growing up in an enabling environment where the presence and use of social networking platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook and YouTube are so easily and regularly accessed that they are taken for granted. Zarien et al. (2016) posits that an advantage is that learning and teaching are easily conveyed via internet platforms. On the other hand, Prensky (2018) warns against too much reliance on digital platforms, a sentiment I concur with as I value personal contact. I would therefore advocate for a collaboration between the two – the personal and the digital. Maybe I am still out of touch because I do not see how my students can learn how to teach without personal contact amongst themselves and with me in a classroom.

1.7.2 Teacher learning

Teacher learning is about students who are developed into teachers in pre-service teacher education programmes. It is also about the in-service teacher who constantly needs to refresh her learning to keep abreast of changes that take place in the lives and times of their learners. Easton (2008) and Kelly (2006) differentiate between teacher development and teacher learning, arguing that teacher development is much like teacher training where the prospective or in-service teacher is taught by someone else. Teacher learning also happens when the teacher (or would-be teacher) gains competences that enable her to be a good or better teacher as she learns from her interaction with other students to gain knowledge collaboratively and contextually. Kelly (2006) refers to this learning as “knowing-in-practice” (p. 510). Korthagen (2017) emphasises the importance of the teacher as a whole person concerning her learning. What is more, the learning of the teacher cannot be separated from that of her students because, from the constructivist perspective, there is mutual learning with the students being the beneficiaries of what their teachers have already learnt (Kelly, 2006)

When I engaged in this study, I wanted to better understand myself as well as my context as a teacher educator in order to improve my practice. This purpose is described by LaBoskey (2004) as follows: “Self-study researchers are concerned with both enhanced understanding of teacher education in general and the immediate improvement of our practice” (p. 818). As a teacher educator I heed the words of Venassche and Kelchtermans (2016) who aver that teacher educators’ professional learning is generally neglected beyond their professional development as ordinary teachers. They claim that teacher educators’ learning should be continuous throughout their professional journey. This view is supported by Kelly (2006) and Venassche and Kelchtermans (2016) who emphasise that teacher educators’ context – their interaction with their student teachers – provides the best environment for enhancing teacher educators’ learning.

1.7.3 Personal history

Reflecting on my personal history was pivotal in this study. I looked back on my learning as it occurred within the social structures that were my foundations as I grew up (Chapters Four to Seven). My experiences of episodes when I learned concepts and skills were explored with a view to better understand collaborative learning. This exploration addressed the first research question: *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* Skerret (2008) argues that the importance of biography in qualitative research cannot be overstated. Strauss and Corbin (1990) also note that qualitative research “is about persons’ lives, lived experiences, behaviours, emotions and feelings as well as about organizational functioning, social movements, cultural phenomena, and interactions between [sic] nations” (p. 11). The foregoing quote confirms what the sociocultural theory emphasises, which is the importance of one’s life as a whole – one’s background, culture, tradition, values and social interactions – that shapes one’s learning, whether it is personal or professional.

Utilising one’s personal history is widely recognised by scholars as one of the methodologies that is best suited for self-study projects. For instance, O’Reilly-Scanlon (2002) and Samaras and Freese (2006) explain that, by using this methodology, one looks back into one’s personal history for episodes that might have influenced the kind of teacher one has become, and then the researcher builds on those experiences to improve his/her future professional practices. I thus engaged in memory work, which is one of many self-study methodologies.

1.7.4 Professional practice

Professional practice comprises teaching and engaging with students in and outside the classroom environment. The teacher or lecturer is a professionally qualified person who, according to Venassche and Kelchtermans (2016), is greatly influenced by personal values and beliefs. Mitchell and Weber (1999) assert that it is very easy to move between “professional and personal lives” (p. 224-5) in daily teaching interactions, which is part and parcel of professional practice. This view confirms my belief that, to be a good teacher educator, I have to be aware that this happens and capitalise on it for the sake of those learners in a school who will be taught by my student teacher who was part of my class. I firmly believe that a teacher should regard his/her students as whole beings. I thus traced and utilised my professional history to learn more about the teacher educator that I am so that I may improve my future teaching practices.

By asking the question, *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional practice?* I wanted to learn more about myself by exploring how I encouraged collaborative learning in the past and could extend my efforts in the future. I did this by looking at my professional practices and by determining how I could improve my practice. LaBoskey (2004) avers that those researchers who engage in self-study are focused on gaining a better understanding of teacher education as well as on enhancing performance in their teaching practice, which is a view that underscored the purpose of my study which was to engage in a self-study project with the purpose of understanding my past professional practices and improving those that I would engage in as I move into the future. I believe that an effective teacher educator must be someone who knows where she comes from and can draw from her educational history. Any effective teacher must use her experiences to become even better at what she does. She must be able to move among personal and professional spaces as and when necessary. She needs to be a model of the behaviour that she hopes will motivate her student teachers to become teachers who care for the welfare and learning of the learners they will teach. The teacher educator must be a team player who is always open to learning from and with her students because, at the end of the day, they also bring knowledge with them. Finally, she must be driven by her conscience – her values guide – which rarely misleads one.

1.8 Methodological approach

To find the answer to my research questions, I used the self-study methodology. Drawing from LaBoskey (2004), Pithouse et al. (2009) and Samaras (2011), I summarised the self-study

methodology as a personal inquiry which is critically collaborative and whose aim is improved learning through a transparent and systematic process that will result in the generation of knowledge that is then presented to the broader learning community. Pithouse et al. (2009, p. 46) also point out that, as one of its characteristics, “self-study... is a general approach that rests on a broad collection of methods that are used for similar purposes or from similar perspectives”. This means that, to conduct a self-study, one is not bound to particular methodologies but one can use many methods such as arts-based presentations, narratives and personal history narratives, to mention a few (Nash, 2004; Samaras, 2011).

The foregoing discourse has summarised my understanding of self-study and the reasons I found it the most suitable methodology to address my search for answers to the research questions. Essentially, this methodology was selected because of its collaborative nature and because it would be best suited for my exploration of collaborative learning.

I also learned that self-study leads to “improved learning” (Samaras, 2011, p. 78). This means that, as I engaged with the self-study methodology, I aimed to improve my teaching practice. It is envisaged that the beneficiaries of my study will be: (i) myself, as I will have improved my practice due to more knowledge about myself, my practice and how my students learn; (ii) my students, who will benefit from my improved learning; (iii) my critical friends, who will have shared some of my experiences as I progressed on my journey to learning; and (iv) the institution of learning where I work, as the shared results of my study will positively impact the quality of teachers that this tertiary institution sends out into the educational world. LaBoskey (2004) underscores my purpose by stating that self-study “is improvement-aimed” (p. 820), which means that the teacher is driven to ask herself questions about her practice because she perceives a need to improve her practice. This is also borne out by Whitehead (1989) when he discusses the “living contradiction” (p. 44), which suggests that a teacher perceives a gap between her assumption of how she is conducting her current practice compared to her ideal practice (p. 43), much in the same way that I asked myself the question, “*How do I improve my practice?*”. I thus looked back at my personal and professional history to improve my professional practice in my quest to move forward, and I based my future actions on what I could learn from my personal and professional history.

1.8.1 Memory work

Memory work is very useful when one explores one’s personal history to remember and identify what is relevant to a biographical study. It is one of the preferred aspects self-study (LaBoskey,

2004; Lighthall, 2004). Lighthall (2004) as the investigator (researcher) gains a better understanding of the ideas that are generated when she provides examples of concepts by sharing her own experiences. In so doing, the teacher engages her personal memories which enables her to reflect on and understand herself better. O'Reilly-Scanlon (2002) summarises the purpose of memory work by explaining that, by exploring one's memory, one is guided to an understanding of one's journey to the present which establishes the foundation for moving forward.

While I remembered most of the incidences that I discuss in the personal history chapters, I also consulted my relatives, particularly Mama and my sister Xoli, to fill the gaps where my memory was hazy. However, the photographs that I unearthed and used in my curated photo album were mainly what assisted me when I engaged in memory work as more memories than I had expected came to mind because of these visual stimuli. I thus use the text to share what I learned about collaborative learning as well as how I became the teacher that I am. Memory work using photographs is recognised as an arts-based methodology in research (Pithouse-Morgan, Pillay, & Mitchell, 2019; Samaras, 2011). I thus used this methodology by not only identifying the themes or aspects the photographs represented, but I also had to think of the aesthetic aspect of placing them appropriately on the pages of this thesis where they would support the discourse.

1.8.2 Extended curated photo album

When I commenced the memory work, I would remember some family event or situations where family/friends shared an experience collaboratively, and I then remembered that there were plenty of photographs that were taken of different family members. These were my 'found' photographs (Mitchell & Webber, 1999) because they were already there even as I started on my memory work. I used old family photographs, most of which were taken by Daddy with Mama doing most of the curating of the family photographs and albums (Mitchell & Allnut, 2008). There were also photographs that either my niece or I had taken for my study (Mitchell & Webber, 1999). As the main curator of the many photographs from our times together as a family, Mama had made sure we each had an album from which I sourced most of those photographs that represented a prominent context. Once I got started, I realised just how many of my memories would be enlightened by these photographs (LaBoskey, 2004; Mitchell & Weber, 1999).

In conjunction with the main curated photo album, I used a smaller one (see Chapter Seven) that I shared only with my surviving sister. Followed Smith's prompts (cited in Mitchel, MacEntee,

Cullinan, & Allison, 2019) and being guided by the advice of Mitchell and Pithouse-Morgan (2014), I selected photographs along a loose, overarching theme which was the times of collaboration when we interacted with our immediate siblings and cousins³. I emailed these photographs to my sister so that she could share my memories and add her own. However, as she was very busy, we engaged in dialogue about them and I subsequently summarised and added her contributions to the stories. There were also memories of photographs that had been taken but I could not find them anywhere. Such photographs are referred to as ‘missing’ or ‘lost’ photographs (Mitchell & Webber, 1999). To deal with this challenge, I found alternative images to use and, in some cases, I used both verbal and drawn illustrations.

1.9 Conclusion and overview of the thesis

My study is comprised of chapters in which I trace my personal journey and share my experiences of historical events. I link these memories and my experiences along this journey to the theoretical underpinnings of the study as well as to relevant literature. I commence by illuminating my memories of growing up under the influence of my parents, their siblings and affiliations, my grandparents from both sides of my family, and my memories of growing up with my siblings and cousins from both the paternal and maternal sides of my family. I then I trace my schooling and also share my memories of my professional journey. Following these memories, I explore my experiences as a university educator involved in pre-service teacher education and I reflect on both my professional practice and my students’ experiences. This trip down memory lane is used to identify and reflect on the collaborative learning that I was exposed to all my life.

Throughout this thesis, I use different languages to enhance or explain some concepts. These are the languages that I was exposed to from the time I grew up till now. My home language is *isiXhosa*, which I use for the titles of the chapters. This language is also used more extensively in Chapter Six. I also include expressions in *isiNdebele*, which was the vernacular that was used at a school I attended and the main spoken language outside my home for most of my childhood. *Shona*, which I learned from my peers mainly at boarding school, is also a language that I was exposed to as I grew up and I could it speak fluently. *Sesotho* (Southern Sotho), which I learned

³ In my family, all the children born of my mother’s sisters are my maternal sisters (*ookanina*), and those born of my father’s brothers are my paternal siblings (*ookayise*) as opposed to our cousins (*abazala*) born of my parents’ siblings of the opposite sex.

at the first school where I taught (see Chapter Nine), is also the language of my in-laws and is my children's home language. The thesis is of course presented in *English*, which is the language of learning and teaching in my current profession and was also my first language (today referred to as the Home Language) at school. English is the one language that has remained constant throughout my life as I moved around in different countries, places and contexts.

Chapter One

This chapter sets the scene for my study. First, I explain the purpose and focus of the project. I also give a glimpse into my background and teaching experiences of being a school teacher to becoming a university pre-service teacher educator. Following this, I explain the rationale for the study that is entitled: "*Exploring collaborative learning: a university educator's self-study*". I also explain why I deem this study important for my students, colleagues, institution of work and myself. I present and discuss the two research questions that gave impetus to the study and I explain in detail why the social constructivist perspective and the sociocultural theory were used to theoretically frame my study. I also elucidate the key concepts related to the topic of the study and describe the methodological approach that I employed, which concludes the chapter.

Chapter Two

In Chapter Two I start tracing the journey I took as I worked on developing the extended curated photo album that was the foundation of my thesis. I explain the methodology that I employed to position the extended photo album as a pivotal source of research. I couch the self-study methodology using the metaphor of a basic bodice pattern used in a dress. I also discuss aspects of my work and learning contexts and explain how they contributed to my research of the topic. I explore the collaborative nature of self-study and refer to my interactions with the student participants in my study, explaining that I am also one (as researcher and participant). I discuss the ethical aspects that I adhered to and affirm the trustworthiness of the study findings that were based on my use and development of ideas elicited from the extended curated photo album.

Chapter Three

In Chapter Three I continue to trace the journey of the extended curated photo album. I explore a new concept as I go back to the dress pattern metaphor and refer how it is adapted for size. I also add features that make it recognisable as a dress bodice pattern as I identify the personal history self-study method as the main alteration that I applied. In doing so, I refer to data collection and the challenges that I encountered in the process of creating my extended curated photo album as

well as how I dealt with them. I conclude the chapter by discussing analysis methods using the features to make a pattern recognisable as a metaphor for analyses. These chapters up to Chapter Ten represent the data that assisted me to generate the new knowledge that I present in Chapter Eleven.

Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven

The sociocultural theory on learning puts emphasises on the importance of one's history (background) which comprises one's experiences of childhood and culture, among others. It also explains how these shape one's identity and the person one grows up to be. In Chapters Four to Seven I thus trace my personal history and memories and identify the times when I learned collaboratively. In this process I sought to answer the first research question: "*What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?*" The African saying: "It takes a village to raise a child" is central to the discourse.

In Chapter Four, I start by identifying my parents as the designers of the basic pattern of my life as they raised my siblings and me. Using photographs and illustrations, I narrate how I learned collaboratively within the nucleus of my family with my siblings. Mama and Daddy not only brought us into this world, but they raised us by instilling values, beliefs and standards of behaviour into our minds as they socialised us. They promoted our understanding of family unity and respect for our elders and one another whilst ensuring that love was paramount.

In Chapter Five, I look back at the times when I learned collaboratively as Mama and Daddy exposed us socially to their siblings, friends, families and organisations, all of whom shared the same values in the village where I was raised. We were grown and we learned collaboratively at the hands of our 'other parents' who shared the same values and principles as our parents and treated us as their own children.

Chapter Six is about the time my family travelled to spend time with my two sets of grandparents who lived in two different countries. I narrate the collaborative leaning episodes and how my grandparents made us feel valued as they displayed their pride in us even as they played their part in growing us. We learned as we saw how our parents treated their parents and came to understand that parents are to be cherished and taken care of and that they need to be encouraged to interact with their grandchildren.

Chapter Seven is about my siblings. I discuss them individually and illuminate the part they played in my learning which occurred collaboratively. This chapter also contains a smaller album with shared memories of Xoli, my only surviving sibling. We co-constructed this album as we reflected on our interactions as children when we engaged in various creative activities such as having a secret hideout and role-playing a wedding with cake and all. We also shared memories of the times we spent with our paternal and maternal siblings and cousins. I thus uncover some intimate reflections that my sister and I shared. This chapter bridges the first and second research questions as it concludes the quest for the answer to my first research question and opens the door for the exploration of my journey that would address the second research question.

In the following chapters (Eight to Ten), the focus of my personal history focuses on my professional practice. I trace my journey to being a teacher, a lifelong learner, preservice teacher at a college of education up, and a preservice educator at a university.

Chapter Eight

In Chapter Eight I trace my journey that would lead me to become a Home Economics/Consumer Studies teacher. I first look at the three teachers who influenced my choice of profession. These people were Mama, Daddy and my high school Needlework and Dressmaking teacher who all had different teaching styles. I then narrate my collaborative learning experiences at the colleges where my speciality teacher education occurred and I reflect on how I finished the year as a qualified, just-married and pregnant new teacher who then emigrated from Zimbabwe to live in South Africa.

Chapter Nine

Chapter Nine is about all the years I spent as a pre-service and in-service teacher educator before I became a university educator. During this period, I practised what I had learned during teacher education programmes and I grew as a teacher. I also engaged in private studies and became the life-long learner that I still am. I studied through distance education but worked collaboratively with other teachers in groups to obtain a Home Economics teacher's diploma, a junior degree, and a post-graduate degree. It was during this phase that I was forever out of my depth, which I realise must have confused and bewildered my more confident colleagues, though I felt better after some time. I did not feel brave enough to voice my opinions and explain my challenges, which are experiences that taught me to ensure that no new colleague will feel like that as long as I am there to guide them.

Chapter Ten

Chapter Ten, which is the last of the personal history chapters, outlines my experiences as a university educator that challenged me to learn more about collaborative learning. I was sensitised to this need because of my class sessions with my students as well as my studies and a Transformative Education/al Studies (TES) project. This chapter illuminates how I was a student again who learnt from and together with my students and my critical friends. This chapter concludes the narratives of my extended curated photo album.

Chapter Eleven

In Chapter Eleven I reflect on the entire process of exploring collaborative learning. I go back to the dress pattern metaphor and additional pattern markings that make the fabric ready for cutting up and making a dress. I link the metaphor of the pattern markings with my learning and understanding of new guides that elucidate collaborative learning based on all the learning experiences that I narrated in the chapters that describe my personal and professional journeys (Chapters Four to Ten). I also highlight my learning about the methodology that I employed and the research process I followed. After this, I conclude the project with a quote that I used at one of the gatherings of the critical friends' support group where we discussed the rationale for engaging in self-study.

CHAPTER TWO: *IFILOSOFI YOPHANDO* (THE PHILOSOPHY/METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH)

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter served as an introduction to my study. I stated the focus and purpose of the study and provided the background as well as the rationale for the study. I also clarified the research questions and the key concepts used in the study. I looked at the theoretical perspectives that informed my work and gave a brief exposé of the methodological approach that I had followed. In conclusion, I gave a brief outline of the chapters of the study.

The previous chapter thus clarified that I had engaged in a self-study project to investigate my professional practice whilst exploring collaborative learning with the purpose of improving my practice as a university educator. I use the word '*ifilosofi*' in the title of this chapter which is an isiXhosa word that means 'philosophy'. Tantray and Dar (2016) describe this as "knowledge that is sought, reflected and understood through discussion [and] questioning..." (p. 339) which were processes that I engaged in during this self-study project.

In this chapter, I start to trace the first steps I took on my journey of learning with and among others and I give the reasons why this happened. I explain the self-study methodology that I used in trying to generate answers to the research questions. I also describe the settings in which my learning occurred, the other participants, and critical friends who walked this journey with me. I also discuss the ethical aspects that I adhered to in order to affirm the trustworthiness of this study.

2.2 Self-Study Methodology

The methodology that I found to be the most suitable for my study was the self-study approach as I wished to explore my educational practice. Self-study requires mainly a qualitative research methodology as it is a personal inquiry. It is a critically collaborative investigation with the aim of improving learning through transparent and systematic processes that result in the generation of knowledge, which is then presented to the broader learning community in various ways (LaBoskey, 2004; Pithouse et al., 2009; Samaras, 2011). Pithouse et al. (2009, p. 46) additionally point out that self-study "...is a general approach that rests on a broad collection of methods that are used for similar purposes or from similar perspectives". This means that there are no cut-and-dried methods of conducting self-study research, thus the researcher has the freedom to use methods that are most suitable for the study. I thus used various methods of data generation and

analysis that are explained in the following sections. In the end, I created and collated an extended curated photo album that is presented in electronic format. This album has more information than an ordinary, physically curated photo album. The concept of the extended curated photo album is further explained in Chapter Three.

2.2.1 Metaphoric beginning: *Drafting a dress pattern*

The main reason why I selected the self-study methodology was because it has qualities that I felt would best assist me in finding answers to my research questions in ways I would be most comfortable with, while they would also be embedded in a sound scholarly approach. In the following section I explain the qualities of self-study in detail and argue that it was these qualities that impelled me to use this methodology.

I use the metaphor of a dressmaking pattern to explain the methodological approach that I followed.

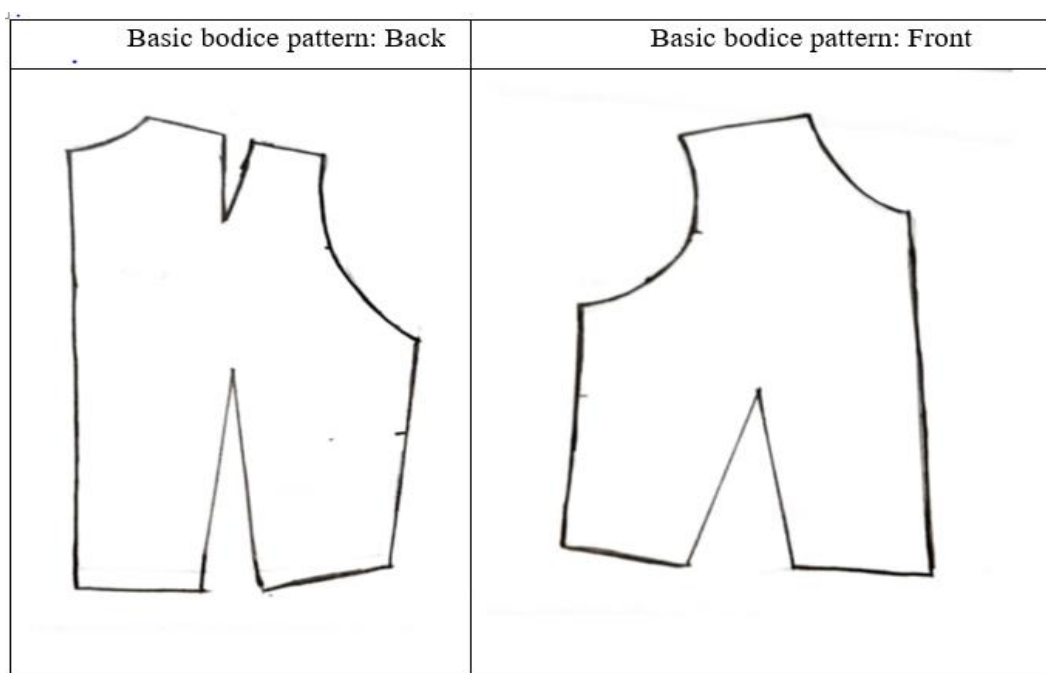


Figure 2.1: *Basic pattern for the bodice (top part) of a dress or a blouse. Drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri*

The figure above illustrates a basic dress pattern that will be referred to in the metaphor that is used to explain that a simple dress pattern, just like the life of a growing child, is the foundation on which all other dress patterns – and thus the life patterns of a developing person – are based. I entitle this section ‘*Drafting a dress pattern*’ because, just like a dress pattern is used to create a

dress, I view the self-study methodology as the basic pattern that is drafted before it is adapted and used to create the desired end product. Self-study methodology is the basis on which the methods that are used to conduct the self-study are grounded. When one wants to make a garment – a dress for example – a basic pattern that was drafted as the basis of all dress patterns is adapted and changed to create a more intricate and complex pattern for a newly designed dress. In the self-study project that I conducted to view and improve my educational practice, my basic pattern was the experiences of my childhood and my early years as a young person when I imbibed the philosophy of *Ubuntu*. Just like an adapted dress pattern, all my later experiences and the insights that I gained about my history were the complex and challenging changes to the basic pattern of my life.

Using and adapting a basic dress pattern is something that has always been familiar to me throughout my life. This metaphor will underpin my discussions in Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven where I explore my personal history that includes my choice of specialisation as a Home Economics/Consumer Studies teacher when the time came to choose a career (Chapter Eight). Embedding my discourse in the metaphor of a dress pattern made me feel very comfortable with the self-study methodology that I employed.

Once I had decided on the self-study methodology, I still needed to learn what it was about and how to apply it to proceed with my study. As a newly registered doctoral student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and a member of the Transformative Education Study (TES) group, I was beginning to understand what self-study methodology is. This understanding was enhanced through the interactions that I had with members of this body. The Transformative Education/al study (TES) initiative is described by Harrison, Pithouse-Morgan, Conolly, and Meyiwa (2012) as a research project funded for three years to promote the scholarship of learning and teaching through the promotion of self-reflective exercise and research between Masters and Doctoral students and their supervisors. The project involved three diverse higher education institutions, one of which was my institution of work and another was my institution of study. I became part of the project in its second 3-year term in 2014 and represented both my institutions of work and study. Chisanga and Meyiwa (2019) trace the establishment of the TES at my institution of work.



Figure 2.2: *I was one of the participants in the self-study workshop conducted by Anastasia Samaras, who is seated in the first row on the right (Photograph by V Msiza, Pinetown 2014)*

As a founder member of the Transformative Education(al) Studies project, Ms Samaras came to educate us about self-study. She was one of the More Knowledgeable Others (see 2.2.2.5) whom I interacted with during my study journey. The students (standing) depicted in the photograph were representative of the three institutions that were part of the project.

Anastasia Samaras is a prolific researcher in the area of self-study. I had the pleasure of being exposed to her work such as the *Self-study of teaching practices primer* that she wrote with Anne Freese in 2006. In this work they succinctly explain self-study and the process of conducting self-study as a teacher. They also provide a list of categorised references relevant to self-study. Samara's book *Self-study teacher research: Improving your practice through collaborative inquiry* (2011) is a guide that takes one from the idea of conducting self-study to presenting and publishing one's own findings based on this process. She co-authored many articles such as the one with Mark Hicks and Jennifer Berger (2004) on self-study through personal history. She also worked with Libbie Roberts (2011) on teachers taking charge of their learning through self-study. She collaborated with Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan in 2019 to write *Polyvocal self-study in transdisciplinary higher education communities* in which they explore self-study through the involvement of different voices (disciplines). These are just a few examples of Anastasia's work. The common thread I found in her writing is her passion for ensuring that whoever reads her work gains some deep learning about self-study.

One concept of self-study that was raised at the workshop that comes easily to mind is that of allowing one's vulnerability to come through so that one can interact with others at a very personal level. Anastasia demonstrated this by modelling this philosophy throughout the workshop. She shared quite a bit about her personal experiences by explaining the importance of one's context in

self-study. This enabled me to feel free to share my story and to be confident that it was worth telling with a view that my critical friends, readers and I would learn more about collaborative learning. The self-study journey will be particularly highlighted in Chapters, One, Two, Three and Eleven.

2.2.2 Self-study is about me

In the following paragraphs, I shall attempt to explain my understanding of what self-study entails. Samaras refers to characteristics/qualities to explain self-study. First of all, she avers that “self-study is a personal situated inquiry” (Samaras, 2011, p. 73), meaning that the teacher who engages in self-study is the one who initiates the study as she asks herself questions about her practice. She also starts the process of looking for the answers in her interactions with her learners in the classroom which is her main situation or context. Loughran (2004) emphasises the importance of one’s contexts which include one’s work, school and any other relevant contexts where the teacher-researcher might position herself to conduct her study. Because self-study is personal, I was able to study myself in practice. Self-study is thus ‘situated’, which refers to my settings, among others, during my study. These settings will be discussed next.

2.2.2.1 My research settings

I was situated in more than one setting during my study. Among them were the two tertiary institutions where I was involved. With reference to my institution of work, I mention spaces and facilities where I interacted as a teacher educator and, with reference to my institution of study, I mention spaces and facilities where I interacted as a doctoral/post-graduate student. This means that I am not comparing the two, but discussing each as I accessed them. I also present photographs as visual images of these spaces.

2.2.2.2 My institution of work

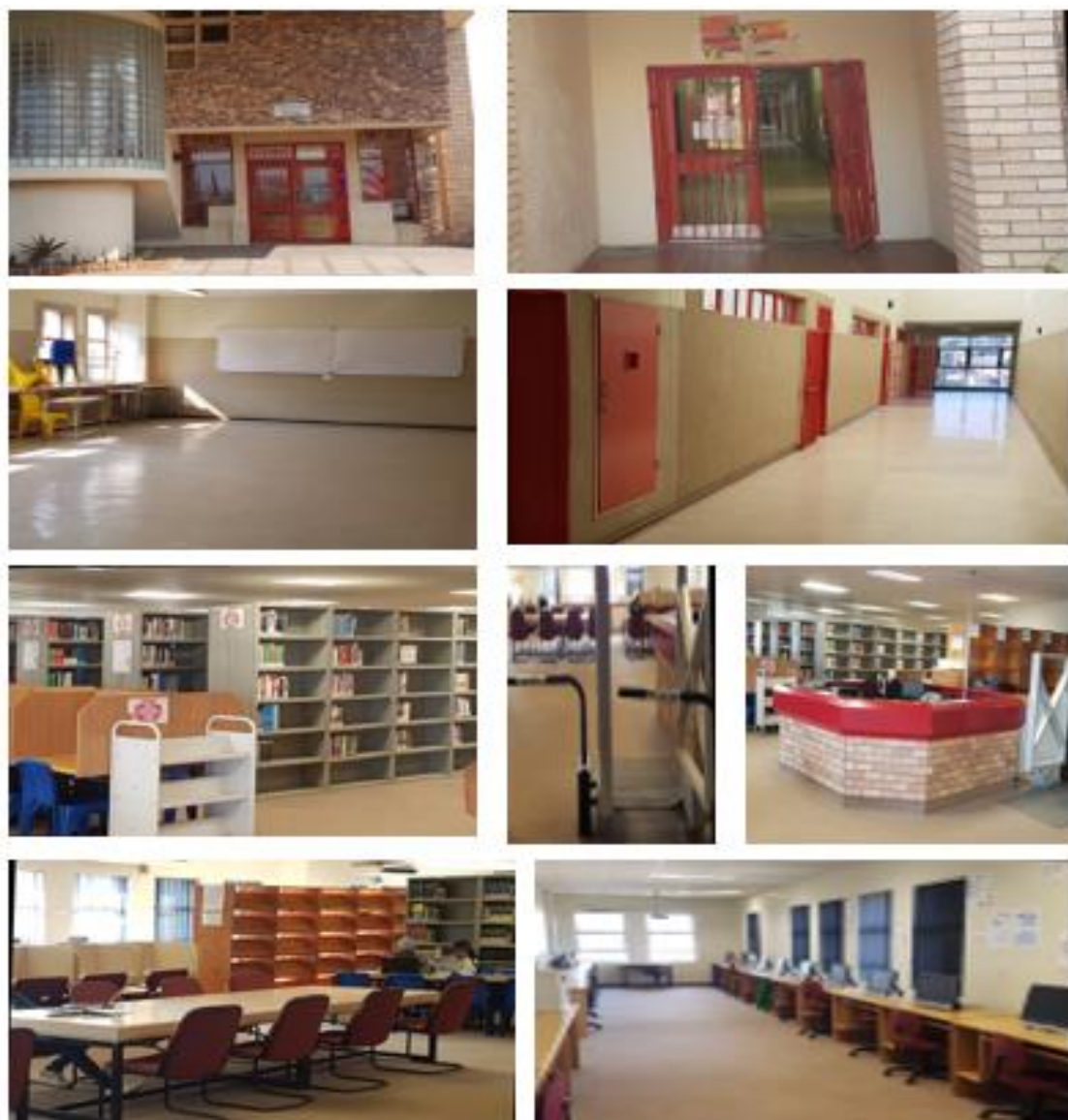


Figure 2.3: Some views of facilities at my institution of work (Photographs taken by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2018)

The above photographs show different parts of the site where I teach. At the time of taking the photographs, examinations were being conducted in the utility hall where most of the furniture (desks and chairs) was. During class times, students move from classroom to classroom carrying desks or chairs as there is always a shortage. The advantage is that the lecturer can always ask the students to position the furniture to facilitate the teaching method of choice. The labels on the buildings are not very conspicuous. The library does not have full shelves. Quite a few books were inherited from the college of education in the early 2000s. Access control could have been modernised.

Wi-Fi reception is erratic. In some areas downloading is stable while others, such as the top floor of the Administration block (where my office is) only get sporadic reception. Internet access depends on the Municipality for the supply of electricity which is unreliable. There are generators for times of load shedding but when they have to be used, the internet is mostly not available. At this site, the only post-graduate students are those in the Bachelor of Technology (B. Tech.) programmes which are offered after a three-year diploma has been obtained.

The first tertiary setting for my study was the comprehensive university where I am an educator. It is in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa and came into being in July 2005 through a government imperative (Higher Education Act: RSA DoE, 1997) to reduce the number of higher education institutions in the country. Three previously disadvantaged institutions (PDIs) (a university and two technikons) merged to form this institution, which comprises a multi-campus that is spread out over four towns: Mthatha, Butterworth, Queenstown and East London. The main campus where I work is in rural Mthatha and has two sites: a former university and a former technikon⁴ (that used to be a college of education before it was incorporated into the erstwhile technikon). I teach at the latter.

I teach Curriculum Studies: Consumer Studies to 3rd-year pre-service teachers in the B.Ed. Consumer Science programme. The enrolment numbers generally range between 45 and 70. Some of my data were generated from the students that I taught at the time of the study. The four-year B.Ed. programme is nested where I am the current Head of Department in the Faculty of Educational Sciences. The campus is poorly resourced for such technologies in terms of laptops for the staff, data projectors, digital cameras and recorders and stable internet and electricity access, although there are generators to offset the latter challenge.

I became a member of the self-study research group at my institution of work and was part of the Eastern Cape TES project that was introduced by Professors Thenjiwe Meyiwa and Theresa Chisanga (Prof Chisanga still leads the group while Prof Meyiwa left the institution). These educationists trace their struggle to have the self-study research methodology recognised and accepted at the institution (Chisanga & Meyiwa, 2019) to a point where the Eastern Cape Transformative Education/al Studies (TES) was recognised and given space at the institution's annual research conference.

⁴ In South Africa, there existed institutions of higher learning that offered technical and vocational education, mainly at Diploma level.

My classroom at this institution of study is an important research setting as it was here where I generated some of my data. Because the focus of my study was to improve my teaching practice, I had to engage with my students in the learning and teaching environment. This classroom is depicted in the photograph on the left in the second row of the collage in Figure 2.3).

2.2.2.3 My institution of study

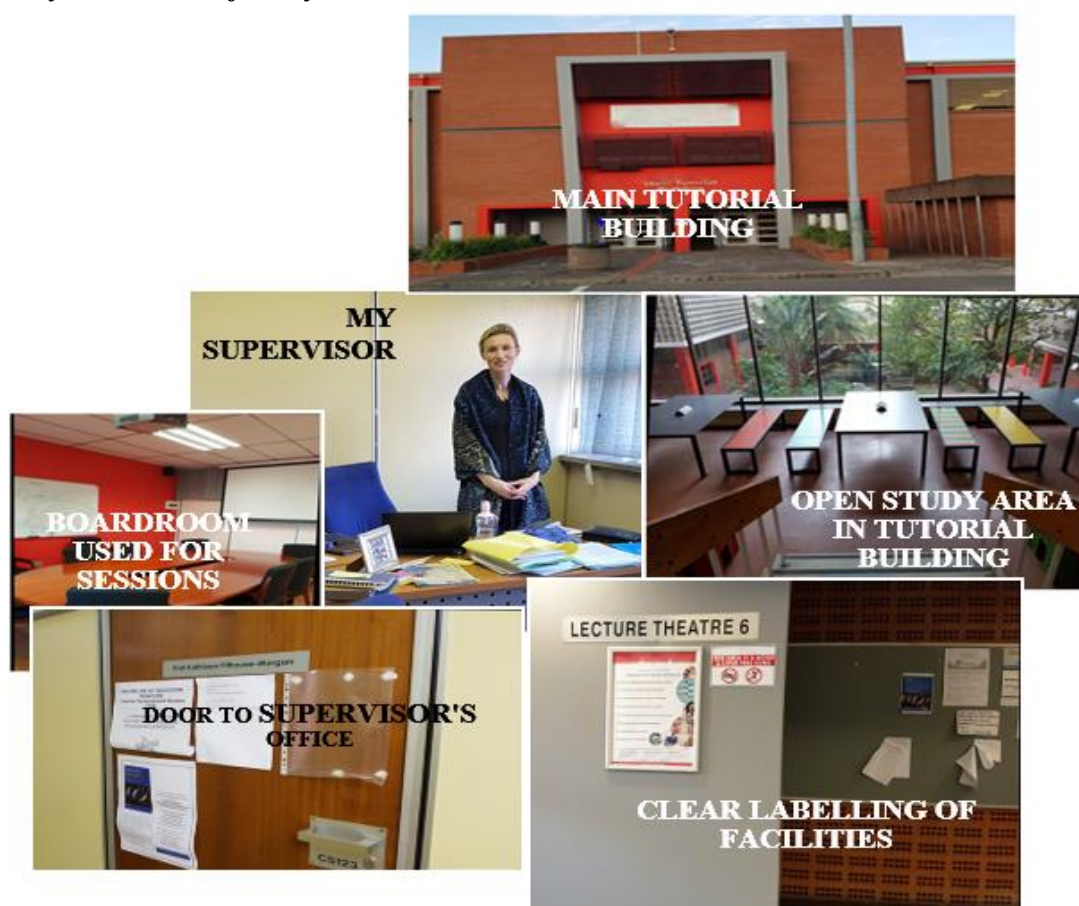


Figure 2.4: My supervisor in her office as well as other localities where I interacted with others in the main tutorial building (Photographs by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2018)

Because of the collaborative nature of the self-study approach, I visited my supervisor in her office in the main tutorial building about twice a week on average during my year of study leave. Being a naturally collaborative person, I found her unflagging support very helpful and encouraging. It eased the sense of isolation I might otherwise have felt.

The second setting for my study was the School of Education at a university in the KwaZulu- Natal Province (KZN) in South Africa where I was registered as a doctoral student. Here I attended supervisor-organised self-reflective support group sessions. During such sessions one or two of us would make a presentation to share the work we had done and were then critiqued by the group. I

also attended one-on-one sessions with my supervisor. This institution is well resourced as it has a well-stocked library and internet access, which are the main resources I needed as a student.

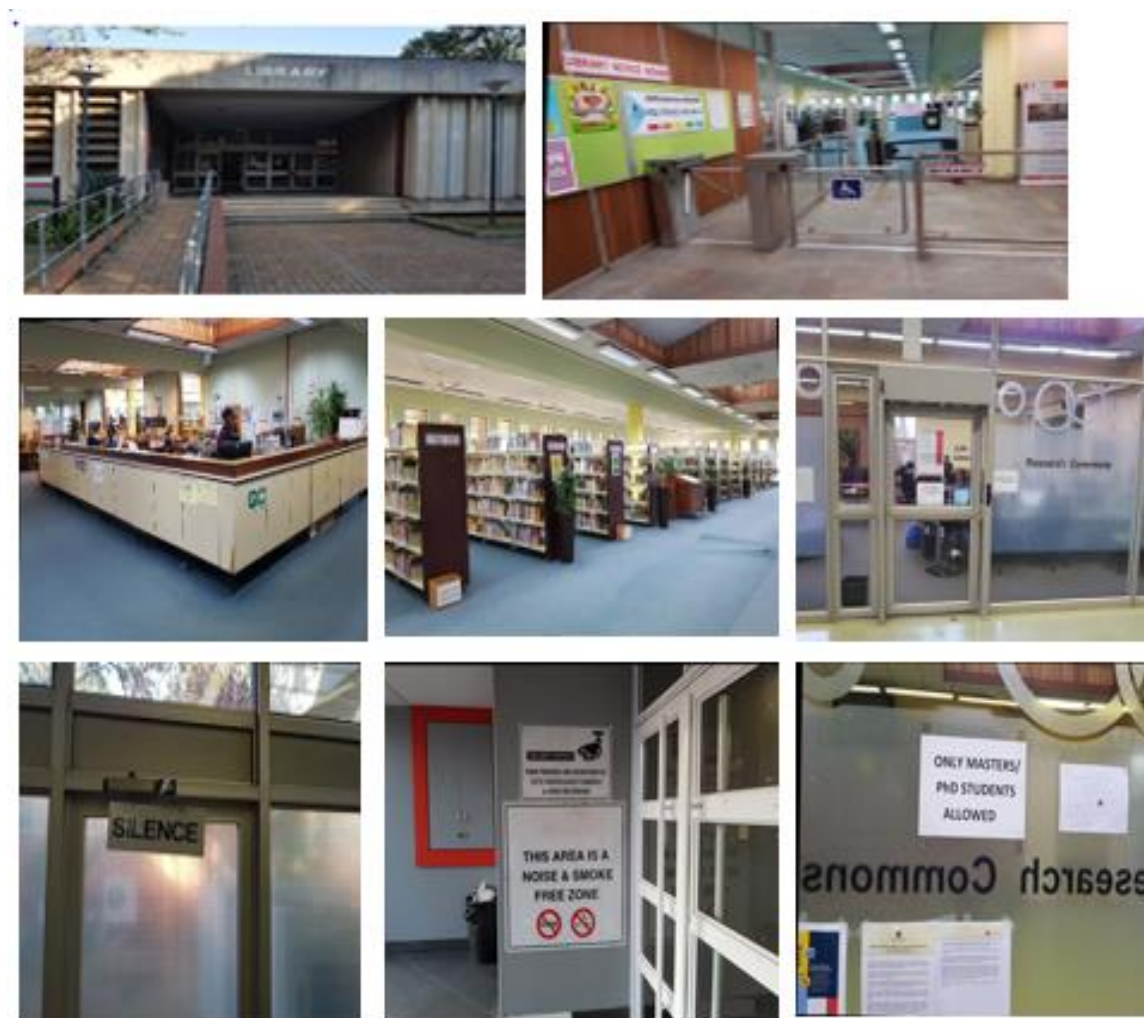


Figure 2.5: The library facilities that promote and support study at my institution of study
(Photographs by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2018)

At my institution of study, the library complex comprises a main library, the research commons for masters and doctoral students, as well as a computer laboratory for all students. The latter has 24-hour access by swiping one's student card. The library itself is well-stocked with books and there is access to the internet via Wi-Fi for registered students. The Wi-Fi is accessible everywhere on the campus and is very stable. The library is open for 24 hours except when the institution is not yet fully open at the beginning of the year when it opens and closes at office working times.

I went on study leave for a year and stayed in a residence at this university. I must say, the institution has some very user-friendly and study-promoting facilities, as mentioned above. The student cards are programmed for entrance to facilities at the student's level of study, so those not registered for masters and doctoral studies will not gain access to facilities such as the research

commons. I only needed to walk about 50 meters from my room in the residence to the research commons in the library.



Figure 2.6: Study desk in my room in the residence at the institution of study
(Photographs by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2018)

During the study leave period, I stayed in a university residence. I had a study area when I wanted to work in my room. Depicted on my desk are my faithful companions: my water bottle and my student card. The former was used for my continued health and the latter ensured my access to study areas on campus. On the notice board are items such as the cover of the book to which I contributed two chapters, a birthday card from one of my friends (I turned 60 while I was on leave), a message of love from my granddaughter, and a page with exercises to prevent stiffness that came with sitting for too long. The book cover was a reminder and motivator that I could do this, the birthday card was significant in that it confirmed that I was not too old to be a student, my granddaughter's message was to keep me in line (I wanted her to be proud of her granny) and the exercises were to remind me that I had to look after my health. The two photographs at the top were to remind me of my roots. The third one was pinned there to prevent it from disappearing.

2.2.2.4 My family settings

Other important settings were my house in Mthatha and my family home in Bulawayo where my parents had lived before Daddy passed away in 2006 and Mama in 2018. I distinguish between my house, which I provided for my children and which is now their home, and my family home, which was provided for my siblings and me by my parents.

2.2.3 *Self-study compelled me to work with others*

I was drawn to self-study by its collaborative nature because I thrive in collaborative learning situations. Samaras (2011) defines self-study as “critical collaborative inquiry” (p. 74). I understand that the word ‘critical’ may be interpreted in two ways, as (i) critical means very important and (ii) it denotes some critique from others (critical friends in my case). I found both these interpretations apt for my experiences because the collaborative aspect of self-study was the focus of my investigations (Moore & Carter-Hicks, 2014). My work thus needed to be critiqued in a constructive manner (Samaras, 2011). Critique also assumes a ‘collaborative’ aspect because others need to be involved to offer critique. LaBoskey (2004) affirms that “...self-study methodology is *interactive* at one or more points during the research process” (p. 821). Even though I was engaged in a self-study of my personal history and professional practice as I explored collaborative learning, I could not do it by myself. As I interacted with “colleagues near and far, with ... students, with the educational literature...” (p. 859) and with family and friends, I gained more insights and different perspectives that challenged mine from a positive and constructive point of view. Additionally, the Critical Friends Support Group that met at my institution of study in KwaZulu-Natal assisted me to avoid the isolation that tends to come with advanced studies (Moore & Carter-Hicks (2014).

Different categories of people made valuable inputs into my study. These were myself as the subject and the researcher, family members, my students (pre-service teachers) and my critical friends who I categorise differently according to their settings. Another layer of my support system is referred to as my More Knowledgeable Others, which is a term coined by Vygotsky (in Stolle, Frambough-Kritzer, Freese & Persson, 2018). As indicated above, I needed to collaborate with other people to gain alternative perspectives on my study (LaBoskey, 2004; Samaras, 2011).

2.2.3.1 Research participants

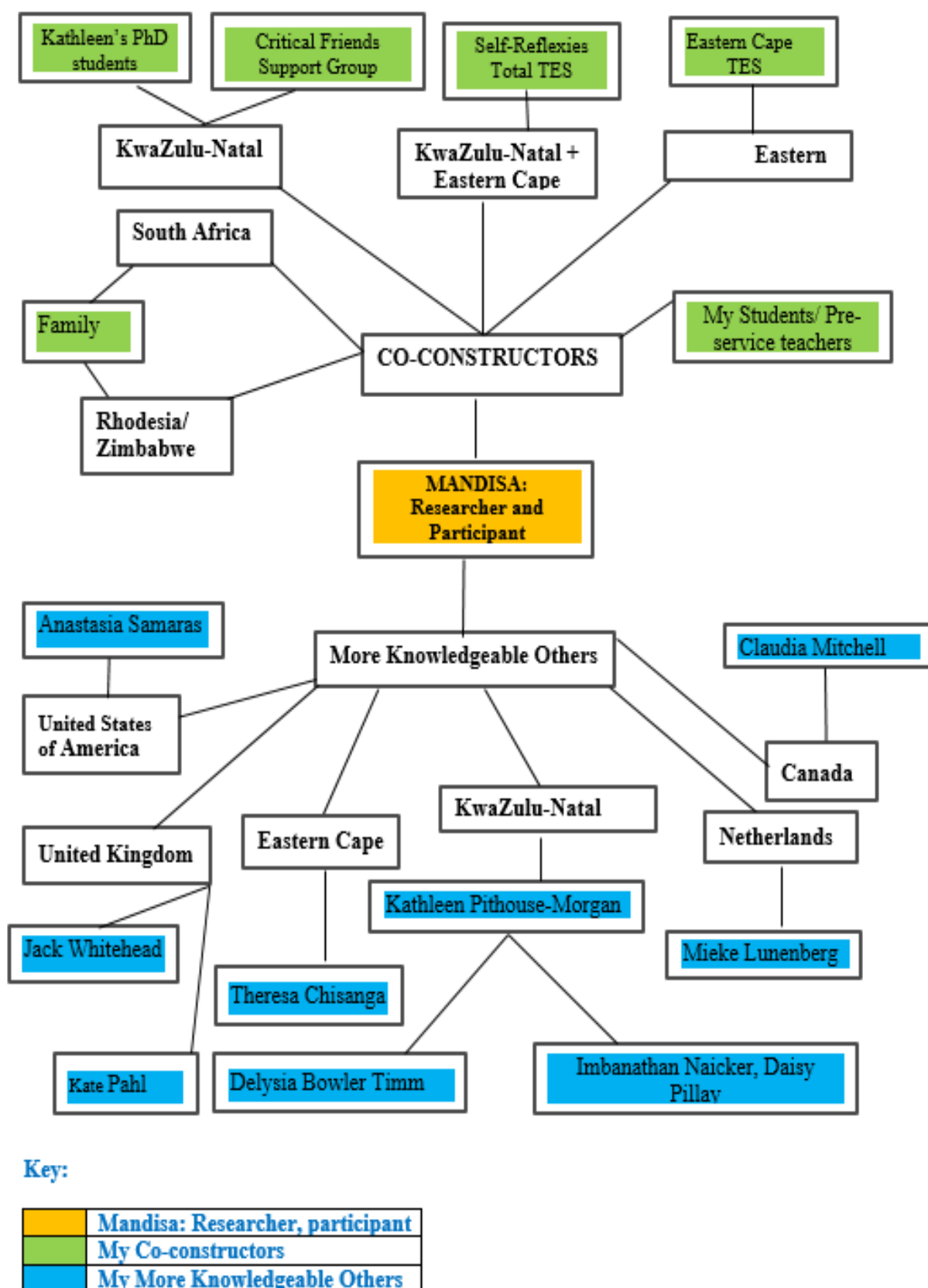


Figure 2.7: Diagrammatic presentation of the people who made valuable inputs into my study

The above figure indicates the different people who impacted my study and I also indicate their geographical locations. I played the dual role of being the researcher and participant as this was a self-study project. As much as it was about me, my study took the contexts where I interacted with other people into account. My focus necessitated that I should work with other people – my family, my students as well as my critical friends. Loughran (2004) explains that, in conducting a self-study, one should take cognisance of the fact that the researcher is the centre – the focus – of the study, and therefore she cannot treat the study as if she is an outsider looking in.

The self-study methodology is collaborative and I therefore needed my family and students for data generation and my critical friends to listen to my ideas and progress and give support by offering critique and help broadening my point of view.

2.2.3.2 My family as co-constructors of the study

My family unwittingly became the main participants in my efforts to address the first research question: *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* Thus the role each played in assisting me with the photographs and memories I collected were vital. The family photographs became my main artefacts and were symbols that helped me recall messages about my personal and professional history and prompt my memory for relevant past incidences when I learned from and with others (Mitchell et al., 2009; Mitchell et al., 2019; Samaras; 2011). Of the original core family of six (Mama, Daddy and my three siblings *Bhut'Sonwabo*, Xoli, Monde and I, Mandisa), only Xoli and I were left at the time of writing. Fortunately, Mama had been around for much of the journey and she and Xoli were the people I communicated with the most for clarity where my memory was unclear because they were, and remain, a major part of my life. Monde's children in Botswana also made sure I had access to my late mother's photo albums.

One of my nieces, *Bhut'Sonwabo* daughter, obliged by taking some photographs of objects that were at home in Bulawayo such as the book cabinet (Figure 3.4) that I also needed. One maternal sister had a photograph of us that we had seen on one of our trips to her home (Figure 6.7, the wedding photograph), and she willingly supplied it when I asked her to. My extended family from both Mama's and Daddy's sides were also involved in providing clarity and they gave permission to use the photographs. They thus appear in the photographs and I did not have to obscure their

faces. This group became participants as and when I needed their input or permission.

Towards the end of this project I unwittingly added a new critical friend, my cousin Zenzele Weda (Zen), S'omkhulu's son. He assisted me with the editing of my chapters. He came in as a mentor because our historical contexts are more or less the same as his mom and my dad were siblings. He read the chapters, asked questions, and generally removed many repetitions that were in my writing. He was also very encouraging and his comments were always constructive. I found him to be an honest critical friend.

2.2.3.3 My students as co-constructors of the study

The module I teach at my institution of work is Subject Methodology/Pedagogics. My main task is to prepare pre-service teachers to apply what they learnt in the module Principles and Theory of Education, among others, to their elective major subjects that they will teach once they have qualified as teachers. At the time of the study, third-year students in Curriculum Studies: Consumer Studies were participants for data collection. They were also co-constructors of the study as their inputs helped me to address the answer to my second research question: *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional practice?* I worked with different groups of these students as I teach the module over one year only. I faced many challenges as I had responsibilities as the Head of Department and classes were disrupted when students went on strike and learning was halted. I thus worked with participating students from 2015 to the end of the first semester in 2017. My classes generally varied in number between 45 and 60 per class over the three cohorts that I taught.

Conducting a self-study project of a teacher's practice can only be successful when she engages with her students in the learning and teaching situation (Loughran, 2004) as she clearly cannot detach herself from this context. Whenever a teacher has prepared and taught a lesson, it is expected that she will reflect on its effectiveness and challenges and devise a plan for improvement.

With my students' written permission, I audio recorded some class sessions such as the ones where they made collages and screenshots of their WhatsApp and Facebook posts. The outcomes are discussed later in this chapter as well as in Chapter Ten. At some point, some of the students

suggested that I was more concerned with my study than I was with their learning. I had to tread very delicately on this one. After requesting clarity, I understood that they were concerned about short deadlines for assignment submission and preparation for tests. I referred them back to the study guide and reminded them of the short time between the beginning of the year and the start of the second semester when they would be going out to schools for teaching practice. The semester seemed very short as there were frequent disruptions of classes. In the end, they understood that my expectations were logical and in line with curriculum requirements and we came to understand one another.

2.2.3.4 My critical friends as co-constructors of the study

One of the characteristics of self-study is that it is “a critically collaborative inquiry” (Samaras, 2011, p. 10, 74). Samaras (2011) further clarifies that the word critical is about the critique one receives from trusted colleagues and critical friends with whom one shares ideas and thoughts for co-construction of the research. Costa and Kallick (1993) and Shuck and Russell (2005) concur with Samaras (2011) on the role of critical friends, arguing that these are people who one feels comfortable with when ideas are presented as they will give positive and constructive feedback in the form of provocative questions and honest points of view. A critical friend shares one’s learning journey.

The relationship a researcher forges with a critical friend (or friends) is generally for the benefit of both parties as one shares one’s work and insights and the friend provides support by listening and questioning for elucidation and better understanding. Critical friends listen to the presenter’s perspective and in this way they learn while also reflecting and offering constructive critique. Critical friends can also direct one’s thoughts to a previously unconsidered aspect and they may make suggestions that could assist the researcher to end up with the best possible piece of work that would not have been possible without their critical inputs (Hiralaal, Matebane, & Pithouse-Morgan, 2018; Samaras, 2011). What these authors describe was also my experience of my critical friends most of the time (Chapters Four to Ten).



Figure 2.8: Critical friends across the three higher education institutions involved in the Total TES project (Photograph by V. Msiza, Pinetown, December 2015)

I had discussions with critical friends from the three institutions that were part of the Transformative Educational Studies (TES) project. My institution of work and my institution of the study were involved in the project. This meant I had the best of both worlds. Seated, from 2nd left to second-last, are four of the More Knowledgeable Others who led the workshop (l-r): Theresa Chisanga, Thenjiwe Meyiwa, Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, and Delysia Bowler Timm. Among those of us who are standing are two More Knowledgeable Others: Daisy Pillay and Inbanathan Naicker.

I was part of supervisor sessions almost every month. During these sessions the group of PhD students, supervised by Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan (Kathleen's PhD students), met with her. We engaged in reflective activities that challenged us to think about the process of our studies. An example I remember was how to juggle our time between our study and our work while engaging in intensive reading as well. Another time we shared our writing processes. I understood these sessions were for us to listen to one another as we shared our perspectives and gained new insights into ways of coping, particularly as our colleagues had found these to be beneficial for them. The sessions were also meant to assist us to achieve our common goal of improving our practice. This process is supported by Quate (2004, as cited in Moore & Carter-Hicks, 2014) and Samaras (2011), who argue that successful critical friend groups help members to become invested in their own learning as well as that of others. These supervisor sessions were followed by a Critical Friends' Group session for any who could make it, mainly from the two institutions in KZN. Kathleen coordinated and facilitated these sessions. Moore and Carter-Hicks (2014) confirm the role played by Kathleen in preparation for my presentations to the Critical Friends Support Group as they aver

that the facilitator (Kathleen) would meet with the presenter (me) beforehand in preparation for a presentation. These meetings, which were preceded by communications by email, always made me trust my story and my presentation and I always elicited a lot of discussion from this support group. Their comments and insights undoubtedly broadened my perspective on my study. Those with other supervisors were guided by them, but the coordination of and the communication among the group were always facilitated by Kathleen. During these sessions, one participant would share what he/she was working on and an in-depth discussion would follow. These discussions were always lively, positive and constructive as the critical friends commented, made suggestions, and even asked questions where they needed clarity. These sessions were audio-recorded and sent to all the attendees. I would transcribe the recording of my presentation and use the input to first reflect on and then to improve the section of the work I had presented. I present some of the feedback from these sessions in different chapters of this thesis.

We had regular Eastern Cape TES group meetings at my institution of work although the time schedules were a challenge as the two campus sites do not share a common timetable. Moore and Carter-Hicks (2014, p. 11) also found that their worst challenge was that of “...scheduling meetings, as we were all from different departments [and had] different teaching and departmental rhythms, and finding a regular common time for the group to meet proved to be nearly impossible”. In my case, the full attendance of meetings was compromised as some members from the University of Mthatha usually had to forfeit their classes to attend the Eastern Cape TES meetings. Currently, finding common times to attend meetings is still a work in progress as we are developing our own self-reflective capacity.

I was fortunate to have a ‘big brother’ as my mentor and critical friend at my institution of work. This person was Sookdev Rajkaran (Raj) who, like me, did not know much about collaboration among critical friends. However, once we had developed a solid working relationship he always showed interest in my study and would call me to check how I was progressing. Sometimes we would meet and I would share my highs and lows with him and he was always very encouraging. However, because we were located at different sites of the campus, it was not easy to meet as often as I would have liked. The few times we met, he would listen to me as I shared my understanding of my study, ask some questions, share some of his experiences, and then give advice – particularly on time management. He was a true critical friend. I suspect our inexperience and my busy

schedule made it difficult for us to develop our critical friendship to its full potential.

When preparing to present some parts of my personal history to my critical friends, I realised that preparing to share my story orally triggered more memories. I felt this also linked with the aspect of photo-elicitation, whereby viewing of a photograph by more than one person tends to lead to the story behind it (Mitchell et al., 2019; Richard & Lahman, 2015; Roberts, 2011). This was borne out in a comment by Kathleen:

“...it's interesting for me as a supervisor, because Mandisa has written this story, although the things that she included in the oral storytelling weren't there in the original. So now she needs to go back and pull in the things that she shared here with us. It was so interesting, what she left out of the original.”

This Critical Friends Support Group meeting took place on 6 May 2018 after I had made a presentation on the collaborative learning I had experienced at Mayitshe Farm, my paternal grandparents' place (Chapter Six).

While I learned a lot from my interactions with my critical friends both as a presenter and participant, I found that some friends also learned from me. This phenomenon is confirmed by Shuck and Russell (2005) who state that learning in a critical friendship relationship has a two-way benefit. I remember that once, after I had made a presentation, Dudu (who was still in the early stages of her study) responded as follows to Kathleen's question if my presentation had given her any ideas for her explorations:

“Ya, I can see how, because I was thinking of how to write my reflection of my history ... I'll have to start with where I come from. What I am doing now before I move on to a new approach I want to transcend or transit to. So I was just not sure of how to do it, so now as she tells the story, I'm learning something.”

This comment was made during a Critical Friends' Support Group on 6 May 2018 after I had made a presentation about my experiences of collaborative learning at Mayitshe Farm, my paternal grandparents' place. Another critical friend, Thoko, responded as follows:

“Yes, I'm learning something here, like all the things I've taken for granted because my story is more or less the same as Mandisa's. I have been taking all those things for granted. I did not know that I could also include them in my study ... like Samaras in 2011 talks about those shapers, those things that happened, the trigger moments, the nodal moments in your life, that shape your personal history, your identity. Thank you.”

This Critical Friends' Support Group meeting was held on 6 May 2018 after I had made a presentation about my collaborative learning experiences at Mayitshe Farm, my paternal grandparents' place.

The foregoing critical friends' comments took my mind back to my beginnings and further reinforced the value of the critical friends' relationships for me.

2.2.3.5 More Knowledgeable Others

I had another layer of friends that Vygotsky (in Stolle, Frambough-Kritzer, Freese & Persson, 2018, p. 1) refers to as “More Knowledgeable Other(s)”. These people are those who know enough (for instance about self-study) to provide leadership. Among these I counted my supervisor, Prof Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, the other supervisors I interacted with in the self-reflective support group meetings (Profs Inba Naicker and Daisy Pillay, and Dr Lungi Masinga), as well as those from other countries with whom I interacted personally at workshops (face-to-face and via Skype) and impersonally through their authorship.

My supervisor, Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, was also a More Knowledgeable Other as she listened to my ideas on a one-to-one basis, asked some thought-provoking questions, and always encouraged and guided me where she felt it was necessary. Self-study requires collaborative strategies and one always needs to share one's ideas that are questioned or challenged so that one can stretch one's mind to think more broadly and deeply (Hiralaal, Matebane, & Pithouse-Morgan, 2018; LaBoskey, 2004; Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015; Samaras, 2011). This sums up the role that Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, and indeed my other More Knowledgeable Others, played in my study.

The leader of the Eastern Cape TES, Prof Theresa Chisanga, was another More Knowledgeable Other (Figure 2.7) along my doctoral journey. Both she and a former coordinator, Nkosinathi Sotshangane (Sotsha), who has since left the university (see Figure 2.3), led us in the support group

meetings where I always felt that my efforts were appreciated. After critical friends and all the other support group meetings I always felt invigorated and encouraged to make more effort.

Another More Knowledgeable Other I had contact with was Anastasia Samaras whose role I have mentioned above (Figure 2.2). I met Anastasia Samaras, who is from the United States of America and an authority on self-study, in July 2014. This was the first year of my registration as a doctoral student. She facilitated a workshop on going public with our self-study research under the auspices of the Transformative Education/al Studies programme for self-study students and supervisors. I came away from that workshop with a deeper understanding of self-study. Anastasia Samaras is a prolific researcher in this field and I had the pleasure of being exposed to many of her works, as discussed earlier.



Figure 2.9: Photograph A: Claudia Mitchell in action. She was one of the facilitators of a workshop in December 2015. Picture B: She was at the book launch in 2017. (Photographs A and B by event photographer and Naleli Moruri-Mafa respectively).

Claudia Mitchell from Canada was another of my More Knowledgeable Other friends. We interacted with her via Skype in December 2014. Then, in December 2015, she attended a workshop in person and was available for face-to-face sessions more than once after that. She is an expert self-study researcher in the field of artefacts, particularly photographs.

During my interactions with Claudia Mitchell I learned that there are very few personal objects and photographs that have no significance in terms of one's learning. This gave me confidence that the learning I had experienced and that is depicted by all the objects/artefacts that I had grown

up with would add intrinsic value to my study. It was mostly due to her research publications that I ended up putting together this thesis in the form of an extended curated photo album. Her publications are also discussed by Mitchell and Allnutt (2008), Mitchell and Pithouse-Morgan (2014), and Mitchell and Weber (1999).



Figure 2.10: *Kate Pahl at the Objects Inquiry workshop in 2016 (Photograph by event photographer, 2016)*

We attended a workshop on Object Inquiry that was facilitated by Kate Pahl and Claudia Mitchell in February 2016. The workshop was about the importance of artefacts and how we could make meaning of them for the benefit of our students and our studies. I remember presenting a collage depicting some objects from my personal history. One of the photographs was of a Singer sewing machine that many of the participants had grown up with. Due to this symposium I was motivated to contribute Chapter Two to a book written by my critical friends, Makie Kortjass, Thokozani Ndahleni, and Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, our supervisor. This book was published in 2017 (Figure 3.8). My contribution was about Mama's Kelvinator stove (Chapter Four).



Figure 2.11: Mieke Lunenberg (at the back, second from right) at a workshop she conducted at my institution of work in November 2014 (Photograph by M. August 2014)

Mieke Lunenberg lives in the Netherlands and became one of my More Knowledgeable Others when she volunteered her services and conducted a workshop on self-study at my institution of work in 2015. She worked on a Nelson Mandela history project and Theresa, another More Knowledgeable Other, seized the opportunity to invite her to conduct the workshop for us. We also invited local district education officers to the workshop.

The fact that Mieke Lunenberg volunteered to present the workshop free of charge was an eye-opener for me. It was a demonstration of the principle of *Ubuntu* (Chapter One) which I feel encapsulates what critical friends do. They make input and give critique freely whilst showing genuine care for others. At the end of the day, this is what the critical friends' relationship is about. Mieke's workshop helped academics at my institution of work to better understand what self-study entails.



Figure 2.12: *Jack Whitehead, another of my More Knowledgeable Others* (Photograph supplied by J Whitehead)

I came into contact with Jack Whitehead at a workshop held in December 2014. This was a special session where we launched a special issue of the journal *Perspectives in Education and Educational Research for Social Change*. Jack attended via Skype. From Jack I learned that all research texts are important. Jack Whitehead is an expert in the field of Autoethnography and the application of living theory. He discussed the special issue journal that was launched at the TES workshop and his comments on each contribution to this special issue were incisive and thought-provoking, which demonstrated that everyone's voice is important enough to be listened to.

In conclusion, one factor that I noticed and appreciated was how supportive my More Knowledgeable Others were when I contacted them for their consent to mention them by name and include photographs of them in my thesis.

2.2.3.6 Ethical considerations

The importance of adhering to ethical considerations in research can never be over-emphasised. Cuenca (2020) defines ethics as “moral principles that govern the conduct of an activity” (p. 3). In terms of my study, I understood this to mean that, in telling my story, I should be guided by my conscience which should be governed by my moral principles, and these principles needed to apply when I worked on the extended curated photo album. Ellis (2007) argues that writing about ourselves invariably involves other people's stories too, and this may put them at risk of being recognised by those who read what we write, which could make them uncomfortable. Various

researchers have identified different kinds of ethical considerations and I discuss those principles that directly affected my curation of the extended photo album.

Informed consent

According to Ellis (2007) and Mitchell et al. (2019), adhering to the principle of informed consent means obtaining the consent of those in our stories in such a way that they fully understand what they are giving consent to and that they understand the possible consequences. I thus wrote emails, letters, sent WhatsApp messages, called, and spoke directly to the people whose images are depicted in this extended curated photo album. I sought consent for my students' faces to appear in photographs such as the screenshots from Facebook posts (Chapter Ten). Richard and Lahman (2015) and Roberts (2011) emphasise the importance of consent when photographs of people are exposed to the public domain. Requesting my students' permission helped to establish a positive attitude between us as co-constructors of the study and they respected the fact that I recognised that they had the wisdom to make their own decisions (Mitchell et al., 2019). Furthermore, I gave my students the power to agree to or to refuse my request and I allowed them to withdraw their participation if, at any point, they felt compelled to do so. Cuenca (2020) emphasises the importance that participants, particularly students, should feel that they also have the power to voice their feelings at any point or refuse that their photographs be used in a thesis.

Procedural ethics

Guillemin and Gillam (2004) refer to "procedural ethics" (p. 262) which requires that informed consent is obtained and that participants' privacy and safety are protected (Ellis, 2007; Mitchell et al., 2019). However, although I obtained consent from my participants, I still had to protect those whom I perceived to be vulnerable by not mentioning their names. For example, for the WhatsApp posts (Chapter Ten) I use a pseudonym for one student who did not want her identity to be revealed.

Ethical truth

The principle of ethical truth refers to truthful expressions of my memories – thus what and how I remembered and felt about events from my past had to be honest. I was thus always conscious of not veering away from what I felt either comfortable or uncomfortable about and I had to be truthful about my conscience. Although others might feel differently, I tell my story in this thesis from my perspective and am truthful about my "motives, intentions, and attempts to be accurate" (Nash, 2004, p. 137). The ethical truth principle was vital in the process of curating the photo

album. Nash (2004) asserts that the researcher's narrative should put the narrator at the centre of the self-study. On the other hand, Ellis (2007) warns that the narrator might sometimes not be as open as she could be when she is worried about hurting the feelings of people she writes about. I dealt with this when my sister wondered about the truthfulness of my writing, and I assured her that it was all about my memories and my story.

Relational ethics

I also applied what Ellis (2007) refers to as “relational ethics” (p. 4). This means obtaining informed consent not just from one's relatives, but also from all the people one interacts with throughout the study. In this way some form of relationship always develops. Therefore, while I wanted to protect the identity of members of my family in the personal history narrative, I also felt that, without showing their faces in the photographs and their names in the narrative, my story would lose a lot of its meaning and impact. I therefore simply told them that I would use photographs of them and anyone who minded had to let me know. Fortunately, no one minded, and they went so far as to say that they wanted copies of my thesis so that they could enjoy reading about themselves in my life.

Cuenca (2020) argues that one needs to treat the ethical aspect of the critical friendship relationship with care. I thus requested the consent of my current and former colleagues and critical friends to use the photographs in which they appear. If I could not obtain the permission of some, their faces are obscured in this thesis. An example is the photograph above of people with Mieke Lunenberg (Figure 2.11).

Emotional ethics

This element of ethical awareness is mentioned by Mitchell et al. (2019). I understand it to refer to the emotions that come with data collection in personal situations. When there is some interaction between the researcher and other people in the study, sometimes emotions will be stirred. For instance, I remember when I was in Bulawayo with Xoli, some cousins and *Malum'uDumisani* in 2019, I read to them what I had written about the time we had spent at Mama's home in Qhoboshane outside Sterkspruit (Chapter Six). One cousin, whose little brother had passed away when we were visiting in 1963 and Daddy had made the coffin to bury the baby, called me later to thank me for reminding her about that time. She further mentioned that listening to me reading about this had made her sad as she had almost forgotten about the incident, but she

was determined to find the grave and put up a tombstone for her brother. I could sense that my cousin had mixed feelings about the death of her brother after so many years. First, she was happy I had reminded her, but then she was sad because she had almost forgotten the loss of her little brother (she was 11 at the time). However, she channeled her sadness to achieve something positive for herself and her surviving siblings. She wanted closure, much like Sifiso Magubane's friends in Mitchell et al. (2019). I was not sure how to respond to her sadness but was glad she had figured it out for herself and would deal positively with her emotions. This is an example of what Mitchell et al. (2019) describe as emotional ethics.

2.2.4 Trustworthiness

Self-study research should be conducted in a manner that is "transparent and systematic" (Samaras, 2011, p. 80). Wolcott (2001, in Samaras, 2011) explains transparency as giving trustworthiness to the study through writing in a manner that has enough detail and that clearly shows the reader the steps and processes that were followed. Feldman (2003) suggests that one needs to provide all the details of how the data were collected and clarify the research methods used. Supplementary material as evidence of the participants and data collection tools should be presented in annexures. I heeded these guidelines as I constructed the extended curated photo album by using the data elicited from the photographs throughout the whole project.

The nature of self-study methodology requires that the investigation be critically collaborative as it is a personal inquiry. Its aim is improved learning through a transparent and systematic process using diverse methods. This results in the generation of knowledge that is then presented to the broader learning community. If these requirements are adhered to, the study will, according to Ritter and Hayler (2019), demonstrate trustworthiness. This was achieved as the methodological processes that I followed strictly adhered to the academic and research requirements of self-study research.

2.3 Conclusion

The main purpose of my self-study was to learn about my practice as a teacher educator through an exploration of my personal and professional histories and to find out how my understanding of collaborative learning had been shaped by these experiences. I thus described the self-study methodology and how I applied it in my use of the extended curated photo album that was the arts-

based foundation of my research. I view the drafting of a dress pattern as a metaphor for this study and I used this metaphor to explain how I understood and approached self-study research methodology. Owing to an intensive literature review and exposure to expert academics in the field, I learnt what self-study research entails and thus positioned myself both as a researcher and a participant in this project. I understood that the study would in essence be about *my* learning and practice but that the outcomes would also contribute to the knowledge and insights of other stakeholders, particularly as the study thesis underscores the outcomes of established self-study projects while it will also serve as a sound platform for future similar studies in education and other fields.

The discourse in this chapter described self-study research as a methodology that is deeply personal. As the researcher, I was thus positioned pivotally in the study and viewed the data from my history as well as my personal and work environments where I gained experiences and insights that elicited learning. Self-study leads to improved practice and is a clear and orderly research process that results in the production of new knowledge which is then shared on relevant platforms so as to make a difference. I learned that, to successfully conduct self-study research, I needed to work with others for the purpose of learning with and from them. My co-constructors were therefore my family, my undergraduate students, my fellow post-graduate students working under the same supervisor, the critical friends' group that met often in my institution of study, the self-reflective study group that spanned the three institutions involved in the transformative education/al studies project (TES), and the Eastern Cape TES group at my institution of work. I also learned from more knowledgeable others – i.e., those who knew more about self-study than I and who took charge of sessions where I was a learner rather than a co-constructor. The intricate web-like connection of all these role-players is reflected in Figure 2.7 above.

The literature states unequivocally that self-study is collaborative in nature as working together with significant others helps the researcher to address the issues of trustworthiness and transparency (see section 2.2.4). As a researcher-participant I was cognisant of the fact that I had to avoid navel-gazing and that I had to share my work with other people who became the co-constructors of my knowledge and understanding of collaborative learning. The inputs of these people helped me to focus on my planned strategies for creating my extended curated photo album to further enhance my learning. In this process I learned that self-study requires the use of multiple methods, which will be discussed in Chapter Three. The approach of this study was essentially qualitative because an arts-based method was applied. For this purpose, I collected photographs as

artefacts of my past and I scrutinised them to reflect upon the learning that had shaped me as a child, student, teacher and teacher educator. I engaged in memory recall as well as dialogue with significant others about events and insights that were elicited by the photographs that appear in the extended curated photo album that is presented in this thesis.

CHAPTER THREE: *IINDLELA ZOPHANDO* (RESEARCH METHODS)

3.1 Introduction

I creating an extended curated photo album as the main data collection and analysis source for this self-study project that aimed to explore collaborative learning with the purpose of improving my practice as a university educator. In Chapter Two I discussed the self-study methodology that I employed and explained my understanding of the applicability of this methodology to address the research questions. I discussed the research settings in which this study was embedded and referred to my approach to elicit the contributions of my family, members at my institutions of work and study, my research participants, and myself as a pivotal researcher-participant. I also looked at the ethical issues I adhered to and affirmed the aspects that ensured the trustworthiness of the study.

In this chapter I describe how I approached the research by means of an elucidation of the methods that I employed to explore my personal history in both personal and professional contexts. I then explain how I sought to respond to my two research questions: *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* and *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional history?* I discuss the challenges I encountered in this process and explain how I conducted the analysis and interpretation of the data in order to evaluate the findings meaningfully. Tidwell and Jónsdóttir (2020) succinctly summarise the methods I needed to apply in three points of emphasis. These methods pertain to: (i) the data that I collected to assist me in looking for answers to my research questions; (ii) the presentation of a clear discussion on how I generated and collated the data; and (iii) an explanation of how the data were analysed.

3.2 Personal History Self-Study

Just like a dressmaker adapts a pattern for a particular size and needs, I refer to my personal history as a process of altering the pattern of my life to fit every new situation. To support this process, I used the personal history approach in this self-study project to gain understanding of my learning and, through reflection, to improve my teaching practice. More specifically, I illuminate the times in my personal history when I learned with and from other people (LaBoskey, 2004; Samaras, 2011).

To illustrate my learning experiences, I engaged in an extensive review of related literature and determined that the method of curating an extended photo album (hereafter referred to as the photo

album) would be the most suitable. ‘Personal history self-study method’ is a term coined by Samaras, Hicks, and Berger (2004) who assert that, “...through a personal history self-study approach, professors and their students can reconstruct significant life events to inform them of their professional identity formation and to help them make meaning of their pedagogy and the connections of their practice to theory” (p. 905). Krall (1998, p. 467) endorses this definition although she refers to this method as “personal history as educational research”. I argue that these definitions emphasise the importance of my personal history in my quest to respond to the research questions that fuelled this inquiry into my learning about collaborative learning. By creating the photo album, I reconstructed events from my past where I learned with others. This photo album therefore helped me to elicit reflections of my experiences that became the bedrock of my professional practice. This learning was thus deemed the foundation from which I could improve my professional teaching practice in a tertiary education setting. Nash (2004) concurs with the foregoing researchers on the importance of “personal stories” (p. 2) in facilitating one’s connection to those that one teaches or serves. He adds that our stories reflect “symbols of God, ethics...justice...truth ...trust” (p. 2), to mention a few. Nash (2004) further avers that such a study “...puts the *self* of the scholar in the front and centre” of the project, thus concurring with Samaras (2011) that self-study is personal.

Samaras et al. (2004) also refer to identity formation, which is a view that takes me back to the sociocultural theory of learning (Chapter One) that states that one is always located in a space that has its own culture. Thus one’s professional space is such a location (Gerhard and Mayer-Smith, 2008). Skerrett (2008) refers to this positioning of the teacher as a ‘biography’ (p. 143) which she further explains as “self-study of [one’s] professional and cultural biography and identity”. To me, the cultural biography and identity that she mentions also link back to the sociocultural learning theory which, in turn, links me to my culture and identity-setting (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). Skerrett's (2008) confirms that any person – be it a learner, student or educator – is a complete being whose different aspects need attention.

From the foregoing I concluded that the personal history self-study method requires looking back into one’s history/autobiography with a view of understanding oneself. This means that one will enhance the continuous consolidation of one’s identity which, in turn, will be beneficial for a teacher who knows herself and is generally confident enough to use this self-knowledge in her professional practice for personal improvement that will benefit her learners/students. Personal history self-study links with the socio-cultural perspective on learning (Chapter One) as it involves

the culture, ethics and values that one grew up with. These elements in turn influence how the educator/teacher conducts herself in a professional setting. This study approach thus unearths the teacher's past during which she always learnt collaboratively with others.

In the process of exploring my personal history by creating a photo album, there was an overlap with other methods such as the art-based self-study method which encompasses the collection of such artefacts as photographs, collages, poems and metaphors. I also used memory work, journaling, audio recordings and transcriptions of my discussion sessions with others as methods of tracing my personal history. This overlap is acknowledged by Samaras (2011), but she emphasises that the personal history self-study method is the overarching approach that is most discernibly recognised. The processes I followed are discussed in the next sections.

3.3 How did I respond to the two research questions using a photo album?

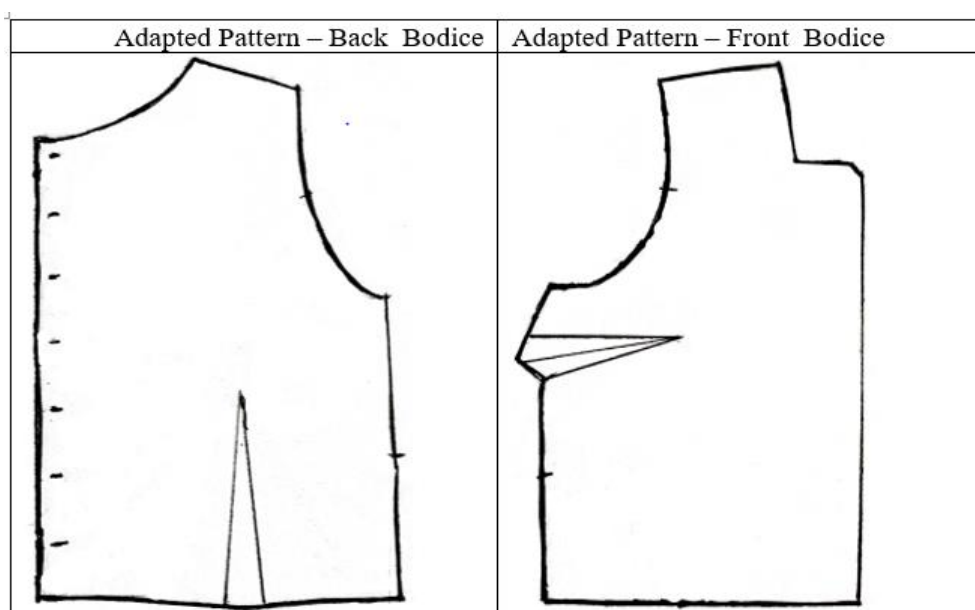


Figure 3.1: Adapted pattern of the bodice of a dress (Drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri)

Using the dress pattern metaphor (Chapter Two), I compare the adaptations that a dressmaker makes to basic pattern to enhance the final look of the bodice of a dress to the other methods that I employed in seeking to respond to the research questions. I had adapted the pattern to my size when I identified the personal history study method as the main self-study research method that I applied. The other methods (enhancements) are discussed below with the extended curated photo album being the main frame that carried the whole study.

In the previous chapter I compared the drafting of a basic dress pattern to the self-study methodology which is what I engaged in as the basis of my study. For instance, once the basic pattern had been adapted to fit my size, I made more (sometimes extensive) adaptations to enhance the appearance of the dress. I might have altered the position and length of the darts, or I might have added a collar and sleeves and some decorative aspects such as a false pocket or pleats to some parts of the dress pattern. In the same manner, I constantly improved my learning from childhood to the point where I commenced this study with the aim of improving my professional practice to better assist my students in the future. This chapter explains the methodology that I employed to achieve this aim.

3.3.1 The extended curated photo album (referred to as the photo album)

I order the meanings elicited by the photo album in Chapters Four to Ten where I make use of “visual art-based self-study methods” to enhance the narratives of my personal history (Samaras 2011, p. 100). Mitchell et al. (2019) refer to the use of photographs for learning as “artful memory-work” (p. 35). When I explored my personal history, I found that many memories came easily to mind when I used photographs, memory drawings and other visuals that I utilised as data sources. Samaras and Freese (2006, pp. 65, 73) describe different forms that the reflections from recalled events could take. Among these forms are journaling, audiotaped discussions, storytelling, memory work, education-related life-histories, photography and poetry. I was thus motivated to utilise as many of these forms as possible in my study.

Most families of my generation have photo albums where their photographs are safely kept and accessed when family members wish to do so. There is usually someone in the family who takes the trouble to order these photographs and this person sometimes adds information about the photograph at the back or as a caption below or on the side of the photograph in an album. Such information may reveal who appear/s in the photograph and when and where it was taken. Mitchell and Weber (1999) refer to this information as “verbal interpretation [that] comes in the form of captions or inscriptions written on the backs of photographs or beside them in an album” (p. 79). In my family, Mama was the main custodian –or ‘keeper’ – of the photographs. Mitchell and Allnut (2008) explain that a keeper is “a person who is responsible for organizing and arranging [photographs], adding transcriptions, dating, and so on” (p. 257). Mitchell and Pithouse-Morgan

(2014), Mitchell et al. (2009) and Mitchell et al. (2019) refer to this process as ‘curating’ as it is done by a curator who organises a collection of photographs or artefacts.

I adopted Mama’s role as I curated the extensive photo album that is presented in this thesis. Using available photographs, I traced my personal history and highlighted episodes of collaborative learning that had occurred in personal and professional settings. According to Mitchell and Allnut (2008), Mitchell, Weber, and Pithouse (2009) and Mitchell and Pithouse-Morgan (2014), I was the curator who put this extended photo album together. Moreover, I ensured that the photographs would tell my story by adding text to explain the context of each photograph and what I had learnt from or with others. To ensure that the photo album is coherent, I embedded it in the personal self-study approach as I told my story. I refer to the photo album as ‘extended’ (or extensive) because I inserted as much information about the photographs and other images as possible, and this is therefore no ordinary photo album (Mitchell & Allnut, 2009). I also highlight knowledge that is “generally provided by the stories told while [the] photographs are shown or viewed” in this album (Mitchell & Weber, 1999, p. 80).

3.3.1.1 The photographs

Photographs were the most useful artefacts as they illustrated what I wanted to convey about my personal history in the most authentic way. I could trace events through a timeline (Mitchell & Weber, 1999) and make meaning of significant encounters on my life journey while loosely making use of Samaras’ prompts for the analysis of artefacts in self-study research (2011, p. 105). The photographs that I used were my main data sources (Samaras, 2011) as I reconstructed my personal history of times when I learnt collaboratively as I grew up, studied, and became the teacher that I am today. I also engaged in memory work in conjunction with using the photographs. I used mainly family photographs as a trigger to recall memories of events of collaborative learning (Mitchell et al., 2019; Mitchell & Webber, 1999; Richard & Lahman, 2015). Roberts (2011) adds that when we look at photographs we not only recall the events they depict, but we also engage in some reflection on the broader memory associated with the photographs, which is what I did.

Most of the photographs that I used in this album were what Mitchell and Pithouse-Morgan (2014), Richard and Lahman (2015) and Roberts (2011) describe as ‘archival’ or ‘found’ photographs as they had already been taken and had been found in photo albums or a shoebox (Figure. 3.2). Other photographs based on my memory of events were mostly taken by myself and my niece, Vuvu,

who lived with Mama at the time of writing. All the photographs in my album are contextual as they were chosen for their relevance to my research, as proposed by Mitchell et al. (2019) and Richard and Lahman (2015). I also took screenshots of digital images using my cellular phone for their relevance to social network communication with my students. Thus WhatsApp and Facebook photographs are also used (Chapter Ten). I found that my students used these platforms spontaneously and effortlessly. They were honest and freely shared their sentiments. My students also initiated individual WhatsApp communications and seemed to feel more comfortable using these than face-to-face communications.



Figure 3.2: The photo albums and shoebox in which photographs were found (Photograph by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2018)

Because the only photographs I had prior to the study were those that I had taken or collected after we had moved to Mthatha in 1984, and I needed images from before that time as well. I thus borrowed albums from my family which they willingly lent to me. The photograph above shows the collection of albums and a shoebox that I sourced whenever I needed a photograph. By riffling through the photos, I sometimes found more than I had expected and this process triggered many memories of collaborative learning. Some of the albums came from Bulawayo in December 2016. Other albums came from Botswana from Mimi (Monde's daughter) via Pretoria and Nomtha (Xoli's daughter), and to Durban via Naleli (my daughter) and eventually to me. I also sourced photos from my own photo albums and a shoebox. I roped in my sisters, Itu and Xoli via WhatsApp, and they contributed from Cape Town and Manchester respectively. Creating the extended album was thus a collaborative effort.

I am a firm believer that everything happens for a reason. When I was preparing to go home to Mama over the Christmas holidays in 2013, she requested that I should bring her some photo albums so that she could put more photographs in them that were at home for safekeeping. We looked at and sorted these photographs into three categories: family photos, photographs from her

and Daddy's days as teachers, and those depicting community engagements (mainly the YWCA). Engaging in this process with Mama and my nieces helped me to remember which photographs would be most relevant for the different stories I needed to tell once I started the narratives of my personal history.

When my siblings and I grew up, we took posing for photographs in our stride as Daddy, and later Mama, loved taking photographs. Daddy had a tripod for his camera and he always activated the time delay function which gave him time to move into position when he took family photographs or those of himself. This practice is mentioned by Roberts (2011) where he discusses self-portraits. I also learned how to take photographs when I was a teenager and I still enjoy doing so. When we were teenagers, Mama and Daddy gave each of us a photo album and some group family and individual photographs to put into the album. When I was married and moved from my country of birth (Zimbabwe) to South Africa, I brought my album with me. As I often moved, I left it locked up in a trunk at the first home that we had built in a rural village in Matatiele when we moved to Mthatha in 1984. A relative-in-law requested us to let his wife and children live on our property and we allowed them to, thinking they would safeguard our home. What we had not anticipated was that their son would be addicted to drugs and he destroyed many things of sentimental value in the home, including my photo album whose fate, to this day, is unknown.

When I started exploring my personal history, I started with pieces of writing using Samaras' (2011, p. 105) prompts on artefacts/objects that could be used in a self-study project. I wrote about Mama's Kelvinator stove (see Figure 4.9). I used a picture of the stove that I had taken for my study when I went home for the December holidays in 2015. This story grew to become part of a chapter in a book that I co-authored with my supervisor and two of my critical friends, Makie and Thokozani (Dhlula-Moruri, Kortjass, Ndaleneni, & Pithouse-Morgan, 2017).

Looking at the photograph of the Kelvinator stove and the memories that it called up, more memories surfaced because the stove was a symbol of my interaction with my parents and my grandparents and also of my cooking skills as I learned how to cook and bake with my siblings. This, in turn, led to other memories of collaborative learning as I grew up which resulted in the personal and professional history presented in Chapters Four to Ten.

Working on Chapter Seven, I needed artefacts that were reminiscent of each of my siblings. Finding a photograph of Bhut'Sonwabo was easy. Figure 7.2 reflects the essence of him perfectly – he loved life and always wanted to look 'with-it'. I remembered my first day of school when

Xoli cheated me out of a sixpenny coin I had been given in recognition of this momentous event, so the image of a sixpenny coin was what I chose. To depict Monde, I remembered that she had encouraged me in my quest to be technologically current by advising me about a personal computer (PC) I should buy and how to use it. I therefore found a photograph of a PC that looked like the one I had bought. After some reflexion, I found the images symbolising my memories of my sisters rather too limiting and impersonal, and then I decided to make a collage of each of them to depict them at different stages of growing up. I spent a whole afternoon without making any progress – the ideas did not quite come together in my mind as I could not decide which photographs to use. I then felt this would distract me from my study, so I made the decision to find photographs of my siblings when they were about the same age – i.e., when they were in their mid-twenties and working. I consulted my one surviving sibling, Xoli, and she supported my decision.

Because my brother, Bhut'Sonwabo, had spent long periods away from home at a special school for the deaf and dumb, there were not many photographs depicting the four of us, hence my depiction in Figure 6.1 in the introduction and Figure 6.5 in the 'smaller' album within the main photo album with the caption: 'Siblings through time'. These were the only two photographs of the four of us I could find. The only decision I had to make was which to place in which position. Next, I worked on the photo album with my siblings and extended family of our generation using the cues proposed by Mitchell and Pithouse-Morgan (2014), Mitchell et al. (2009) and Mitchell et al. (2019). Among the features of this album are the following:

- a **title** (*'Siblings through time'*);
- 12 **found** photographs
- **drawings** of events/memories because of missing photographs;
- a **short curatorial statement** to introduce the album;
- **short captions** for each photograph;
- **extended text** where necessary;
- a **theme** that runs throughout the album;
- evidence of **oral presentations** with comments to an audience;
- clear **visibility** of memories/events (see Chapter Seven).

(Mitchell & Pithouse-Morgan 2014; Mitchell et al., 2009; Mitchell et al., 2019)

Milestones in our lives influenced my choice of photographs for the album. I chose the photographs and requested those I did not have from Xoli and Itu. I then sent them to Xoli by email for her comments. Because Xoli was generally very busy, we eventually agreed to engage in a

FaceTime discussion as we both looked at the same photographs, which we did. This process is referred to as photo-elicitation, which Mitchell et al. (2019), Richard and Lahman (2015) and Roberts (2011) describe as conducting an interview or interviews based on photographs that both interviewer and interviewee are looking at. I did a voice recording for the accuracy of memory and discussion. The discussion is presented as part of the text in the photo album. I feel that the manner in which we approached the compilation of the photo album reflects the reliability and trustworthiness of the data and my findings regarding my experiences of collaborative learning and how they shaped my life.

In the process of collating the album I found that photographs of some events/experiences that I remembered were missing. Mitchell and Weber (1999) assisted me in this dilemma as they argue that "...the absence of a photographs does not prevent the rememberer from engaging in memory work. People often retain vivid memories of actual photographs or the process of having photographs taken" (p. 83). The first was one I wanted to use as part of Figure 6.2. It was a photograph of *Makhulu* (Grandmother), her daughters-in-law and a large number of her grandchildren and the offspring of her extended family that had been taken in front of the homestead at Mayitshe Farm. I had seen the original (a very small photograph) among the many that my parents had kept many years ago. I had taken it to Mthatha where an enlarged copy had been made and I had taken the copy home. The original photograph must have disappeared when the centre where the enlargement had been done was closed. I had tried to trace it, but to no avail. No one seemed to know what had happened to the copy and it got lost. I then replaced it with one of *Makhulu* and *Tat'omkhulu* (Grandfather) standing next to each other. I have not given up hope of finding this missing photograph and, when I do, it will serve as a data source for another project. The memory of this photograph was vivid in my mind when I worked on the project, and this helped me recall more memories about Mayitshe Farm (Chapter Six) than I had expected. Missing (or non-existing) photographs were of a trip taken by three families to the Zimbabwe Ruins (Chapter Five) that depicted us dancing (I replaced it with another of the whole group that was on that trip), the tree hideaway that we had constructed as children (Figure 6.6), and the sewing machine that depicted the needlework and dressmaking class organised by a teacher (Figure 7.3). No photographs existed of these events (such photographs were absent/missing/lost) because no one had thought of taking photographs at the time or the images had gone missing. As with the Mayitshe Farm photograph, memories of experiences there were vivid in my mind and I used other photographs in some cases and illustrations in others to depict these memories. Some photographs were taken especially for my study, such as the ones of Mama's Kelvinator stove (Figure 4.9) and

the Singer sewing machine (Figure 4.10). My niece took one of the glass-fronted cabinet (Figure 4.5) as she lived at our home with Mama at the time of writing.

The photographs that are presented in the phot album, whether of individuals, pairs or groups, accurately and vividly depict the collaborative nature of my learning experiences with these people and during the events depicted. These artefacts are rich in nature as they depict the closeness of the family and are thus of “great sentimental value”, as Mama would put it. The fact that they were easily accessible was a bonus. When I received the albums, I embarked on a project to capture all the photographs electronically so that we should not lose them. I wonder, though, whether I shall ever replace the photo album that I lost.

3.3.1.2 Memory Work

Memory work (or recall) was very useful when I started to embark on my journey to record my personal history and I had to remember and identify what would be relevant to my study. Recording one’s personal history is a recognised scholarly method of self-study (LaBoskey, 2004; Lighthall, 2004). Lighthall (2004) explains that illustrating concepts and ideas when sharing experiences assists the researcher to ensure a better understanding of what is being conveyed. Thus memory work enables the researcher to reflect on experiences and insights and this helps her to understand herself better. O’Reilly-Scanlon (2002) summarises the purpose of memory work by explaining that this helps one to realise how one has gotten to the present, these memories lay the foundation for moving forward.

Memory work is recognised as an art-based research method by various scholars (Pithouse-Morgan, Pillay, & Mitchell, 2019; Samaras, 2011) and I embraced this process to enhance and validate the outcomes of my study. While I remembered most of the incidents I discuss in the personal history chapters, I also consulted relatives – mainly Mama and my sister Xoli – where my memory was hazy. However, the photographs that appear in the photo album were mainly what assisted me when I engaged in memory work as they elicited more memories than I had expected. I not only identified what the photographs depicted, but I also had to think of the aesthetic aspect of positioning them on the pages of the album appropriately to tell my story. I utilise text to share what I learned about collaborative learning and to explain how I became the teacher that I am.

I also used memory drawings/notes to replace missing photographs and to depict some memories that were relevant to my study. Drawings/notes are also recognised as a means of eliciting memories or conveying some message (Mitchell, Theron, Smith, & Stuart, 2011). For example, I made notes of a brainstorming session to depict the manner in which I prompted my memory (see Figure 3.3).

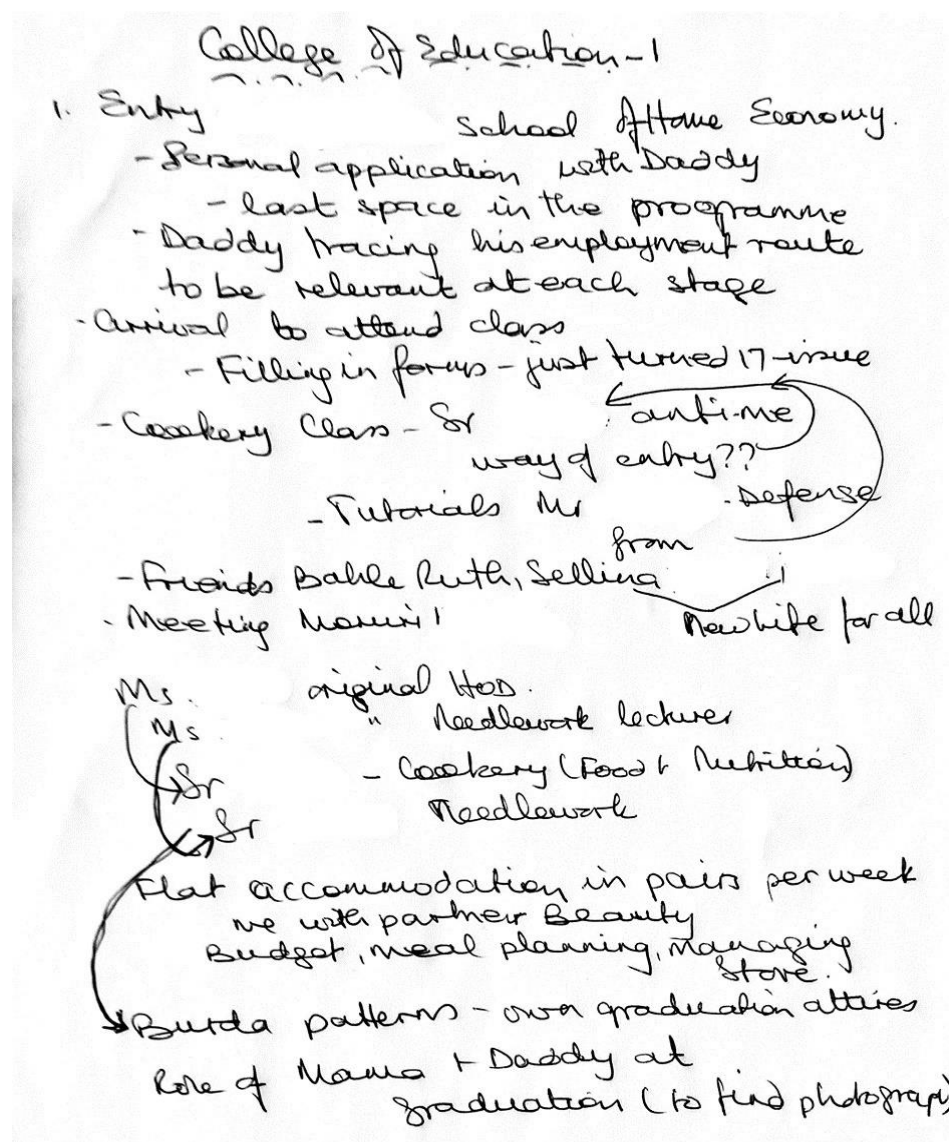


Figure 3.3: Brainstorming as I made a memory drawing of my college room. I deleted the names of those I could not contact for consent. (Scan by MN Dhlula-Moruri)

Another example is floor plans of houses. When I realised I could not locate any images/drawings of the floor plans of the houses we had lived in and knowing no one had any, I drew floor plans of the houses as I remembered them. I used a sequence developed from an exercise outlined by Peter Stillman (1992). Stillman (1992) encourages the use of floor plans to assist in memory recall and

writing. He suggests that one draws a map and then labels each room, the main features, and the contents per room. Then, below the diagram, one should write notes on the memories elicited by the drawing. Stillman (1992) argues that such an exercise can assist a researcher in looking back and reflecting on the memories of important places. For instance, Riggings (1994) used photographs to capture different parts of the two main rooms in his parents' house and he then 'took them apart' to discuss the different items in these rooms from both a denotative and connotative perspective. In this way his memory was extensively prompted and he could present an accurate description of his experiences and insights.

Engaging in memory recall exercises was very helpful because, as I drew each feature, more memories came to mind. They were so many that I ended up making a list at the back of each floor plan (Figure 3.3) lest I forgot important points. I sketched floor plans depicting the houses we lived in from memory and I discuss these in Chapter Four. I also did the same for the college hostel rooms that I occupied and depict the notes at the back of the plan in Chapter Eight. I shared my sketches and notes with my supervisor for discussion and this elicited more ideas than I had anticipated (Mitchell & Weber, 1999; Mitchell & Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2014).

Whilst making the floor drawings and generally compiling this photo album I was not too confident in my creativity at the beginning. But then I remember that Kathleen asked us to talk about any creative activities that we had engaged in as children during a self-reflective support group session. When I made my submission, I suddenly remembered that no one in my family had ever believed I was creative and I had agreed with them. Then Kathleen requested that I present two pieces: our tree hideaway (Figure 6.6) and the role-play wedding (Figure 6.7) to the Critical Friends Support Group. Towards the end of the ensuing discussion Kathleen made the following statement:

"I think what is interesting about this activity is [that] Mandisa was saying she is not creative, and it's obviously not true. She said she's not creative but she demonstrated her creativity in a number of ways in this presentation..."

Critical Friends Support Group session on 29.09.2017 (Chapter Seven) on creative activities we engaged in as children.

This comment strengthened my belief that my photo album, which was used as an art-based tool, was a creative piece of work and that I needed to believe in myself.

3.3.1.3 Songs

There were always singing and dancing in my family. Tidwell and Jónsdóttir (2020) recognise these activities as relevant to an art-based self-study approach and I employed references to these with enthusiasm. For instance, when I narrated and presented some stories of my personal and professional history, my critical friends observed that the role of music in my life was very important because whenever my narrative could be supported by a song, I sang it in my presentations. Gibson Kente, a South African playwright, wrote the song *Africa Sings* (sung by Ndaba Mhlongo) as part of the repertoire in his 1973 musical entitled *How long?* I feel the lyrics of the song capture the essence of my relationship with music. In the lyrics, there are phrases such as:

In the rhythm of days, Africa sings...
When they're tilling the fields, Africa sings...
When herding the cattle, Africa sings...
When Africa dies, Africa sings...
In times of victory, Africa sings...

(Ndaba Mhlongo in Kente, G., 1973)

These phrases in the lyrics capture the essence of my message that music and singing have always been part of me and have thus enhanced my learning.

I also told a folktale in a song during one of my presentations (Chapter Six). Nzewi (2005) agrees that singing is common in the telling of folktales. This was very popular when we grew up and we would all be expected to collaboratively learn to sing songs that told stories. During these and other singing episodes as many vocal parts as possible would be represented – soprano, alto, tenor and bass. We never had sheet music for the songs but we would improvise and harmonise naturally, which is a skill that Bresler (2005; 2008) discusses in her discourse about art-based elements, particularly harmony, that make our singing so enjoyable.

I refer to singing and folklore in the photo album as I feel that songs, while demonstrating the uniqueness of my family life and me as a person, add authenticity and warmth to my story. The songs are also a reminder to myself that I have no excuse for not incorporating music when I interact with my students. Singing in my family is further discussed in Chapter Six.

3.3.1.4 Poetry

Although associated with the lyrics of songs, poetry as a genre in its own right is also recognised as one of the tools one can use in memory work when using the personal history self-study method (Lighthall, 2004; LaBoskey, 2004). I composed a poem (see Chapter Eight) in preparation for a presentation to my critical friends in my first year as a teacher. I just wanted to try something different as I tried to condense the events of my first year as a teacher within the poem sharing “my experiential story” (Pithouse & Samaras, 2020, p. 14). From the ensuing discussion on the poem I realised it was an acceptable genre to use. At school my experiences of poetry taught me that there is not only one way of interpreting a poem, although somehow I never seemed to get it right, and this always made me feel insecure about poetry in general. However, Sword (2009) advocates for the use of tools such as poems to break the monotony in writing and for the reader to feel that there is some progress in the discourse. Mitchell and Weber (1999) aver that looking repeatedly at a photograph might inspire one to use art-based tools such as poetry to recall memories, which is what I did.

3.3.1.5 Collages

I also use collages in the photo album in this thesis. Butler-Kisber (2008) and Mitchell et al. (2019) describe this as an artistic process where separate images are collated so that they make up a complete image. A collage is generally made up of found images cut from magazines and newspapers (Butler-Kisber, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2019), although it can also be created using photographs, as I have discussed in Chapter One and in the current chapter. I created collages at a workshop in December 2014 as well as in February 2016, which I discuss in Chapter Ten.

There are three ways of utilising a collage: (i) as a memory recall/reflective process; (ii) as a conceptualising approach; and (iii) “as an elicitation for writing or discussion” (Butler-Kisber, 2008, p. 269). A collage can be used to facilitate a reflective discussion that allows the collage maker the opportunity to look back into the past and to learn from experiences. This learning then influences how one deals with new and future experiences (Williams, 2000). Butler-Kisber (2008) argues that a collage can prompt the use of a metaphor or extended metaphor, which I did.

3.3.1.6 Metaphor

I introduced the metaphor of a dressmaking pattern as a way of simplifying the concept of self-study methodology for myself. I thus refer to this metaphor throughout the study as I found that

this enabled me to personalise whatever object or concept I might be discussing by relating it to my life. Belluigi, Alcock, Farrell, and Idahosa (2019) support this view when they argue that, by using a metaphor, one could “articulate, express, and engage with the unfamiliar ... by associating it to that which is more commonly known...” (p. 112). For instance, I compare the basic pattern of a dress to the basic life lessons that my parents taught me and that became the foundation of the extended pattern of my life. I also compare the methods and tools that I used to curate the photo album to the processes of adapting and altering a dress pattern. In this way I could relate the processes of being a Home Economics/Consumer Studies preservice teacher educator to the metaphor of the basic dress pattern that is changed and adapted.

Shaw and Mahlios (2008) concur with Belluigi et al. (2019) when they refer to metaphors as “tools for learning new information, concepts and skills and...for framing and defining experience to achieve meaning about one’s life” (p. 5) (citing Hardcastle, Yamamoto, Parkay & Chan, 1985; Yamamoto, Hardcastle, Muehl, & Muehl, 1990). This quote motivated the method I used to explain some concepts, ideas and processes related to the photographs and images that I used throughout the photo album. The dress pattern metaphor, which I also refer to consistently, helped me tie up the different parts of the discourse to create unity in the thesis, as advanced by Bullough and Stoakes (1994).

3.3.1.7 Transcriptions

Whenever I did a presentation, I personally transcribed the recording I received of the session. Sotshangane (2015) and Tidwell and Jónsdóttir (2020) describe transcription as the process of converting a speech or a discussion from an audio recording into text. By transcribing these recordings, I could re-listen to the voices of my critical friends and reflect on their comments. Sotshangane (2015) also acknowledges that transcription is a long and arduous task but that it has the main benefit of ensuring an accurate record that is very useful in a reflective context. Although these transcriptions were used to listen and reflect, they were also printed so that I could analyse the texts to detect links between participants’ comments and other aspects of my study (Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020). Although tedious, it was a very productive exercise. In the beginning I hated it and, at one point, even considered hiring a professional to do the transcriptions for me. This was before I realised what a useful exercise it was because it gave me a chance to remember the events concerned more easily. This process thus added value to the study as reflection was enhanced. I made a brief journal entry when this realisation came to me:

19.03.2018: Journal entry

Transcription does not feel so strenuous now – I suppose I see the value of the input from my critical friends, and there is a lot of input.

One of the recordings I transcribed was that of a presentation to the Critical Friends Support Group in May 2018. Other examples are peppered throughout the chapters as I present the images I selected in the photo album.

3.3.1.8 Journal writing

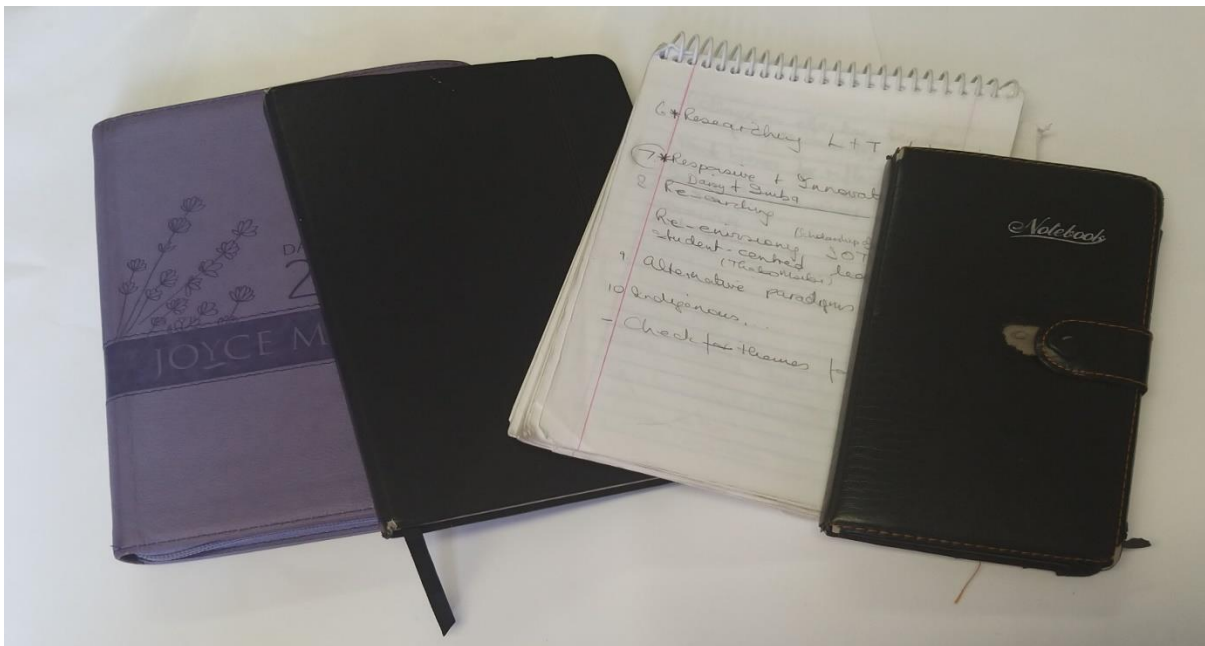


Figure 3.4: Notebooks that doubled as journals throughout the study (Photograph by MN Dhlula-Moruri).

The note pad, notebooks and diary were used to keep all my records as I journeyed through the process of curating the photo album. I started with the now coverless notebook. Then I quickly realised it was not going to last long and I used the black notebook on the right. It has a burn scar on the cover as I used it to block the lens of the data projector before I learned how to do so more appropriately during a presentation I made in the early days of my study. I stopped using this notebook because of its small size – I was always worried that I would lose it. The two books on the left are the 2016 diary on the extreme left and a notebook (given to me by a young colleague who expressed admiration for the fact that I was still learning at my age), both of which I used right to the end. What is common among the three latter notebooks is that the pages are secure – a zip fastener for the diary, a rubber band for the notebook, and a band with a press-stud for the last one. What made the diary more special is that it has some motivational messages by Joyce

Meyer, which I would sometimes read to keep going. I used the dairy as a notebook and not as a diary.

Journal writing (or journaling) is an exercise that is part of the self-study journey as one writes down whenever and whatever thoughts, ideas and reflections come to mind. There are various ways in which one can use the journal in self-study. One way is to write the things one thinks about or does not want to forget in a journal. After an event or an experience, one thus makes a journal entry to be able look back and reflect on the experience (Mitchell & Webber, 1999; Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020) (see section 3.3.8). One can also compare reflections in the journal with transcribed recordings (Samaras & Freese, 2006). Tidwell and Jónsdóttir (2020) list alternative ways in which the journal can be used such as: (i) “to inform practice” (p. 11), which means that because one may read/go through an experience and reflect on it, the result may be added as information to the study; and (ii) “recording observations and interactions in teacher education” (p. 11), which is self-explanatory and will result in reflection and informing changes and modifications to future teacher education session interactions. The realisation that the notebooks that I liked best were secure made me realise that I would like be as secure and durable as these books. I discuss my reflections on the transcriptions where relevant in the following chapters.

I presented an example of a journal entry in section 3.3.8 above. I typed the entries in my journal as they had been recorded in pencil which were unclear when scanned. Below is another example:

27.03.2018: Journal entry:

Today managed to complete Lunenberg, Korthagen, and Swennen, 2007.

Talks about modelling behaviour to my students

-But modelling not yet recognised as a teaching method – have to link it with the 3 domains of teaching according to Bloom – cognitive, affective, and psychomotor – mind, spirit, and body ... the motivational aspect of the child not to be neglected

-always took it for granted that what I do is normal for any teacher!!! I just found I’m special!!! UNIQUE – I do not criticise the students, but want to interact with them so we understand each other and our roles ...

3.4 Making Meaning: Data Analysis and Interpretation

In the process of curating the photo album and exploring each photograph, I had to make meaning of all the data in order to generate answers to the two research questions: *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* and *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional practice?* I also had to bear in mind that I was conducting this self-study project to improve my practice (Ritter & Hayler, 2019).

For my data to mean anything at all, I had to keep going back and reflect on the stories that the photographs represented. I had to identify common themes and sometimes delete unnecessary or add newly elicited data to make sure that the different parts of my story, when put together, would make sense and address the aim of the study. This concept is referred to by Chang (2008) as data analysis. To maximise the meaning-making of the data, I had to fully disclose the data collection and analysis processes (Tidwell and Jónsdóttir, 2020). Such disclosure contributes to the transparency and trustworthiness of a study. Chapters Two and Three address this requirement.

To make meaning of my data I also kept going back to my personal and professional history narratives (from Chapters Four to Ten, inclusive) and identified the lessons from each (Chang, 2008). Reflecting on these, I identified some common themes/guides (see 11.3) which Braun and Clarke (2006) and Elo and Kyngäs (2007) articulate as the application of inductive analysis. Elo and Kyngäs (2007) argue that inductive analysis is best applied when the aspects from the data do not fit any specific classification, which I found to be the case when I presented what I learned about collaborative learning in the form of guides (11.3), based on what I came away with from my personal history narrative chapters, which are my original contribution to the existing knowledge.

From my session with critical friends (here I lodge all the participants in Figure 2.7 under the title of critical friends) I learnt that no input is ever useless as different eyes and ears that look at and listen to the same idea come up with different interpretations. One example is when I made a presentation about my first-year experience as a teacher using a poem (Chapter Nine). I thought that the poem told a simple story but, upon reflecting on my critical friends' questions for clarity, I realised that it may not have been that clear to all and I that I should expect varied reactions whenever I compose a poem, which was a valuable lesson. Transcribing the recordings from these sessions enabled me to reflect on and identify aspects of learning, and this made me realise how valuable my critical friends were. The collaborative nature of self-study (Feldman, 2003; Samaras, 2011; Ritter & Hayler, 2019; also see 2.2.4) and the methodology that I employed to address the research questions thus enabled me to ensure that my study would be trustworthy and transparent.

I stated before that I never believed that I was artistic or creative, but in one presentation I sang some songs that reflected my history and that were relevant to my story (Chapter Six). My supervisor commented that this was very creative. In another session I discussed and analysed

some activities that we as children enjoyed (Chapter Seven) and my critical friends thought my presentation was creative and inspiring. I thus began to realise that I had an artistic side and I could use this learning to tell stories well and use my musicality in my classes with my students. Generally, the feedback from these sessions always led to reflections (see 11.3) and this allowed me to analyse the data to generate themes.

To make meaning of the data, I continually considered the application of the dress pattern metaphor. For instance, as I proceeded with the study I compared my progress with the process of adding pattern markings to the pattern pieces (Figure 11.1). Just like these markings guide the dressmaker to cut and assemble a dress, I was guided by looking at my personal and professional history to gain an increasingly deeper understanding of collaborative learning (Figure 11.2 to 11.7). So just like a pattern is designed and ready for use piece by piece, I had to move forward step by step in the compilation of the photo album to be able to articulate the new knowledge that I gained from my personal and professional history.

3.5 Research Challenges

As a child – and even as a lecturer – I never believed that I was creative and I was always uncertain when I was required to demonstrate any creative efforts. However, the positive responses I received from my critical friends⁵ who praised my artistic renditions (see 3.4) gave me the confidence to compose a poem (Chapter Nine), and to sing in one of my presentations (Chapter Six). I also became confident to apply other art-based methods such as the metaphor and the collages I refer to in this thesis. Mitchell et al. (2019), Mitchell and Weber (1999) and Samaras (2011) encourage the use of art-based methods in a way that gave me confidence to use them in order to communicate my ideas and insights.

Interacting with others made me very nervous at the beginning. I was like the new kid in the classroom as I attended the first session in 2014. The participants all seemed to know one another well and they spoke so fluently and confidently about what they were doing in their studies that I felt out of my depth at first. They also made very organised and informative presentations. I did not feel that I could make any input or ask questions at first as I was scared I would not make any sense. Kathleen worked hard to make sure I became comfortable in the support groups. I came to

⁵ For the purposes of this section, I refer to all the people that are depicted in Figure 2.7 under the heading ‘Research Participants’ as my critical friends because of the role they played in guiding and supporting me.

value their inputs very highly and their contributions are scattered throughout the discourse. I was always pleasantly surprised by the positive feedback I received. My presentations were not perfect, but it was the constructive manner in which questions were posed and suggestions were made that made it all worthwhile.

I remember complaining to Kathleen at one point that my presentations seemed to generate a lot of discussions which resulted in long recordings and required long hours of transcription. Kathleen made me realise that it was all meant to ensure I could present the best project possible. She made me understand that I was learning by looking at my stories from perspectives other than my own. This is supported by Hiralaal, Matebane and Pithouse-Morgan (2018) who state that one might not always get the feedback one expects, but one's eyes are directed to discern a broader point of view. I felt vulnerable just as Hiralaal et al. (2020) suggest researchers do, but I learnt to put myself in the hands of my critical friends who proved to be trustworthy and their support was therefore invaluable.

I also found that writing my personal history was quite a challenge. I tended to want to write an autobiography and forgot the brief which was to narrate episodes of collaborative learning from my personal and professional history. Furthermore, I tended to write as I speak and I acknowledge that I can be very verbose. I found it hard to cut down and remove repetitions and unnecessary words that I tend to use as I speak, and I was assisted to a large extent in this regard by my cousin who also became one of my critical friends (see 2.2.3.2). I would not be honest with myself if I did not acknowledge my language editor, Linda. She had a hard time convincing me to cut out some chunks of writing that were really not necessary.

Journal writing was another challenge as I tended to mix my stories with my reflections, which meant that my reflections were scattered across many passages in my records of reading and in my journal, and I had to condense them for presentation in the chapters of this thesis. I thus endeavoured to apply what I had learnt about journaling (see 3.3.9 above).

As a lecturer at a tertiary institution I found student protests and an unexpected strike severe challenges that impacted the data collection process involving my students. This impeded the time available to prepare and present or submit assignments while teaching time was also often interrupted. Fortunately, my students learnt to maximise 'normal' times. Additionally, the Centre

for Learning and Teaching Development at the university of study encourages the use of e-learning which was a facility that my students and I learned to utilise to our benefit.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I described the methodology that I used to address the two research questions, *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* and *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional history?* in detail. The aim of curating an extended photo album and the processes involved were explained and the data collection, recording and analysis processes were thus illuminated. Factors that supported my endeavours to bring this study to fruition, such as the constructive criticism that I received from my critical friends, were highlighted. I also explained in detail how the data relating to my personal and professional history were recorded and how I was enlightened to use an extended curated photo album as the main source of data presentation and evaluation in this thesis.

The next chapter (Chapter Four) addresses the first research question. I narrate incidences of collaborative learning as I remembered them occurring within the nucleus of my family context where Mama and Daddy were the designers of the basic pattern of my life.

CHAPTER FOUR: SIYANIKHULISA (WE ARE GROWING YOU)

4.1 Introduction

I engaged in self-study research and focused on exploring collaborative learning by exploring my personal history to determine how my learning with and among my family, friends, colleagues and students helped me to better understand the influences made me the teacher that I am now. I also envisaged that my understanding of collaborative learning based on my professional history would help me understand and improve my teaching involving current and future cohorts of university students. In the foregoing chapter I explained the methodology and tools that I employed to collect data that would elicit answers to the research questions.

The discourse in this chapter partly assists in generating a response to the first research question, “*What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?*” Using the photo album approach as explained earlier, I explore in detail the contributions that my parents, whom I refer to as Mama and Daddy, made with regard to collaborative learning experiences that moulded me as a child. I refer to my father as ‘Daddy’ because that is what he wanted us to call him. The community we lived in was Ndebele speaking and they referred to a father as ‘*uBaba*’, but at home my language was Xhosa and a father would be referred to as ‘*Tata*’. Daddy was also called ‘Scorpion’ or ‘Scorpie’, which was the nickname used for him by those who liked him.

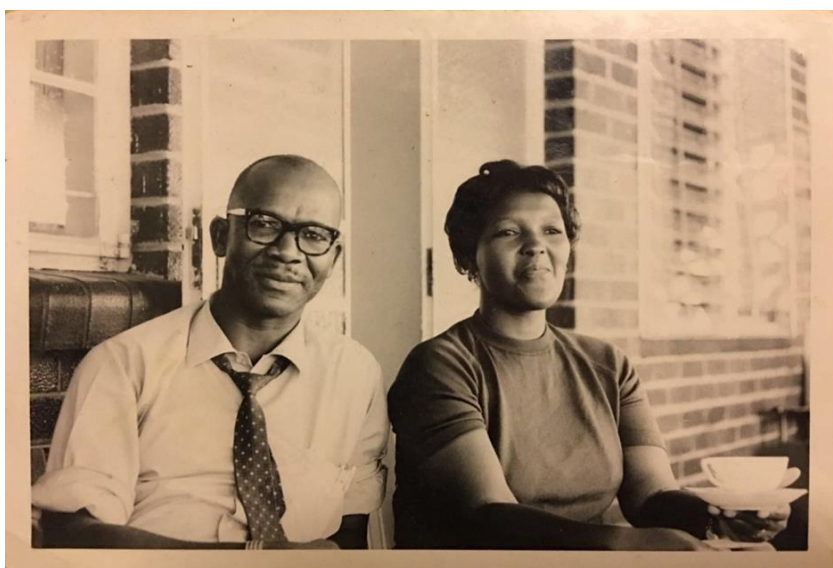


Figure 4.1: Daddy and Mama at Uncle Memo Khumalo’s house - 206 BF (Photograph taken by Mr M Khumalo, circa 1966)

This photograph of my parents was taken on the veranda of the house of Uncle Memo and Aunt Tendai Khumalo, who were family friends. They lived a stone's throw away from our house in Barbourfields Township in Bulawayo. This was between 1963 and 1966. This picture calls up memories of the strong and loving bond between my parents and their general demeanour of contentment in each other's presence.

My parents had four children, a boy then three girls. My brother was called Sonwabo Dan (or *Bhut* 'Sonwabo to us) and he was physically challenged as he was both deaf and dumb. Then there were the three sisters, Xoliswa Nomso (Xoli), Mandisa Nonceba (Mandi – which is me) and Nomonde Ndileka (Monde). My parents not only grew us well, but they also made a name for our family by working hard at their jobs and shining in their interactions with the community. Even today, when I meet people of my generation in Zimbabwe and they hear who my parents were, they immediately remember them and even ask about some of my siblings. I got married and left the country at the end of 1977, and I found that my peers in Zimbabwe generally remembered my siblings better than they remembered me.

In the next sections I approach this part of my personal history by identifying the places where we lived and exploring our interactions and experiences there. The narrative focuses on memories of my earlier childhood and teenage years when I learned valuable lessons – i.e., times of collaborative learning when I was grown by my parents.

4.2 The Township Mission House (1956 to 1963)

When I was born, the family lived in a township mission primary school in Makokoba Township (an old location) in the west of Bulawayo in the then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). We lived there until I was five years old and in Sub-A (now Grade 1). One of my earliest memories is of Mama washing her special navy blue cardigan in benzene (which is highly flammable) one evening. This was before dry-cleaning services became generally available. There was no electricity so we used candles and paraffin lamps. There was a burning candle this evening and, when Mama turned her back for a moment, the candle fell into the basin and everything erupted in flames, destroying the cardigan. Fortunately, this happened outside. The siblings helped douse the flames with very small handfuls of sand. Although we were still children and probably did not make a big impact on containing the situation (I suspect we were more a distraction than help), we played an important part in a situation where we had to work together to ensure our mother's and our own safety.

I started school in the mission school where Daddy was the headmaster (or principal). In Sub-A (Grade1), I did not know Daddy's nickname was Scorpie. Older students who used to tease us little ones called me *umnt'aka* Scorpie (Scorpie's child). I was upset and ran to his office to complain to him. He laughed and told me his nickname was indeed Scorpie. He teased me by asking if I did not want to be his child. Of course I did, but I never really wanted to be called that when I was young. Only much later in my life did I understand and accept that a nickname may be a symbol of belonging.

I was born and grown in the Anglican Church and attended Sunday school at the township mission venue in Bulawayo. I remember we used to sing hymns such as 'Away in a Manger' 'Ukuhlabalelela' and many others. Our Sunday school teachers told us many biblical stories, mainly about Jesus, to teach us values and principles such as being obedient to our parents and elders, being helpful, and offering our services to our elders in a respectful manner. We memorised verses from the Bible and recited them in front of the whole congregation once a year. One verse that has remained in my mind is Matthew 11:28: *Wozani kimi lonke elikhatheleyo lelisindwayo, mina ngizakuliphumuza* (Come unto me all you that labour and are heavily laden, I will give you rest) (NKJV Bible). I always remember this verse whenever I find myself in a situation where I feel anxious, especially about things I have no control over. Whenever this verse comes to mind, the load seems to be lifted from my shoulders.

4.3 My address: 179 Barbourfields (BF), P.O. Mzilikazi, Bulawayo (1963 to 1966)

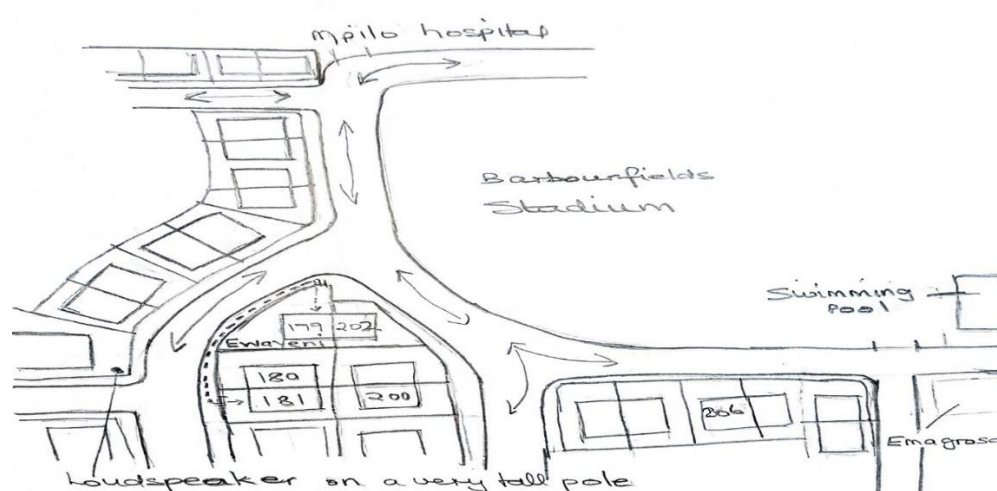


Figure 4.2: Context map of the locations of houses 179, 181, and 206BF, ewayeni (the fence), the loudspeaker/community radio, Mpilo Hospital, the swimming pool, and Emagrosa (Memory drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2018)

In this drawing I indicate the locations of the places I mention in this text. The dotted line between 179 and 181BF shows the path we took when we walked to our cousin Noma's home. I also indicate the position of 'ewayeni' (a fence). Uncle Memo's house was 206 BF (see Figure 4.1). When I look at this drawing, I am taken back to the days of innocence when most of our behaviour was influenced by our enjoyment of life where the only challenge was to 'dodge the stick' when we had been up to some mischief. It did not matter who the guilty party was, as long as you could avoid 'the stick'.



Figure 4.3: L-R: Xoli, Maudie, Monde, Noma, Mandisa (Photograph by EVS Dhlula, circa 1966)

This photograph depicts my two sisters, our cousin Noma from house 181 BF, and a friend, Maudie, from the neighbourhood. We were seated on a couch that was in the open-plan lounge/dining room area at 179 BF in Bulawayo, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). To my left is the sideboard. The wooden dish on the sideboard was a gift my parents received when they left the College near Durban to relocate to the then Rhodesia nearly 3 years after they were married. The couch was against the common wall between the two adjoining semi-detached houses 202 and 179 BF (See Figure 4.2). Opposite the couch were the two bedrooms and to the left of the sideboard was the television (see Figure 4.3). The children in this picture were our main playmates and we got together especially over the weekends or during school holidays.

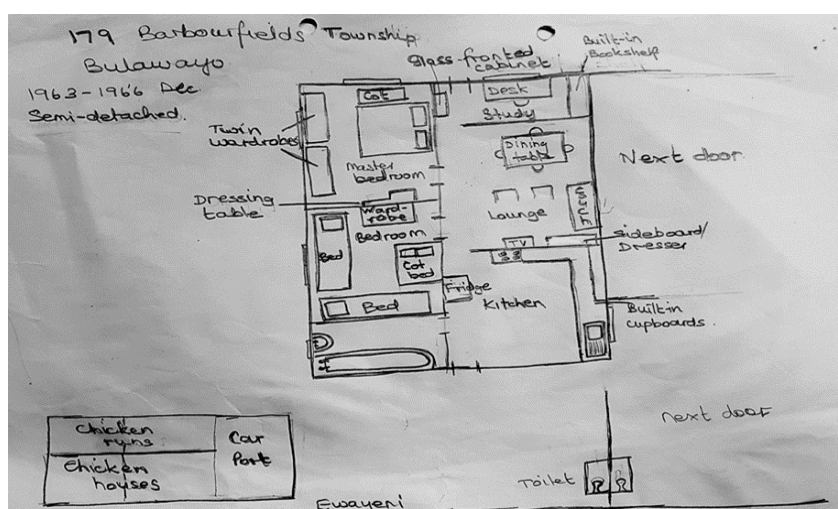


Figure 4.4: Floor plan of 179 BF, Bulawayo, 1963-1966 (Memory drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2017)

I made this sketch to help me remember the events when we lived in this house. Recording these memories in writing felt as if I was walking into each room and reliving the time I spent in the house. House 179 BF was a semi-detached house on the left, and the neighbours lived in 202 BF on the right. This was a 2-bedroom house with an open-plan sitting and dining room with a study in the front (at the top of the sketch). The study was originally an enclosed veranda but the occupants of the house chose to utilise it more effectively for their purpose. At the bottom of the drawing there is the kitchen that my parents extended and fitted with some cupboards. They also added the bathroom to the left of the kitchen. Lower to the left I depict the two chicken runs and the carport where the family car was parked. The chicken runs are divided horizontally to show that at the bottom were brick and mortar spaces Daddy built for the chickens.

I remember that so much happened in this house, yet our sojourn there was only four years (1963-1966). I have a vague memory of the family moving to the semi-detached house in the township the year I was in Sub-A. The next memory I have is of Xoli and I sharing a dark green iron bed in the second bedroom. I remember it was like a mini double bed, short, but wide enough for us to sleep comfortably. There is a gap of only nineteen months between us and I suspect that this small age gap and spending so much time together brought us close as we grew up. This closeness has lasted till today. We could watch the television from our bedroom. After lights-out if we were not yet sleepy, we opened the door slightly and still watched. We were often caught out because we would argue about the position from which the TV was best visible.

In the kitchen was a stove and Mama taught us how to bake. The stove was much like the one depicted in Figure 4.9, but I do not remember much about baking or cooking in this kitchen except taking turns to make tea for our parents. I do remember one incident, though. Daddy called from the study and asked for water to drink. Mama prepared a tray with a tray cloth on which she set a glass jug full of water and a glass tumbler covered with a tea cosy (shower). Monde was about four and stubborn. Just as Mama prepared to take the tray to the study, Monde demanded that she should take the tray. Mama tried to reason with her, telling her the tray would be too heavy for her, but she threw a tantrum. Daddy asked Mama to let Monde bring him the tray. She took the tray, managed to walk quite a few steps, and then dropped it onto the concrete floor as she tried to raise it to put it on the desk. Surprisingly, only the glass tumbler broke. The glass jug sustained only a very small chip. I do not remember how Mama and Daddy reacted to this incident, but the jug now resides in my kitchen cupboard. From this incident I learnt that there may be discord in the way members of a collaborative group deal with situations that arise – both parents were growing Monde – but the end-goal of collaboration should always be the basis for interaction.

Recently my sister and I shared a bath at her daughter's house in Pretoria just as we used to in our childhood at 179 BF. Her daughter commented about it on our WhatsApp group and our children were all scandalised. Xoli and I laughed about it. That is how we were brought up; we shared so many things, including a bath. Sometimes our cousin, Noma, would be the fourth occupant of the bath. To this day, whenever there is a shortage of time or space, my sister and I just share the bath.

Every once in a while health inspectors came to the houses in our area to check for cleanliness and to help avoid household pests such as cockroaches and mice. On such days, no lunch would be cooked. Instead, we would have a cold meal of a variety of sandwiches, cold meats, and milk for us children and tea in a flask for the adults. Mama and Daddy always turned this adverse situation into a fun occasion. They did this collaboratively without any fuss or conflict and we always looked forward to this unusual indoor picnic.



Figure 4.5: Daddy's book cabinet (Photograph taken by SR Dhlula, 2017)

This cabinet has in Mama's house since our 1963-1966 era when we lived at 179 BF. It used to sit in Daddy's study and always contained books. On top there is a 2003 calendar which was a Christmas gift from our first grandchild, Zena, to her great grandparents (they are referred to as GGPs on this calendar) at the end of 2002. Her picture is above the calendar. Next to it are two plates that commemorate some YWCA events. There is also a pink SHE booklet (propped up by a Valentine teddy bear) that I gave to Mama some years ago. The book contains motivational messages for women. To the left on the wall is a copper plaque of praying hands with the 'Serenity prayer' below them. On the right is a photograph of Mama's late eldest brother,

Carmichael Mdingi, who was responsible for bringing Mama and Daddy together. Inside the cabinet are books that have sadly been neglected for some time. This photograph evokes my learning of self-development and modelling because Daddy kept his books in it as he studied for his Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of South Africa (UNISA). He obtained this degree in 1965.

The cabinet has stayed with the family despite many moves and now resides in the passage just outside my late parents' bedroom. It is still full of books. Daddy loved books and he ignited the love of books in me. Mama was more a current affairs person and enjoyed reading newspaper and magazines. However, we all loved puzzles and often shared building them.

I remember one school holiday when Mama's back went into a spasm when she bent down to sweep the floor under the bookshelf. Daddy had to lift her into the car and drive her to Mpilo hospital (see Figure 3.2). It turned out she had a slipped disc in her spine. She spent about a week in hospital. We missed her, but Daddy tried to keep us from missing her too much by taking us into town and getting some colouring books for us and generally entertaining us, and we loved that.

The television was a focal point in the lounge. There was no 24-hour programming in those days. The television was black and white and there was only the English Channel. In the late afternoons there would be some educational shows for children with quiz competitions, debates, and other entertainment. We watched these programmes avidly. On Saturdays, we watched a popular music programme without live performances but with silhouette dancers. We imitated them and continued learning new dancing styles as they came into fashion. Not all the families in our community had a television, which was why our cousin and the neighbouring children came to watch television at our house.

I remember a day when we were watching television but the picture on the screen suddenly disappeared and only the sound remained. The three of us took turns to try and sort it out but to no avail. We gave up and waited for our parents. They were puzzled too, and we thought that was that until a few weeks later Daddy called us to the study where he had a metal object on his desk. He pointed at it and told us it was what we had damaged in the ‘telly’. We apologised. He then asked us if he should punish us by caning us or whether he should forgive us. There was usually a fixed speaking order under such circumstances – from the eldest to the youngest. Xoli, being the eldest, answered first and said he should beat us. Monde and I said he should forgive us. He looked at us sternly but said that, because the majority had asked for forgiveness, he would forgive us. Later, we gave Xoli a good talking-to for agreeing to being given a hiding when she knew how painful it was. In her defence, she maintained that she thought that Daddy had intended to give us a hiding anyway. It was a lesson in democracy long before we knew what it was.

There was a communal swimming pool near our house (see Figure 4.2) which we were rarely allowed to visit. When it was very hot, we would sneak off to the pool and each pay a penny for a swimming costume. We would then play in the water until we thought we would be missed. Somehow, Mama always knew when we got home that we had been to the pool. It never occurred to us how she knew until a friend advised us to take Vaseline skin ointment with us so our skin would not look too dry when we got home. This was an example of the involvement of the whole village to grow a child. After we had taken this valuable advice, Mama never ‘noticed’ our misdemeanour – as far as we knew.

Opposite the swimming pool complex was *Emagrosa* (a small complex of old-fashioned grocery stores and a butchery) (see Figure 4.2). ‘*Maf’avu*’ (literally, one who dies and rises from the dead) owned the shop at the end nearest to our home. We never knew his proper name or surname. When we first moved into 179 BF, we would pick up small stones and go to his shop to buy sweets,

thinking he did not realise that we gave him stones instead of money. He always accepted this form of payment. Looking back, I now realise that he must have been a kind man who loved children and enjoyed our simple innocence. Thinking back, I realised he was also an example of my being grown by members of the village as his kindness to children touched me very deeply and is a memory that will stay with me.

Every morning on school days, Noma came to catch a ride with us as we all attended the same township school where my parents worked. There was always a cake tin in the car with marmalade sandwiches made by Mama to eat at break time. We were also given milk at school that was supplied by the government. We quarrelled as children do and unfortunately, if Noma was deemed to be at fault, the three Dhlula girls demanded retribution such as refunding us for the sandwiches she had eaten. One day she took us seriously, went to her home, and started making 'refund' sandwiches. That is how *Dad'obawo* got wind of what was happening and called Mama to *ewayeni* and told her. The thrashing we got that day with a switch from the peach tree is one of the worst I remember.

Opposite *Dad'obawo's* house was a corner yard that was quite big. In the corner nearest to *Dad'obawo's* place was a very tall pole with loudspeakers attached to it (see Figure 4.2). This was the precursor of the community radio stations/channels that are only accessible within a certain radius from where they are based, as opposed to national radio stations/channels. In the afternoons, around 3 pm, there would be a broadcast of local news, community announcements, and notices of deaths in the townships. When they were going to read out the death notices, they played Handel's Hallelujah chorus first. This was the start of my love for classical music.

4.4 The Rural Mission

4.4.1 The Principal's house (1966-1977)



Figure 4.6: My family at the Principal's house where we lived at the rural mission. Standing L-R: Mandisa, Bhut'Sonwabo, Xoli, and Monde. Sitting are Daddy and Mama (Photograph taken by EVS Dhlula, 1973)

Daddy took this photograph in 1973 with a self-time camera on a tripod. Xoli and I were both in high school in Plumtree. By this time Daddy was both Principal of the secondary school and part-time priest in the Anglican Church. We still lived in the Principal's house. To our right was the front of the house with the water tank at the corner of the house visible behind me. This is most probably one of the last photographs that Daddy took of us as a family before we started going our different ways. Xoli went into nurse training the following year, 1974. Looking at this artefact, I am reminded of the close bond within the family. It was taken during the school holidays when we were all home. Our parents instilled in us the knowledge how important it is to spend quality time together as a family.

On 12 December 1966, a truck came and loaded everything we could take with as we moved to a rural mission house in Gweru. This date has always stayed in my mind because it was the day before Monde's birthday. Both Mama and Daddy had cars, so the girls travelled in Mama's car while Daddy, Bhut'Sonwabo and the dogs travelled in Daddy's car. I remember that, at one of the stops we made, Daddy told Mama that the dogs had soured the air in their car and that they

generally showed a lot of nervousness as it was the first time they travelled in a car. We eventually reached the rural mission at dusk. This mission still operates and is 32 km from Gweru town. It is also on the same route as the one to Mayitshe Farm, which was my paternal grandparents' farm located about 6 km before the mission. We saw no street lights as we drove into the mission area towards the house and we found no light switches on the walls of the house. Only then did our parents tell us that there was no electricity. We noticed much later that the fridge, the stove and the 'telly' had remained behind in the Barbourfields house. We entered the house through the kitchen where there was a wood stove. Imagine our shock! We had to enter through the kitchen and walk through the dining room to the veranda before we could get to our bedrooms (see Figure 3.7). We were warned to always lock the doors because the mission was roughly 3.2 km as the crow flies from Connemara prison. About two years before our arrival, an escaped convict had attacked and brutally murdered a nun who had worked at the hospital. We therefore had to lock our bedrooms at night.

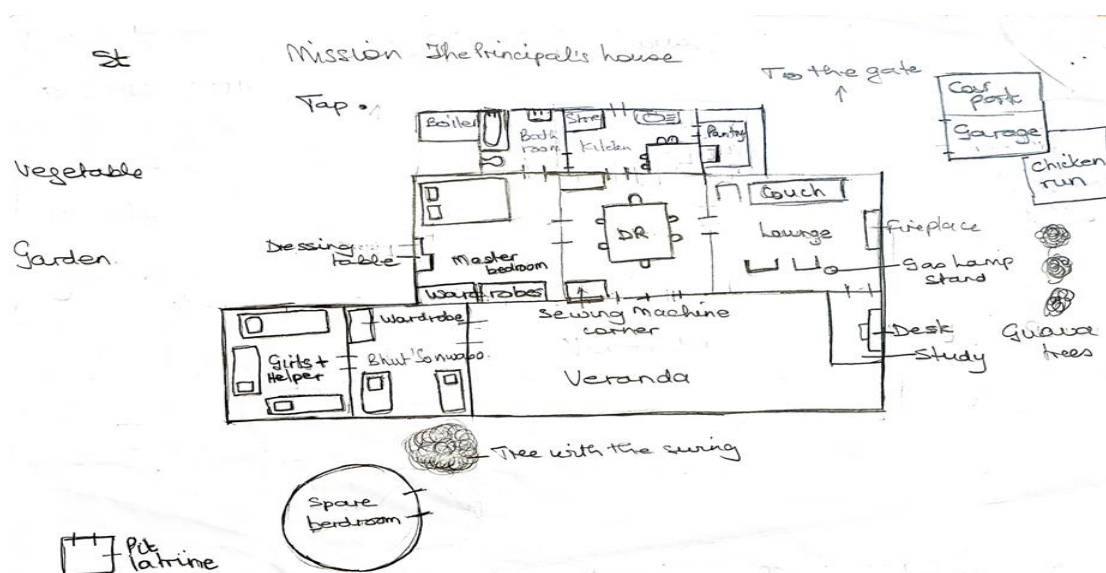


Figure 4.7: Sketch of the Principal's house at the rural mission (Memory drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2017)

We lived in the rural mission house from December 1966 to early 1977. Drawing this sketch revived many memories of our stay there. It was where I spent my late childhood and most of my adolescent years and, I must say, there was not a single room in this house where I did not interact with my family. This house symbolises my growth as this was where I became a teenager. I had my first boyfriend during the time we lived in this house.

On Sundays Mama (who worked during the week) would cook a special dinner in the kitchen. We often had custard and red jelly dessert which we enjoyed sitting at a table in the adjoining dining

room. Proper use of cutlery and table etiquette were taught during the meals we had there, but Sunday was also the day she gave us Brooklax or Epsom salts to cleanse the bowel the next morning. As a result, when I started working, I hated laxatives with a passion and never imposed their use on my children. The kitchen in this house was also where we baked, mainly for our grandparents, and generally learned how to cook.

As there was no electricity, Daddy constructed a boiler outside the bathroom (see Figure 4.7). Every evening around 5 pm we took turns to make a fire under a horizontal drum and had to make sure to put in big logs that would burn for most of the night so that we all could have a hot bath next morning. My parents' bedroom had an *en suite* bathroom and it had a door that opened into the kitchen as well. We generally used the outside pit latrine except at bath time and evenings.

Next to the kitchen, opposite the bathroom was the pantry where the cutlery, crockery, groceries and the paraffin fridge were. Except for the fridge, all the other items were on open built-in shelves. Whenever Daddy was going to town during the week and some items were needed in the house, Mama would give him a list. When he came back with the items on the list he always insisted that they should be checked by Mama before they were taken to the pantry for storage. I suppose they must have come to an agreement about this.

It was during this time when my love for reading developed, and I loved reading any books I could lay my hands on. Around mid-morning, during the holidays and on Saturdays during term time, I would steal away to the pit latrine, shut myself in, and read my novel. I would hear my sisters shouting for me but I ignored them until I had finished reading whatever exciting part I was busy with. Once they had discovered my whereabouts, I varied the times I stole away to read. I had to do this as Xoli, a natural leader, often wanted us to engage in some activity of her interest while I would be more interested in my novel.

When we first arrived at the rural mission house we were fairly young. Bhut'Sonwabo was 13 (because of the boarding school he behaved older than his age), Xoli was 10, I was 8 and Monde was 5. Running around in the nude in the house was no big deal. As we grew older, Daddy advised Mama to make sure we had dressing gowns. She made these for us of deep pink with white polka-dot material. We loved them. Looking back, I realise that, as our bodies started developing, Daddy felt protective and wanted us to have personal privacy.

We had the house to ourselves most of the time on Saturdays with the helper at church and our parents in Gweru town, which often left the three of us by ourselves. Mama expected to come back

from town to a clean house and baked cookies for Sunday. One of us would sweep, the other would scrub, and the third would apply polish. Then the first would shine the floor with a brush and the second would dust the furniture, and we were done. Collaboratively we fulfilled our mandate (as politicians would say) and Mama would come back to a clean, shiny house.

At some point I volunteered to dust and rearrange our parents' bedroom because I had discovered that Mama kept a stash of sweets in a tin in one of her wardrobe drawers. I would help myself to some as I dusted and put the furniture back in their place. I tried not to eat too many so that Mama would become suspicious. One day Xoli caught me in the act and threatened to tell on me. I tried to buy her silence by offering to share the sweets with her, but to no avail. She told me to promise to stop or else she would report me if she caught me again. I tried to circumvent her but she would keep on appearing unexpectedly and I eventually lost interest in that loot. I suppose it was her duty as the eldest daughter to take charge in the absence of the adults.

Sometimes I would escape from my sisters, go into Daddy's study, and rummage through the shelves, drawers and closed steel cabinets. I never knew what I was looking for, but I was curious and enjoyed these explorations. I came across their old photo albums and their love letters. I learnt that they had met in 1949 when Mama went to a college in South Africa outside Durban in the current KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Province (formerly Natal) where Daddy and his best friend, my mother's eldest brother, were in their second and final year of teacher training. In her second year in 1950, when Daddy had completed his training and was then working for the same college, Mama's brother passed away in a hospital in Durban after a long illness. Then Daddy went back to Rhodesia to teach, but they kept in touch. Later, the College invited him back to teach but Mama had gone back to her home area in the Herschel district (Sterkspruit) to teach. They got married in January 1953 and she went to work in a primary school near the College.

There was this treasure trove of love letters and photographs in that study from all those times when they were not together, and I feasted my eyes on them. Sadly, most of these treasures were destroyed when Daddy's study was burnt down when they were attacked in 1978 during the Zimbabwean war of freedom. I must say, in 53 years of marriage they never showed any deviation from the affection and love they expressed in their letters. Together they were committed to the vows they had made to each other.

Apparently, before I was born Daddy was confident that I would be a boy too. I do not think that, at a certain level, he ever fully accepted that I was not a boy. I suppose my technical ability and being a tomboy did not help my case. He was technically very gifted and would do all the maintenance and repairs around the house and on cars, both theirs and the school's vehicles. He could also do some very basic building with bricks and mortar. I became his assistant. I even learned how to change a tyre long before I learned how to drive.



Figure 4.8: Rituals and Tradition: Mandisa's 10th birthday party (Photograph by EVS Dhlula, 1968)

The star of the day is standing at the far corner of the table directly facing the camera in line with the cake. We celebrated various milestones such as birthdays. Some were muted, but celebrating our 10th and 21st birthdays were non-negotiable. Invitations went out and many invitees came – nuclear and extended family members, local friends and friends from far, many of them of South African origin, and they always kept in touch. My sisters and I wore dresses made by Mama on her Singer sewing machine. This picture was taken right at the start of the party. There are unopened bottles of fizzy drinks in the crates and on the tables (I think there were only Coca Cola and Fanta Orange in those days). Our clothes, shoes and socks are still clean and I still had to blow out the candles. After the speeches, I would blow out the candles followed by the singing of 'Happy Birthday', and the cake would be cut and we would all receive our wedges of cake as well as a bottle of cool drink. The bottled fizzy drinks are a sure sign of a special occasion as we never had any under normal circumstances. Then we would dance to the music played on the record player and the smart dresses, socks and shoes would look a bit worse for wear after a while!

In the background, from left to right, are a swing (a suspended tyre that Daddy had put up for us) and our bedrooms that are visible behind those standing at the long side of the table. Immediately behind them are magnolia trees and to the extreme right one can see the edge of the veranda that lead to the dining room to our bedrooms.

This picture is an example of how my family kept in touch with extended family, friends and how we got together to celebrate special occasions. This custom has never been abolished as we still celebrate our children's milestone according to the example our parents set. The involvement of so many others is also a reminder of the importance of treating all children/learners/students without favouritism. We girls all celebrated our 10th birthdays and we all three received new dresses that Mama had made on her Singer sewing machine for the occasion.

Just over a year after we had moved to this house, I turned 10 in February 1968 and had a birthday party. In December 1971 Monde also turned 10 and had her party. Xoli had hers at 179 BF in 1966.

I remember that children who were invited never thought of declining or not turning up. At this time when we had moved out of the township and we were 190 km from where my early childhood had started. There was no electricity yet at this mission house but the party had to happen as it was a tradition. Most of our aunts and our parents' friends, whose origins were in South Africa and were married to Zimbabweans, always kept a network going and they stayed in touch. Because our clothes were usually home-made, something bought from a shop always felt special. Ironically, I now avoid store-bought clothes for special occasions because I want to look unique and so I avoid any chances of someone else wearing something that would be a duplicate of mine.

We adhered to rituals and traditions in my family. My Dad was the first in his family to immigrate from South Africa and he adhered to his Xhosa traditions. For instance, all the young males in our extended family attended a traditional initiation ritual that celebrated their becoming men. Celebrating birthdays helped us recognise these milestones as we progressed towards adulthood. But some of the birthdays were muted because you would be wished a happy birthday and receive a present, but there was no cake or party.

When I shared this memory in a presentation at a Critical Friends' Support Group meeting on 26 May 2017, Chris reacted in surprise:

Chris: No cake? No cake?

Me: Nah!

Chris: I would say that is a non-negotiable.

Presentation to Kathleen's PhD student group, 26 May 2017

This seemed to be the general feeling amongst my critical friends. I suppose I never really thought that no cake was a big deal, although I always made sure that there was a birthday cake for my own family. Perhaps, in my subconscious, I might have sensed a lack of something, but I was always happy with the presents as they lasted longer than cake.

I remember that we always had a cake when we lived in the township, but once we moved to the rural mission the town was 32 km away and too far to buy cake. In the township we used to walk to the shop to buy a sixpenny cake and we put candles on it. Incidentally, when we moved it was the day before Monde's birthday and we arrived at the mission only at dusk, so there was no cake on her birthday. We then took a slice of bread, spread it with butter and marmalade, and put a candle on it. She was not impressed. A number of my critical friends chorused that they would not have been impressed either. Later Monde mentioned her 'lost' birthday and we said, "But we celebrated your birthday!" But she insisted that it had been a '*yobukopokopo*' (a stupid birthday). It was a word Sis'Bee liked using. It may have been a 'stupid birthday', but we celebrated birthdays in the best way we could.

The Principal's house in which we lived was built in an awkward style (see Figure 4.6). Its front faced away from other houses and, when visitors arrived, they automatically went to the kitchen which was nearest the gate. Below our bedrooms there was a 'rondavel' or round hut that was the spare bedroom. Whenever we cleaned and polished its floor, a swarm of bees would arrive and settle there for a few days before disappearing again. So whenever we had visitors they would wake up to the presence of bees in the night. One day when she was working with a student teacher from the training school, Mama sent me to go fetch something from the rondavel. As soon as I opened the door, I saw the bees and ran back to Mama and the student teacher. The student teacher took my hand, led me back to the rondavel, and taught me how to survive in a space with bees without being stung. She became part of the members of the village who grew me as a child.

Daddy was ordained as a Deacon in 1970 and as a Priest in 1971. These ordinations occurred in Bulawayo at the Anglican Cathedral. In readiness for the second occasion (we were going to participate by taking the wine and the wafers for communion from the back of the cathedral to the front), Mama asked one of the youngish lady teachers to do our hair by stretching and curling it with a stretching comb. Xoli went first, then I, and then Monde. As soon as Monde was done, she went to the mirror to look at herself whilst we all complimented her. She had complained about the process all the time as it had hurt and Mama had come to sit with her and kept encouraging her. She took one look at herself and broke down and cried. She was inconsolable, claiming her scalp hurt. Mama gave up and let her wash her hair. I first knew about hair conditioners and softeners because Monde was in pain whenever her hair was combed and Mama had to be creative and look for something to lessen this pain. The answer was conditioner.

During the pre-electricity days at the rural mission, Mama and Daddy found ways of keeping us all occupied while spending quality time together. We would play Monopoly, draughts and card games and build jigsaw puzzles to while away many an evening under the glare of gas lamps in the lounge and dining room. We also played these games when family or friends came to visit in the school holidays. Daddy always won the Monopoly games. There was a tennis court at the school and we played tennis *ad nauseum* to keep ourselves occupied during the holidays. As a result, it was the only game I played up to college. Daddy enjoyed it and instilled a love for it in us.

Xoli refused to do her high school education at the rural mission and eventually went to a high school in Plumtree which is about 90 km from Bulawayo. The mission where we lived is about 190 km from Bulawayo in a north-easterly direction. I followed Xoli a year later and when I left two years later, Monde arrived there too. Sister thus followed sister on a well-trodden path.

Our parents raised pigs and sheep in addition to chickens. When we arrived back home from boarding school Daddy usually slaughtered a pig or sheep so that there would be plenty of meat to eat. Once the carcass was ready, Mama would call one of us to assist her to quarter it. Of course some members of the Mission like the Archdeacon and key staff members would be gifted with some of the meat. We would eat this meat alternatively with beef, which Mama loved. When we sat down to eat supper (breakfast and supper were the two meals we ate together), Daddy would look up from his plate and ask, “*Imandi?*” (Is it delicious?), and we would chorus back, ‘*Ewe*

Daddy!’ (Yes Daddy!). Then he would say, ‘*Kwakunje kuthi esavela kusakhanya!*’ (It was like this for us who were born in the time of enlightenment!).

At last, electricity came to the Mission in 1970! The telly, fridge and stove were fetched from the 179 BF house and life became ‘normal’ again...



Figure 4.9: Mama’s Kelvinator stove (Photograph by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2015)

Above is a picture of Mama’s stove which is over 40 years old now and still in excellent working condition. Whilst I share the story below, it is also representative of all the stoves that we had when I was small and learning how to cook. My parents were well ahead of their time because Bhut’Sonwabo was not exempted from kitchen duty although he spent most of the year away at boarding school. In the society where we grew up, only the girls were expected to do kitchen chores, but my parents taught us that male siblings should share such tasks.

Mama taught *Bhut’Sonwabo*, Xoli and me to bake when I was 7 years old and that was the beginning of my history with stoves. We had no house phone. My parents’ friends would usually visit on a Saturday. Sometimes my parents would be late and I would quickly bake something to go with the tea that I would offer while they waited for my parents to come home. Whilst they had their tea, I would quickly start on a meat stew and cook it in a casserole dish in the oven. The visitors would usually stay to enjoy a hearty meal.

In 1973, after electricity had been installed, Mama got it into her head that she needed a new stove. She justified her request by convincing Daddy that my love of cooking and baking needed to be encouraged by access to a good stove. She wanted a stove with a rotisserie, a clock and a timer

(these features had just come into fashion). Daddy requested Bradlows to find such a stove and, about a week later, he took Mama to the store to buy the new stove. But Mama declared that the stove was not a Kelvinator and she refused to buy it. Even when Daddy explained that Bradlows did not sell Kelvinator products, she did not budge. Eventually Bradlows obtained a Kelvinator from another store which my dad bought. This stove made me feel special as it had been bought with the idea of nurturing my love of cooking. Mama always made sure that my dad always knew who had prepared what dish or meal for the day and he commented on the food. His comments were always frank and, as a result, we all strove to do better. To this day, the stove works just fine. The oven door is rather loose as it suffered in the moves over the years. Well, I have also taken a few knocks over the years, just like the stove. Its longevity has taught me the importance of choosing brands that are durable – just like I have striven to be a ‘durable brand’ as a teacher educator. To this day, whenever I am at home, I take the time to check if the stove is still working by making at least one dish. This stove exudes an air of efficient calm which is a state of being to which I always aspire. I therefore personify the stove as it always feels as if I am reconnecting with an old friend who never changes. For instance, when I cook and do not watch the pot, the food in it burns. Watching the pot is not the responsibility of the stove, but mine. Similarly, each member of a group who works together has a clear role to play and is a member of a team just like the stove and I are. The stove provides the energy and the heat, and I have to work hard to make sure that the food is tasty and nutritious. There will therefore always be a special connection between my Mama’s Kelvinator stove and I, as I have learnt that baking and cooking in a kitchen require collaboration and understanding.¹ (see Endnote ¹ at the end of the chapter.)

Next to the kitchen, opposite the bathroom was the pantry where the cutlery, crockery, groceries and the paraffin fridge were. Except for the fridge, all the other items were on open built-in shelves. Whenever Daddy was going to town during the week and some items were needed in the house, Mama would give him a list. When he came back with the items on the list he always insisted that they should be checked by Mama before they were taken to the pantry for storage. I suppose they must have come to an agreement about this.

In the dining room, there was a sewing corner near a window facing the veranda where Mama’s Singer sewing machine sat. The opening between the dining room and the veranda was a French window which allowed in a lot of light. The dining table provided enough surface area for us to engage in sewing activities. Although the sewing machine was not electrical like the modern ones used today, it was an ideal tool in a perfect setting to experiment and learn. First Mama and later

we ourselves made our clothes. Mama was also asked by some members of the community to make clothes for them, but she never charged them anything for her labours. I remember that during the holidays, Mama excused me from household chores so that I could make the clothes she had promised to make for other people. I remember making four maxi length dresses for bridesmaids in as many days on the Singer sewing machine. I also made the dresses of my own two bridesmaids on the same machine when I got married.



Figure 4.10: Mama's Singer sewing machine (Photograph by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2015)

My parents got married in 1953, lived at a College residence in Natal, and moved to the then Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in 1955. This Singer sewing machine was my mother's wedding gift from my maternal grandparents. According to my grandmother, any self-respecting person who could sew used a Singer sewing machine and my grandmother, expert that she was, would not give her Mafungwashe (eldest daughter) anything less than the best. This Singer sewing machine was instrumental in nurturing sewing skills in the family. The latest person to use it full time was my late brother's daughter, Lolwakhe, who made clothes for people as a home industry from 2014 to 2016 before she got into full-time employment in South Africa. It still works well as it is diligently and carefully maintained. It still has its original cover and key. What confirms Singer as the best brand to me is that even now, more than 60 years later, one can still find parts for it in the market. It is a durable brand, like the brand that I have always striven to become.

I remember Mama spending many evenings and holiday afternoons sitting in front of this sewing machine, usually making dresses for my sisters and me. She graduated into making shirts for Daddy when he became a priest and needed those with a neckline that could take a priest's collar.

In our days, we started sewing at school in Sub-B (Grade 2) by doing mainly craft-based practical work.

When bell-bottoms (bootleg trousers) came into fashion in the late sixties, Daddy could not find any straight-leg trousers in the shops. So he bought himself a pair of black bell-bottoms and asked us to narrow (he called it zooting) the legs for him. We all refused as our friends' fathers wore bell-bottoms and we wanted him to be trendy too. That was a small matter for him. He simply took the Singer machine and started narrowing the legs himself. He had poor eyesight and wore glasses and threading the machine needle was his greatest hurdle as it was in the evening when he embarked on this project. I pitied him and assisted him to thread the needle. He managed to get the results he wanted, much to our disappointment.

My brother (*Bhut'Sonwabo*) attended a special school where he learned all manner of skills, of which sewing was one. Unfortunately, we never saw many of his efforts besides what he brought from school, I suspect he did not like sewing. I became quite adept at sewing and when I went back to boarding school after the holidays I usually had something new in my suitcase that I had made myself. Whenever I told Mama I had seen something I liked in a shop, she would immediately say "*Akukho mali*" (There's no money.) However, if I said I had seen a pattern I liked, she would not say anything, but the following morning at breakfast Daddy would ask why I was not ready to go to town with him as I had a dress (or whatever article of clothing it would be) to make. Then I would rush to get ready and go into town with him. He would attend to one or two errands and buy the newspaper. Then we would go to Meikles, which had an extensive haberdashery department. He would ask for a chair, sit on it, and read the paper whilst I chose a pattern. He had to approve it first and offered comments like that one is too mature/too revealing/too young...and so on, until I picked the one he felt was just right. Then I would look at the 'notions' (the requirements listed on the pattern envelope) and choose the fabric, fasteners...whatever was needed to make the garment, all with his input. Then he would pay and we would go home. Daddy's involvement did not stop there. When I was making the garment, he would show interest as I tried it on. He would comment about the appearance, the length, the seeming crookedness, and the general neatness of the whole product – but he always offered a word of praise at the end. Mama would also make comments, but she was usually busy with other things that needed her attention. In the end, I always felt that I had made the garment with the inputs and assistance of my parents.

At school, the situation was very different, at least up to Form 1 (Grade 8). I was always in a hurry to finish whichever article we would be making without caring about the finer details. There are several possible reasons for this. I was young and I had not yet made the connection between school and home. Also, I was very young as I was only 11 in Grade 7, which could account for immaturity and impatience at the time. Perhaps I did not respect the teacher – could it be that I compared her to Mama and found her wanting? It was embarrassing that the Needlework teacher would finish the garment I took home or exchange mine with another student's. I was so young I did not see anything amiss with this until years later when I looked back, but more about this later.

4.4.2 The doctor's quarters (1977-1978)

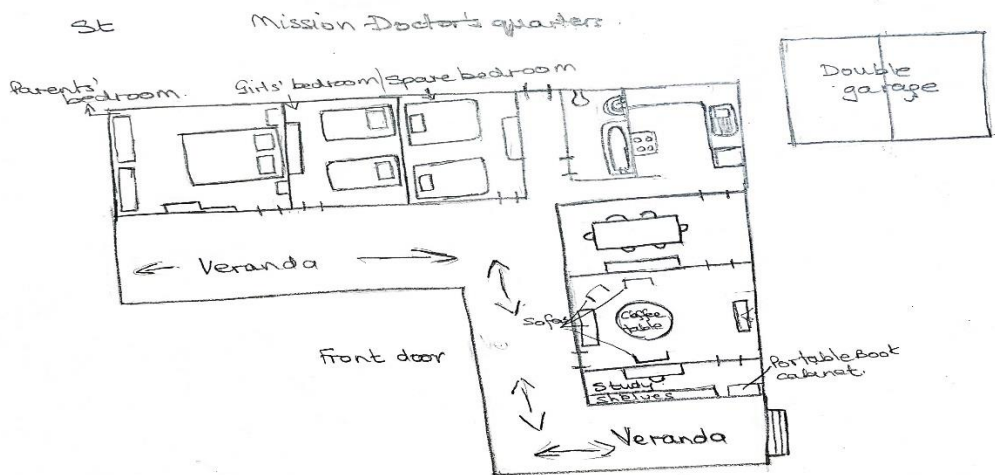


Figure 4.11: The Doctor's quarters at the rural mission (Memory drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2017)

When the family moved from the Principal's house to the doctor's quarters, I was already in my final year at college, but still faithfully came home in the holidays (one never considered going anywhere else in those days). This house was in a rather isolated location with only one nearby neighbour. Therefore, the point was re-emphasised that we should lock our doors when we went to bed.

There were three bedrooms, all opening onto a veranda that was very wide. By this time Bhut' Sonwabo was already working in Bulawayo and living at 179 BF, and Xoli had just abandoned her nursing training as she had fallen pregnant in 1976 and her baby was born in January 1977, so she was home fulltime. I was in my final year at college. Monde was at an Anglican private high school for her 'A' levels, so we three would be home together over the holidays. Our parents' bedroom was the one at the end. We occupied the middle one until I moved to the spare bedroom so I could read my novels in peace just before falling asleep. My sisters liked chatting until they

fell asleep and always scolded me for not participating. For once I was not a team player. This goes to show that one cannot be definitively categorised as a specific type of person.

By this time, we had developed a less formal dining system as we would put cooked food into serving dishes on a large, round coffee table so that we all served ourselves in the lounge and eat as we watched television. However, everyone sat down at the dining room table for breakfast, whether one was ready for the day or not. Engaging together in these daily meals was valued by our parents and promoted family unity as well as an appreciation of the value of communication and staying in touch with one another. Also, by leading a discussion about the following day's planned activities, Mama and Daddy taught us the importance of communicating and planning ahead.

Just before the evening prayer (which was always conducted in Xhosa) we shared our plans for the following day. After the prayer whoever was interested would watch late-night 'telly'. Daddy was a fan, and so were we. Mama preferred reading in bed and she would turn in. We would watch movies. However, whenever there was a romantic scene, I would find it highly embarrassing to watch it with Daddy. But he would crack some joke about it and we would laugh and my embarrassment would pass. Daddy's way of dealing with potentially embarrassing situations taught me to deal with them as well, and I thus have no unnecessarily embarrassing moments with my students.

Both Xoli and I got married from this house in 1977: she in October and I in December. I was pregnant and, because we wanted to avoid any citizenship challenges that could affect our baby, my and my husband's families had agreed that we should get married and move to South Africa where my baby would be delivered. This was against our custom. Normally, in our culture when the first-born child is due, the mother goes to her family home where the baby is delivered. The mother and baby stay at the family home for two to three months before her family arranges her return. A delegation from the father's family comes to see the baby, bearing gifts for the baby and the family of its mother. The baby was then officially welcomed into both families. This is another example of familial collaboration as the two families recognise and play their role in the life of their married children and the start of the relationship with their new grandchildren. As mentioned above, our parents advised that I have the baby in his fatherland. My parents had had challenges of citizenship: Daddy was refused South African citizenship not long after they got married. The reason given was that he was not born in the country even though both his parents were. Mama

had a challenge in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe because she was not born there, and ended up being naturalised because of her marriage. This made them seem to move with the times when they advised us to deviate from the cultural norm of having my first-born child being born from my home. This showed me that in collaborative situations one can always learn from other people's experiences, and tradition does not have to disregard other circumstances. This tells me that I have to move with the times as my students are generations that do things such as learning in ways that are vastly different from our generation. I thus learnt to embrace this modern way of life without letting go of the most valuable lessons that I learnt from my parents and that will never fade or pass: respect, compassion, honesty, togetherness, trust, loyalty, and faith. These are the values that I hope my students will imbibe in my classroom as I go about my business of preparing them for a thoroughly modern future.

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4.5 Conclusion

This chapter commenced my exploration in response to the question: *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* I narrated my personal history by narrating memories of my childhood with particular focus on making visible the contributions of my parents, Mama and Daddy, to my lived experiences of collaborative learning. By perusing old photographs and then writing down my memories that they elicited of some personal episodes in my youth, I realised that my young life had been rich in personal moments where I learned from and with others. I could thus look back and understand my lived experiences of collaborative learning, and the discourse in this chapter revealed in particular how Mama's and Daddy's influence shaped me to be who I am today.

In writing this chapter, I became aware of how Mama and Daddy modelled the lives of my siblings and I as we worked as a team to support and motivate one another. My parents seemed to guide us effortlessly and seamlessly. I realised that the relationships that bonded us took a lot of work and, looking back, I could see how my parents were successful as a team and how they grew us collaboratively. This understanding had important implications for both my personal and professional practices. As a sister and a mother, I value the relationships I had with my parents and siblings and still have with my surviving sibling, my children, my nieces and my nephews. My sister and I always ensure that our children see us working as a team on any family project that needs planning and organisation. We also acknowledge and welcome their suggestions and input. As I work towards ensuring that my students succeed as teachers, I have to work not only with

them but also with my colleagues. I encourage my class to treat one another as part of one family with its attendant characteristics, one of which is loyalty.

I now understand why Mama always made a dress for each sister for a birthday party as this was her way of not showing any favouritism. She made each of us feel special even if it was a special occasion of one of us. When she taught us how to bake and cook, none was exempt from sharing in the responsibilities and duties. Even my brother, who was a special needs learner, had to do chores when he was at home. Similarly, as a teacher educator, it is very important when dealing with my students to avoid showing favouritism. This is not easy, especially when there are some students in my class who perform exceptionally well in their tasks and presentations and walk the extra mile in volunteering their time and efforts outside the classroom. However, I learnt through the example that my parents set not only to treat my children without favouritism but that, in dealing with my students, I should treat all equally.

An important lesson I learnt from Mama and Daddy is that they treated *Bhut'Sonwabo* no differently from the three girls. Their fairness was so profound that I only realised that my brother was really different when I was a teenager and other children would comment on his particular challenges. I am thus profoundly grateful for the sense of fairness that my parents instilled in me and that this is a special character trait of the person and teacher that I have become. Also, because of my upbringing, I recognise that each person deserves my respect just as I need to be the person whom they can respect.

I have also learnt that as human beings we have desires and needs. Because Daddy diffused embarrassing scenes on television without barring us from them, I learnt that as human beings we are also sexual and that we need to embrace this in a mature and responsible manner. I thus approach any potentially embarrassing topic that might be raised in the classroom with professionalism and compassion for my students, and this encourages my students to bring their problems to me for advice.

Not only did my parents contribute to the establishment of my identity as a Xhosa and a Christian, but they also opened my perception of myself as a citizen of the world who represents different countries and ethnicities. In return, I acknowledge that my students are who they are meant to be by respecting their individual and cultural identities. Although the language of instruction at my institution of work is English, I use the two main languages of the university's catchment area as

well, namely Sesotho and isiXhosa. These languages were somewhat diluted in my youth by the environment where we lived as a family, but I still embrace all they represent. When I speak their languages in certain contexts in the classroom, my students feel that I care. This contributes to a professional bonding that is invaluable in the educational context in which I work.

I believe that sharing my personal history of how my parents grew their children has established their position as the foundation of my learning. Not only did they regulate our ability to function confidently and assertively in social settings, but they ensured that we could stand on our own feet before we left the nest. My narratives, reflections and analysis of the lessons learnt during my upbringing thus served to provide a significant part of my answer to the first research question. My parents' influence in my upbringing ensured that I learned collaboratively about myself and my life with my siblings. I learned to respect my elders and my peers regardless of their gender, age or ethnicity. This is one lesson that I shall always carry with me. Therefore, although I might question or be critical of the world and some people in it, my parents taught me to always do so respectfully. So, as much as I expect other people and want my students to respect me, I encourage them to feel free to talk, ask, and offer advice as they see fit, but to always do so respectfully.

Teamwork and positioning oneself as a respected and valued member of that team is thus one of the most important lessons I learnt from my parents – simply because they modelled themselves as members of a team in their close-knit family and community as a couple. I thus encourage my students to embrace the benefits of teamwork in collaborative learning sessions and even when they complete projects or study at home.

I was raised not to count the differences among people as important and I would have failed in my duty as a role model if I had not modelled that. My parents modelled non-favouritism when Mama made us all dresses for any special occasion such as birthday celebrations. It was a lesson well learned, and I strive to do the same with my students. Because of my parents, I know who I am both personally and professionally and I shall always celebrate and cherish the values and lessons that they taught me so aptly.

This chapter has set the stage for the next chapter where I shall continue to look for answers to the first research question: *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?*

I will look at how members of my extended family and the people in organisations that my parents exposed me to contributed to what I learnt collaboratively.

* Not their real names

Endnote:

^{1.} A version of the story of Mama's Kelvinator stove was published as:

Dhlula-Moruri M N, Kortjass M, Ndalen T, Pithouse-Morgan K. (2017). A stove, a flask, and a photograph. In: Pillay D., Pithouse-Morgan K., Naicker I. (Eds.). *Object medleys: new research – new voices*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

CHAPTER FIVE: *NATHI NGOKUNJALO* (WE TOO)

5.1 Introduction

I engaged in a self-study project in my endeavours to improve my professional practice as a teacher educator in a tertiary education context. The focus of the study was on an exploration of collaborative learning during which I looked back at my personal history for episodes when I learnt with and among others. The previous chapter illuminated learnings during my childhood when my parents were the designers of the pattern of my life. I looked at episodes where I and my siblings learned collaboratively under their care.

Together, Mama and Daddy were a formidable team who collaboratively raised and grew their four children, however diverse in character and aptitudes they were. I also recognised that they had raised us to be able to interact respectfully and freely with other adults, their relatives, friends and their parents, and as part of the village that grew us. In this chapter I advance my exploration of collaborative learning by looking at what I learnt from other adults, some who were very close to my parents, through interacting with them. The discourse continues to address the first research question: *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* The title of this chapter enhances the fact that, together with Mama and Daddy, various relatives and organisation were involved in our learning. *Nathi ngokunjalo* means that ‘they too grew us’, which means that this chapter is a follow-up of Chapter 4 that is entitled *Siyanikhulisa*, which means our parents ‘grew us’

5.2 The two sisters



Figure 5.1: *Mama and Ncinci Gambukazi, her sister. This photo was taken on one of Ncinci's visits to 179 BF (Photograph by EVS Dhlula, 1964)*

Ncinci was Mama's younger sister and Malume's twin. They were named Christina Nonceba and Christian Nceba. They were generally called Gambukazi and Gambu respectively which were derivatives of their clan name, which is Gambu. The two sisters were very close and they made sure we had a mother in each of them. They continually communicated so that each knew as much about us as they knew about their own children. As their children we learnt that we were siblings rather than cousins. The Xhosa word used by children born of sisters in addressing each other is 'Kanina' (maternal sibling) rather than 'Mzala', which refers to a cousin that is born of a male sibling.

There was a series of coincidences that linked my name to *Ncinci*. My aunt Sis'Yo (she was the younger *Dad'obawo* – Aunt – literally, Dad's sister) named me Nonceba, which is my middle name. Because *Ncinci* was never called by her real name Nonceba, Sis'Yo was not aware that the name she gave me was the same as *Ncinci*'s. That was the first coincidence. The second was that I married a Mosotho man whose clan name is Mofokeng, the Sesotho version of Vundle, which is *Ncinci*'s in-laws' clan name. The third coincidence was that, according to Sesotho culture, when a girl gets married she is not allowed to call or refer to her in-laws by name as a sign of showing her respect for them. By the same token she is given a name that the in-laws use when talking to or about her. I was named Mathabiso (mother of Thabiso). This name is the basis of the name of one's child if the gender is appropriate. If it is not, it makes no difference; the woman keeps the name. My first-born was a boy and he was named Thabiso. I had not known until then that *Ncinci*'s firstborn, whom everybody called Thembelihle, was also called Thabiso. When I was expecting my second born, *Ncinci* brought her last born, Itumeleng, to the junior secondary school that was attached to the senior secondary school where I was teaching. The following day we went to Matatiele with them to see them off on their way back to East London. In town, we met my eldest brother-in-law and I introduced them to each other. *Ncinci* told him about all these name coincidences that linked us. She proposed that, if the baby I was carrying was a girl, she should be named Naledi as the child who came after her own Thabiso was named Naledi. I did give birth to a girl and my in-laws agreed that she could be named Naledi too, but my in-laws spelt the name differently – Naleli – even though the meaning and the pronunciation were the same. When she came to collect Itumeleng for the June holidays, she asked to take Thabiso too as she explained that I needed some relief as he was a demanding 3-year old whilst I also had the baby Naleli who required a lot of attention. I appreciated her thoughtfulness. This also helped Thabiso to learn the

isiXhosa language as well as Sesotho because they only spoke isiXhosa to him. This was *Ncinci* playing her mother-role in the absence of Mama. This showed me the collaboration and respect between my family and my in-laws, as well as collaborative care of young children when *Ncinci* took over my son for those holidays.

The two sisters were very close as they had grown up together and only four years separated them. In 1965, *Ncinci* and her (then) two children, Thembelihle and Naledi, came visiting. We lived in the then Rhodesia and she and her family lived in East London, South Africa. Itumeleng came into the world three years later. Although I never noticed any clear similarity between the sisters' appearance, quite a few of my parents' friends could not tell them apart. In our house it was literally like having two mothers as they were always in accord with each other. Mama would take walks with *Ncinci* to visit nearby friends and home girls who lived in the Barbourfields area just to show off her sister, I think. Having Thembelihle, Naledi and, later, Itumeleng was like having three more siblings. Our relationship has a quality that has stood the test of time, as our mothers made sure that we regard each other as siblings. When we were small, we used to be scared of *Ncinci's* displeasure as we had seen her punishing her son, Thembelihle, by using corporal punishment. Her stern look, accompanied by a quiet but emphatic "*Hayi!*" ("No!") was enough to stop any mischief.

On the four-yearly visits to Mama's family in South Africa, we used to spend the longest time at *Ncinci's* house. She and her family would drive to Mama's home known as *eKoloni*, so the two sisters could spend time as long as possible together. Whenever we were at their home, the two sisters shared a bed and a bedroom while the dads shared another bedroom, and the children would sleep on the dining room or lounge floor on mattresses spread across the floor. Whichever children felt close would sleep next to each other. Thembelihle and I always slept next to each other. He was my junior by only a year. Even though we would chat late into the night catching up on each other's lives, Mama and *Ncinci* would always still be chatting when we fell asleep. The house had no ceiling – that came much later – so it was easy to hear that they were not asleep yet. Monde and Naledi always slept next to each other (Naledi was older than Monde by only six weeks).

When they were apart, our mothers kept abreast of all the events that were happening in their families' lives through letters. When we drove to South Africa in 1974 Xoli, my elder sister, did not come with us. I was 16 and had just written my Ordinary ("O") level external examinations, and I was thus the eldest of the children when we arrived in East London on this leg of our journey.

I noticed that *Ncinci* treated me differently. She expected more from me. I remember that I spent most of the day ironing the laundry and I also actively assisted in cooking. She was impressed and Mama was silently preening with pride.

In the early years of my marriage when we lived in Matatiele, *Ncinci* was my nearest mother as she was only 500 km away in East London. Mama was about 1 800 km away in Bulawayo (see Map page xxiii). *Ncinci* and I communicated by letter, and when I conveyed my fears and concerns about the new place and family to her, she wrote me a very supportive letter expressing her confidence in me. She stated that, because of my sociable personality and my ability to interact respectfully with people of the older generation, I would soon make friends with the whole family, which I did. I had had no idea about these characteristics in me before, so her expression of confidence in me freed me to be myself. I soon settled into my routines in a strange land with a new family.

Thembelihle (*Ncinci*'s son) was shot and killed on 11 February 1990, the day Nelson Mandela was released from prison. He was one of many in a large crowd who sang and danced with joy when the Ciskei police drove through and shot randomly into the crowd. His funeral was on 24 February 1990, which was my birthday. I was teaching at a College of Education in Mthatha at the time. *Ncinci* phoned the rector and asked him to inform me about the tragedy. I heard later that she had warned him that my reaction would be emotional as Thembelihle and I were very close. The Rector was very sympathetic and compassionate, and when I arrived in his office there was also an older female colleague and co-member of the YWCA who was like an older sister to me and who comforted and consoled me. Indeed, *Ncinci*'s wisdom and compassion for me regardless of her own grief strengthened the bond between us.

Years later, when all of us were much older, the two sisters were still as close as ever. When we met at Mama's home, the sisters continued sharing a room. We noticed a pattern of behaviour. One was that when *Ncinci* emerged from their bedroom, she would chat a bit, but go back into the bedroom to chat to Mama if she was still there. They obviously consulted about everything. For instance, if *Ncinci* had noticed any behaviour she did not approve of, she would emerge from the bedroom after consulting with Mama, express their joint displeasure, and then tell us what was expected of us. Based on such interactions we gave our mothers nicknames (without their knowledge, of course!): Mama was 'Mandela' (the President of South Africa at the time who never said much in parliament but who quietly and assertively influenced decisions) and *Ncinci* was 'Frene Ginwala' (the speaker of the same parliament at the time who directly controlled the

discussions). The nicknames reflected the bond of collaboration between our mothers and an understanding of their roles in our lives.

When *Ncinci* took ill, I unhesitatingly visited her as often as I could by travelling to East London from Mthatha over weekends. I helped Naledi to take care of her mother. Her last born, Itumeleng, lived in Cape Town so I was the nearest sister Naledi had. *Ncinci* downplayed her pain and discomfort and we would spend time doing some shopping and generally enjoying ourselves, not really realising how sick she really was. This was a measure of her love and caring for us as she carried her burden alone and did not want to burden us as well.



Figure 5.2: The housecoat my parents bought me in January of 1999
(Photograph by Mandisa, 2019)

At the end of 1998 Ncinci passed away. By then, Mama and I had stayed with her for some time. When she passed away, Daddy also came for the funeral, which was held just after 16 December. All three of us stayed on with her orphaned daughters until after the first week of January 1999. One day we went into town as my parents wanted to do some shopping for clothing items. We went into Edgars in East London. I saw this housecoat with a navy blue background and deep pink and white flowers. It is quite ordinary, as can be seen in Figure 4.2. I asked my parents to buy it for me. I just reverted to my childhood whenever I was with my parents. As many clothing items were on sale (it being the first week of January), it was quite cheap. They looked at each other and agreed. I really did not need my parents to buy me anything at my age, but hey, I did not complain when they did so. I still have this housecoat. It is now old and I have replaced the buttons and patched the buttonholes but they keep tearing. It is also too small for me now, but I just love

it and cannot imagine looking at the coat hangers in my wardrobe and not seeing it...it takes me back to that time of loss and re-bonding with my parents. In 1999 I had been married for 22 years. However, I still treasure the memories that come to mind each time I look at the housecoat. It is also a reminder of the model of empathy my parents were towards each other and to my maternal sisters at the loss of Ncinci.

I shall always remember *Ncinci* as a mother who never shirked her duties although she did not give birth to me. Whenever we talk about her, we end up laughing at the things she used to do and say and her demeanour when she scolded or advised us.

5.3 Sis' Bee

Sis'Bee (Beatrice/Ntombini) was *S'omkhulu's* (my elder *Dad'obawo's*) daughter who spent most of a period of four years (1963-1966) with my family. She had epilepsy ever since she was a baby. She had many intellectual and emotional challenges and she could not hold down a job. Her attention span was very short and she was generally very restless. However, she was very industrious.

Sis'Bee spoilt me rotten. She always washed and dressed me. As a result, I only learned how to wash and dress myself when I was 8 years old and she had left. She was 10 years older than I was and she never hesitated to remind me of that fact whenever I displeased her, because showing respect for our seniors was a crucial value in our family. She loved me to such an extent that she would pass clothes she did not wear anymore down to me rather than to her siblings. She was the epitome of how a village grows a child, whether they are cousins or siblings.

At the end of my first ever school term, I did not hear which position in the class I had achieved when the teachers announced the marks. I must have lost interest when the first few names and positions were called out and mine was not among them. When we got home, Sis'Bee asked me what position I had achieved that term. I told her I got position number one. I was horrified when Daddy corrected me and told me I was position 14. I resolved to achieve better. In the second term I was position 3 and the end of the year I was position 2.

When we left Bulawayo in December 1966 for the rural mission outside Gweru, Sis'Bee was already at Mayitshe farm living with her paternal grandparents. She was pregnant when she left and had a boy, John, in April 1967. John was later adopted by my parents and was raised as our younger brother.

When we move to the rural mission house our domestic helper came with us, but she left after a while. There was then a series of helpers and, whenever a new one was found, Sis Bee would come

and teach the helper how to work in her Uncle and Auntie's home. These poor girls had to work hard under her watchful eye! She never missed a spot that had not been properly dusted. The entire house and laundry would be spick and span within three days and their cooking would be up to Mama's high standards by the time Sis'Bee had completed her training. Quite a few did not last this orientation, but Sis'Bee was not fazed.

I remember that not long after John had started living with us, Sis Bee visited and asked him if he had enjoyed the chicken she had cooked for his birthday. John replied that he had only been given the chicken feet and the rest had been eaten by the other members of the family. Sis'Bee, who did not shun confrontation, confronted Mama about the issue. Mama was hurt by John's statement that she felt it was untrue. Daddy had to remind her that John was too young to know the difference between the different cuts and only remembered the chicken feet that were generally given to the youngest children in the family as extra food.

5.4 The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)



Figure 5.3: Group picture of a trip organised by the YWCA for children and teenagers to the Khami ruins outside Bulawayo in Zimbabwe (Photographer unknown, circa 1965)

This picture was taken on one of the trips Mama and her fellow 'Y' members had organised. They took us to see the Khami ruins outside of Bulawayo. All three my siblings and I sit/stand scattered amongst the others, with Mama at the back in one of her favourite postures: one arm across her chest while her chin rests on the other hand.

I remember Daddy making us breakfast on Saturdays as Mama usually went to attend YWCA (or the 'Y' as we referred to it) meetings. This was an international non-denominational women's movement that advocated for equality and justice for women through women's leadership meetings. Mama was one of the founder members of the Association and a staunch member when we lived in the Township Mission School.

I always claim I was an involuntary member of the 'Y' because they founded it in 1958, the year I was born. Or maybe it was prophetic in that I am the only one of her daughters who has never lost interest in the association and still maintains active membership even now. At the time Monde was ready for crèche and preschool, an organisation had been established for Black children by the 'Y' in Mpopoma, one of the townships in Bulawayo. There she learned all the nursery rhymes that she taught us at home.

In my last year of primary school, we had some cookery lessons at school. I remember that in one lesson we learned how to bake bread and butter pudding. On the following Sunday, I offered to make this pudding for the lunch. There was a lot of praise for my effort from my family.

As soon as I was eligible, Mama called us to become members of the Y-Teens, the children's wing of the Association. Xoli and I became members. One of the pillars of the 'Y' is that it is a movement for women, led by women. Therefore, much as we could invite boys to be members, they would be associate members who would not qualify to be full members.

Mama spoke to me about 'the birds and the bees' as I approached adolescence. She seemed rather shy and embarrassed but tackled the topic anyway. This opened channels for deeper and more intimate conversations with Mama, such as telling her about my boyfriends which I did from when I was a teenager until I got married. No topic was taboo in our chats right up to her passing. When I was older, she confessed that if she had not been a 'Y' member, she would not have been able to talk about such topics with us.

We learned about life through the 'Y' – it was like some life orientation programme where we had a voice to ask questions, teach one another what we knew (this was peer learning and cooperative learning at its best), and learn basic skills such as cleaning up after ourselves. We often referred to the slogan 'cleanliness is next to Godliness'. At annual general meetings and conferences, the Rural Mission Y-teens were famous for our cleaning skills (our motto was 'Leave a space the way you would like to find it') and looking after the environment. We spoke about boyfriends and what

qualities we wanted in our husbands. There was always a young adult working with us, and being close to her in age made it easy for us to engage freely and collaboratively in discussions of sensitive topics.

My parents made many friends, especially through their job as teachers, members of the church, and the YWCA. Many of their local and international friends, both Black and White, visited us. I remember that not long after I had made the bread and butter pudding, two White women had been invited for supper and Mama asked me to make the pudding. They loved it and Mama told them I had made it, and they even asked for the recipe, which I wrote down for them. These visitors became part of the village that grew me as they affirmed my efforts – a proud moment indeed.

Mama grew in the ‘Y’ and was selected the World Vice President for Africa. As a result, she travelled a lot – not only within Zimbabwe, but throughout the African continent and the world. Whenever she had to travel, she and Daddy made it a family affair. We would for instance drive to Salisbury (Harare) or Bulawayo as a family to accompany her before she boarded her flight or to welcome her on her return. She would always bring us something nice like the dresses she brought us back from Abidjan in the Ivory Coast (see Figure 6.10).

When I was in Standard 1 (Grade 3), we shared a classroom and a teacher with a Standard 2 (Grade 4) class. The teacher would teach us and then give us some work to do before she turned to teach the Standard 2 class, and vice versa. The government had stopped married women from teaching and, as a result, there was a shortage of teachers which resulted in two grades being taught by the same teacher in the same classroom. The YWCA, with Mama as leader of the delegation, met with the then minister of education and proposed that qualified married women teachers in the ‘Y’ would volunteer their services to address this shortage. They would not leave his office without an answer. He agreed that they could volunteer, but affirmed that they would not be paid. They went into the classrooms and taught while the YWCA Head Office ensured that they received groceries every month. After a term, the policy was revised and married teachers were once again reabsorbed into service. Thus, when I was promoted to Standard 2, we did not have to share a teacher. My mother demonstrated that when there is a passion for the nation’s children, it is easy to give of oneself and make a difference without expecting to be paid. This is a sentiment that I feel has been my attitude to this day.

Mama introduced an Adult Literacy project through the YWCA that, I think, could be compared to the Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) of today. My illiterate *Makhulu* became one of the students and made quick progress. Soon she could construct sentences in English and addressed us to test herself and show off her newfound proficiency. This showed me that it is never too late to learn. As the Shona people say: '*Kudzidza hakuperi*' (learning has no end). This lesson underpinned my entire life journey and strengthened my resolve as I embarked on this project as well.

5.5 The home girls

Mama had a friend called Aunt *Edith who came from the same area as she and was also married to a Zimbabwean man. They lived in Gweru in the town where Uncle *Sam, her husband, was a college lecturer. Aunt Edith was a nurse at the hospital in town. Their three daughters *Sihle, *Nandi and *Nomsa attended a multiracial Roman Catholic school. *Sihle, the eldest, was Monde's age. English was the language of teaching and learning across the schooling spectrum in the then Rhodesia. Usually, one parent would speak English to the children and the other would speak the vernacular, thereby modelling collaborative teaching and multilingualism. However, my parents tended to speak English more often, probably to support our school education which was in English. Whenever we spent time with our parents, our English needed to be polished but we generally did not spend too much time conversing in English amongst ourselves. There was a lot of laughter when one of us would forget an English word and simply insert one in the vernacular.

The first time I saw the musical *David and the Technicolour Dream Coat* was when *Sihle, *Nandi and *Nomsa invited us to their school concert. I have loved the theme song ever since. Their parents were also part of the village that grew me. Whenever we visited Mama's home in Sterkspruit, South Africa, we would be invited to Auntie's brother's family home (the home of the Mbethe family) at Blue Gums just outside Sterkspruit for lunch. We would spend the afternoon playing with their children, Sipho, Thandi and Vusi, whilst the parents whiled away the time with Uncle Wes and Auntie Mvusi, their counterparts. The Mbethe children treated us as their older siblings. I always treasured these visits as they further reinforced the value of family unity as well as the value of being grown by the village. The house was near the main road to Sterkspruit and opposite the gate to the house was the shop that Auntie ran. Driving there, the roof of the shop appeared first on our left before the house on the right became visible. We had to drive to Qhoboshiyane via Sterkspruit and this was a landmark that announced our arrival. My memory of

this time is filled with nostalgia as those were days when our only responsibility was to be obedient to and please our parents.



Figure 5.4: The party that visited the Zimbabwe Ruins when the Mbethe family visited from eKoloni (Photograph by EVS Dhlula, circa 1969)

*I remember that when Uncle Wes (Auntie's brother) and his family visited Gweru one year, we were four households as one family: Uncle Wes and Aunt Mvusi's family, *Uncle Sam and Aunt *Edith's family, Aunt Linda Dube (South African born and married to a Zimbabwean man) and her daughter Celiwe, and our family. We drove to the Great Zimbabwe Ruins and spent the day there. None of the dads appear in the photograph above – maybe they were all taking photographs for their own family records.*

There was also a record player and Uncle Wes and we danced to the music. I especially remember the 1969 hit song *Dizzy* by Tommy Roe as the most popular on that trip. The children had all been very young when we first visited the ruins and this trip was perhaps more special because we were old enough to appreciate what we saw and also because of all the fun we had. All the parents looked after us and made sure we learned about the ruins and the nearby Lake Kylie (now Lake Mutikwiri), which is man-made and was a source of water for irrigating the sugar estates in the area. We thus had an enjoyable experience of what we had learned theoretically in class. What

struck me most about this photograph is that our parents shared the joy of teaching us collaboratively about history while they made sure that we were also bonding and having fun.

5.6 Family friends

Uncle Peter and Aunt Pollyanna Mahlangu had met in Durban like my parents, but whilst Uncle Peter was also in teacher training like Daddy, Aunt Pollyanna was training as a nurse in one of the hospitals in Durban at the time. They got married the year before Mama and Daddy and, like my parents, they had four children, each a year older than each one of us. They had two sons who were first and last born while my parents had a first-born son and three daughters. The two families visited each other frequently when we lived in Bulawayo and I remember that they visited us for some occasions when we lived in the rural mission house. We tended to bond with our familial peers: *Bhut'Sonwabo* and *Bhut'Zulu*; Xoli and *Sis'Gugu*; Mandisa and Sibongile; and Monde and Ndabentle. Although *Bhut'Sonwabo* could not hear, he and *Bhut'Zulu* were close to the end. *Bhut'Zulu* was the doctor who attended to my brother on his deathbed. Monde and Ndabentle attended the YWCA crèche together. We also attended the same high school. When *Sis'Gugu* and Xoli turned 10, they decided to give Sibongile and me their dolls. But they swapped sisters as *Sis'Gugu* gave me her dolls and Xoli gave hers to Sibongile. Mine was a black doll that Aunt Pollyanna had bought in the United States. I kept this doll and gave it to my baby daughter. I suppose it was too early to give it to her because my high school learners must have picked it up when she had left it outside one afternoon because we never saw it again.

Uncle Peter and Aunt Pollyanna also treated us as their children. I remember Uncle Peter asking me about my career choice and wanting to know what impact I envisaged myself making in the community. He did not sound impressed by my decision to become a teacher, but when I explained that I was going to be a Home Economics teacher and the role I saw myself playing in the community, he expressed his approval. Both Mama and Auntie were actively engaged in community projects as Mama was involved with the 'Y' and Auntie was instrumental in the establishment of an old age home. Each was a board member on the other's project. As they collaboratively grew us, they always modelled family unity and loyalty in friendship.

5.7 Being a Brownie



Figure 5.5: Brownies at the Rural Mission, led by Mama (Photograph by EVS Dhlula, circa 1967)

Besides her engagement in the YWCA, Mama was involved in another community engagement as well. She was our leader in the Brownies, as depicted in the picture above. I remember wearing the brown Brownie tunic with a yellow scarf and a 'woggle' to hold it in place. In the rural setting, sashes were used instead of scarves because it was not easy to get the woggles. I also remember the motto of the Brownies ('Lend a hand') as well as the song we used to sing whenever we marched: "Brownies, lend a hand, it's our motto".

I suppose that motto has always stayed with me because I sometimes find myself in conflict when I have to make a decision about a priority or dilemma. For instance, my study sometimes suffered because I wanted to help someone who could have been helped by someone else. At work I will lend a hand to whoever comes to my office. I refer them to someone who can help if I am unable to do so. My students also know that I am always available to help, offer advice, or lend a listening ear.

5.8 Visit by *Tat'omkhulu waseKoloni*



Figure 5.6: Time to say Goodbye: Xoli, Tat'omkhulu wase Koloni, Mandisa, Bhut'Sonwabo, and Monde in front, at the Bulawayo Railway Station (Photograph by EVS Dhlula, 1969)

Tat'omkhulu wase Koloni (my maternal grandfather – literally, Grandfather from the Cape Colony), visited us at the rural mission. However, he had to be fetched from and taken back to the South Africa-bound train in Bulawayo. It was now time to say goodbye in more ways than one because that was the last time we saw him before his passing in 1970. That this was the last time we saw him evokes conflicting feelings: sadness because Bhut'Sonwabo and Monde also passed on, but also gratitude that they all affected my life positively. To 'unconfuse' myself, I prefer to celebrate their lives. I always have the feeling that I can still talk to them and that they listen to and watch over me.

I remember *Tat'omkhulu* used to affectionately call me Mandis and Mama Nqabs (one of Mama's Xhosa names was Nqabase, a derivative of *Nqaba kayise*, which means 'dad's unique gift'). I remember that when we visited Qhoboshane, I noted that he used goat's milk for his tea, but when he visited us he used condensed milk. You had to make two holes opposite each other in the top surface of the tin so that when you tilted it, the milk would ooze out. Two holes were necessary to avoid a vacuum which would have prevented the contents from running out. We used to hide in

the pantry and suck the sweet condensed milk out of the tin...yummy! The speed at which the condensed milk was finished puzzled Mama, but as no one was ever caught red-handed, she never solved the mystery. However, I suspect she may have had her suspicions. *Tat'omkhulu* also took a pint of beer occasionally. I once tasted beer from the dregs he had left in a bottle, but did not like the taste and resolved never to drink any alcoholic beverages. This is a decision I have never veered from, except for Holy Communion in church and a sip of bubbly when a toast is proposed.

5.9 Daddy, his siblings, and fathers



Figure 5.7: Seated: L-R: *Tat'omkhulu* wase *Mayitshe Farm* and his younger brother, *Charlie*. Standing: L-R: *Tat'omncinci Lex* (7th born) *Dad'obawo-Sis'Yo* (4th born), *Daddy* (2nd born), *Dad'obawo-S'omkhulu* (3rd born) and *Tat'omdala-uBhut'omkhulu* (1st born) (Photograph by ANN Dhlula, 1972)

This photograph was taken at the back of the Principal's house at the rural mission. In the background to the left is the garage where Mama's car is visible. Then there is the house (l-r): the pantry, the kitchen, and the bathroom with the boiler visible between Sis'Yo and Daddy. The window to our parents' bedroom is visible to the right of Bhut'omkhulu (See Figure 3.10 too). S'omkhulu was a Domestic Science (Home Economics/Consumer Studies) teacher and Sis'Yo was a nurse. Makhulu was very proud that her daughters were professionals. My grandparents' love of education also contributed to my striving to be where I am in my education.

This photograph was taken not long after Daddy had been ordained as a priest in the Anglican Church, and this would have been on a Sunday when my grandparents would have come to the house for tea after the service. Lex also worked with Daddy as the school clerk and lived nearby with his family. It must have been a special occasion for all these people to be together. The two Dad'obawos lived further away with their own families. It was only on special occasions that Bhut'omkhulu would come to church. Tat'omkhulu Charlie lived on his own farm and rarely came to the mission. Tat'omncinci Lex was the last one to pass away in 2019. They were all part of the village that grew me. Mama and Daddy, as the designers of the pattern that ordered our lives, ensured that we interacted with their families and regarded them as our parents too.

This picture is evocative of times when the whole family resided in one country, Zimbabwe. Getting together was not too much of a challenge compared to nowadays when our and our children's generations are scattered across many countries such as South Africa, Botswana, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. The only way we can communicate in a group setting is on social networks. I must admit, though, that the younger generations of my extended family are in constant touch with one another on social networks even though many of them have never met.

5.10 Mama and her siblings



Figure 5.8: Mama and her siblings: R-L (In order of seniority): Malum'uLanga (2nd born), Mama (3rd born), Malum'uGambu and Ncinci (4th born-twins) and Malum'uDumisani (5th born) (Photograph by EVS Dhlula, 1974 at Qhoboshane)

This picture was taken in 1974 on the last visit we took as a family to Mama's home. At this time, we had started leaving home. Xoli was already training as a nurse and I was awaiting my high school results so I could go into teacher education the following year. It was also on this visit that the tombstone for uTat'omkhulu wase Koloni was unveiled after he had passed away in 1970.

There was an age difference of 4 years between Mama and the twins, and one of 14 years between the twins and Malum'uDumisani, which made him 18 years younger than Mama. Their mother, Khesa, passed away when her last-born was only eight years old. A few years thereafter, Tat'omkhulu remarried and had three more children who are my younger peers, therefore they will appear in a photograph with us, taken on the same day, that is presented in Chapter Six.

Of the five siblings here, only Malum'uDumisani is still alive at the time of writing. Mama passed away in November 2018. They are standing against the Chevrolet Biscayne that Daddy drove at the time, and the mountains, part of the Drakensberg range, can be seen in the far background. Like the paternal family members in Figure 4.6, Mama's siblings were also part of the village that grew me through the efforts of Mama and Daddy in their joint roles as pattern designers in our lives.

This photograph brings to mind the family pride that these siblings always displayed whenever they were together or when they spoke about one another. They have instilled that pride in us as the children and siblings in their extended family.

I remember that *Malum'uDumisani* (5th born) taught us about the heart using the heart of one of the animals that had been slaughtered for the tombstone unveiling. He described the different parts of the heart and explained how they function. By this time, I had already written my final high school examinations, but this lesson of a real heart has always stayed with me.

When I lived in Matatiele and *Malum'uLanga* (2nd born) had passed on, *Malum'uDumisani's* telegram telling me of this death arrived on the day of the funeral. A week later, we met by chance in Mthatha and he took me to Qhoboshane on his way back. He took me through the rites of saying farewell to his late brother. He also accompanied me halfway back to Matatiele. The link between the two places was a big challenge at the time, as he took on the role of his sister in her absence.

Whenever I needed to go to Johannesburg, *Malum'uGambu* (4th born and twin) always made those occasions special. I would arrive at Johannesburg Park Station by bus at around 3 am and he would be waiting for me. When we got to his house in Rockville, Soweto, he would make a fire in the

coal stove and some tea, and he and I would chat until *Malumekazi*, his wife, got up to prepare for the new day. Also, if I had to go to the Home Affairs offices or the Zimbabwe Mission in Pretoria, he would take the day off work and take me there. I remember him taking me to the university in Pretoria to register for my first degree. He was so proud and told a man he had started to chat with that he had brought his *Mtshana* (niece) who wanted to further her studies.

My mother's siblings thus always closed the gap when Mama and Daddy were far away. They contributed enormously to my growth and development and taught me many lessons such as obedience, respect, the joy of having fun together, family love and caring, support, and togetherness.

5.11 Conclusion

In this chapter I continued the quest to answer my first research question: *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* The following are my reflections on the lessons learned from this part of my personal history.

My sense of self-identity and self-worth were encouraged and nurtured by Mama and Daddy's close relatives and friends who pretty much ensured that they socialised me to grow up into a person who could hold her head up high in any social situation. They shared common values and norms by approving of the good and the positive and disapproving of what was naughty and cheeky – they thus insisted that their siblings' children embraced the same positive behaviours as their own children. I learned how to conform to societal norms and how to adhere to high standards of behaviour on both sides of the Limpopo River, which forms the border between South Africa and Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia). These qualities capacitated me to attract the attention of a good man and to marry this South African.

My cultural identity as a Xhosa-speaking person was nurtured and solidified by my parents' efforts to ensure that their children were exposed to family, friends and communities where religion, language, history, culture and friendships were paramount. I was grown to understand my paternal and maternal families' histories and my position as a valued member. By reviewing the value of the memories that I have shared in this chapter, I discovered just how much I learnt during the times I spent with my extended family.

Towards the end of their lives, my parents relied on me to represent them by communicating with my extended family in situations such as the time when *Ncinci* was not well. For instance, Mama valued my opinion when she needed to decide when *Ncinci*'s condition was so serious that she needed to come, and she trusted my word when I advised her to do so. Because my elders displayed trust in me, I always try to keep my word and be a trustworthy person. On our last visit to Mama's home as a family, *Ncinci* expressed her confidence and pride in me when I assisted her with the laundry and cooking as a 16-year-old. After my marriage when I moved to my husband's home in Matatiele in South Africa, she wrote me a letter to express confidence in my ability to adapt to my new life and family. By remembering this and other interactions, I always try to do my best for someone who is in my space – sometimes to my disadvantage. I have thus learnt through my interactions with my parents' siblings and friends to be sociable and to easily adapt to new people and situations.

I learned that my parents displayed the value of collaborative learning when they put us in contact with their siblings and friends. The different elders that crossed my path have and still remain my elders whose opinions I have always valued. I interacted with them in different ways as my parents made sure that they played their part in growing me. This relates to the fact that, in collaborative learning, every member of the group has a specific role to play which is valued by the other members. My interactions with my elders were underpinned by the role that my parents played as the initiators of my learning and the other members of my extended family were part of the collaborative team from which I learned different skills and knowledge.

When I grew up, my elders dealt immediately with any misbehaviour and did not wait for 'a more suitable time'. Thus I deal with any unpleasant behaviour in a collaborative learning situation immediately and preferably within the group itself or, if only one individual is involved, in privacy. In my home, community and school we were praised whenever we did well but we were assertively discouraged from misbehaving. I thus feel that this can be applied in collaborative learning situations where members of groups should be encouraged to acknowledge the good others do and say, and also constructively criticise what is undesirable.

By engaging in this personal history writing, my eyes have been opened to the norms and values that I learned from my elders since my childhood. I have come to appreciate the diversity of people. For example, while Mama was quick with 'the stick' when we were small, her sister, *Ncinci*, would be more quietly assertive and very effective when she reprimanded us. I have learned that collaborative learning is a form of socialisation where each member of the group is a unique

individual but has to work together with the others for the common good. My students also need to realise that there are ways of behaving in a collaborative learning group that are acceptable whereas other behaviours are not.

What is now clear in my understanding of culture is that, while the most common culture we tend to speak about is our ethnic background, there is also a family culture and a work culture that encourage positive behaviours while others are regarded as rude and unacceptable. Thus each group of learners/students that the teacher encourages to engage in collaborative learning will develop a certain culture and identity. However, this culture and identity need to be firmly embedded in the lessons that have been learnt and the values that have been imbibed since childhood. So first and foremost, I want to encourage my students to look back to their personal histories and identify what they learned and from which elders in their family circles these lessons came. I envisage that I shall be able to use this process as a basis for collaborative learning – that is, that my students will not only acknowledge and embrace the role that their elders played in their education, but that they will also understand that, in my class, we are a family while our family backgrounds will represent our extended families. I intend to use this new insight as a platform for a lesson in teaching and learning methodology which is part of their preparation to become teachers. I need my students to learn to work with any classmate as ‘part of a family’ who deserves to be listened to and whose opinions and views are respected, even if there may be disagreements.

In this chapter I explored the role of my parents’ siblings and friends in my life and I highlighted special events when I learnt with and from them as I grew up and matured. My parents exposed me to their siblings, families of origin, friends, and organisations such as the YWCA and the Brownies. All these different people and organisations made a great impact on my life and my decision to become a teacher and they have been influential in making me the educator that I am today. Therefore, by exposing myself to this process of self-study, I have become more aware of who I am and where I want to go to improve my professional practice.

In the next chapter shall I continue my quest to answer the first research question: *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* I focus on episodes of learning from my interactions with my grandparents and those who lived with them.

CHAPTER SIX: *SINIXABISILE* (WE VALUE YOU)

6.1 Introduction

In this self-study research project, which focused on collaborative learning, I explored my personal history for episodes and events when my learning was encouraged and enhanced by and through others. I anticipated that this investigation would help me to understand my learnings that guided me towards becoming a teacher and made me the teacher that I am now. I also intended to look at collaborative learning from a professional point of view so that I may better understand the diversity among the students that I teach and will teach at university in the future. When I conceptualised the study, I envisaged that I could improve my professional practice and become the best teacher educator that I can be.

In the previous chapter, I looked at what I learnt from my ‘other’ parents who were my parents’ siblings and extended families, home girls and friends, and the organisations of which our family were members at the insistence of my parents. In this chapter I continue to look at how my parents, as the designers of the pattern of my life, contributed to ways in which I learnt collaboratively by ensuring that my siblings and I knew our grandparents and had good relations with them. My two sets of grandparents lived in different countries: the paternal set in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and the maternal set in South Africa. We referred to them as *uMakhulu no Tat’omkhulu base Mayitshe* (Grandmother and Grandfather from Mayitshe Farm) which was in Gokomera district of Gweru in Zimbabwe, and *uMakhulu no Tat’omkhulu base Koloni* (Grandmother and Grandfather from the Cape Colony which was in Qhoboshane village in the Eastern Cape Province in South Africa). Every four years we travelled to visit the maternal side of the family and, in between, we would visit our paternal grandparents

6.2 On The Road



Figure 6.1: The Blue Lagoon: Chevrolet 150, a 1957 model (Photograph by EVS Dhlula, circa 1967)

The Blue Lagoon and, later, the Chevrolet Biscayne were the cars that we travelled in as a family whenever we went to visit our grandparents. These journeys were memorable. The photograph of the Blue Lagoon signifies the value my parents attached to their parents. It also signifies that they understood the value of establishing and nurturing relations between their parents and their children, which were so good that we always looked forward to visiting our grandparents.

Our journeys from Zimbabwe to the Cape Colony usually progressed in a set manner. We would leave home at 03h00 and reach Johannesburg in the late afternoon during peak hour, usually around 17h00. On these journeys, Daddy sat *Bhut'Sonwabo* in the front seat between himself and Mama and the three girls would be seated in the back. My brother was a practical joker and a typical bully (as only brothers can be) and Daddy knew we would be miserable if he were to sit with us in the back.

My parents would take turns to drive the car. Whenever the driver needed a break, or at mealtimes (we took provisions in a basket), we would stop in a lay-by and have refreshments and relax before continuing the journey. During these journeys we would play word games and sing to stave off boredom. Once we had crossed the border into South Africa, the car radio always lost signal, so we entertained ourselves. I remember games such as *I spy with my little eye...* which was a favourite. I also remember some popular South African music of the time such as *Isinkwa nobanana* by Izintombi Zesimanjemanje and international songs such as *Beautiful Sunday* by Daniel Boone, and many others.

Once in Johannesburg, Mama would have a road map on her lap and we would look out for the street names and then she would direct my dad so that he could change lanes or make a turn. In this collaborative way we arrived at *Malume's* home in Rockville, Soweto. The map only took us out of the central business district of Johannesburg and not through the townships. Somehow, we always managed to find the petrol garage known as 'Uncle Charlie's'. Spotting the garage always assured us that we were on the right road. From there we would get final directions. I always found the manner in which directions were given to us by the petrol attendants very interesting. They would use an interesting mixture of English, isiXhosa and isiZulu as Daddy asked for directions in isiXhosa. I particularly remember that the traffic lights

were referred to as *olhobothi* (there is no ‘r’ sound in Nguni languages such as isiXhosa and isiZulu).

We were always amused that once we had reached South Africa in a car with Rhodesian number plates, racial segregation between Rhodesian Blacks and Whites eased. Whenever other Rhodesians drove past us when we were parked in a lay-bye, they would hoot and wave regardless of their race, which was unheard of in Rhodesia. We also did the same. In a strange land, we acknowledged one another as brothers and sisters from the same country.

6.3: “O. B. Dhlula, Mayitshe Farm, Gokomera, Plot 16, Close the Gate!”

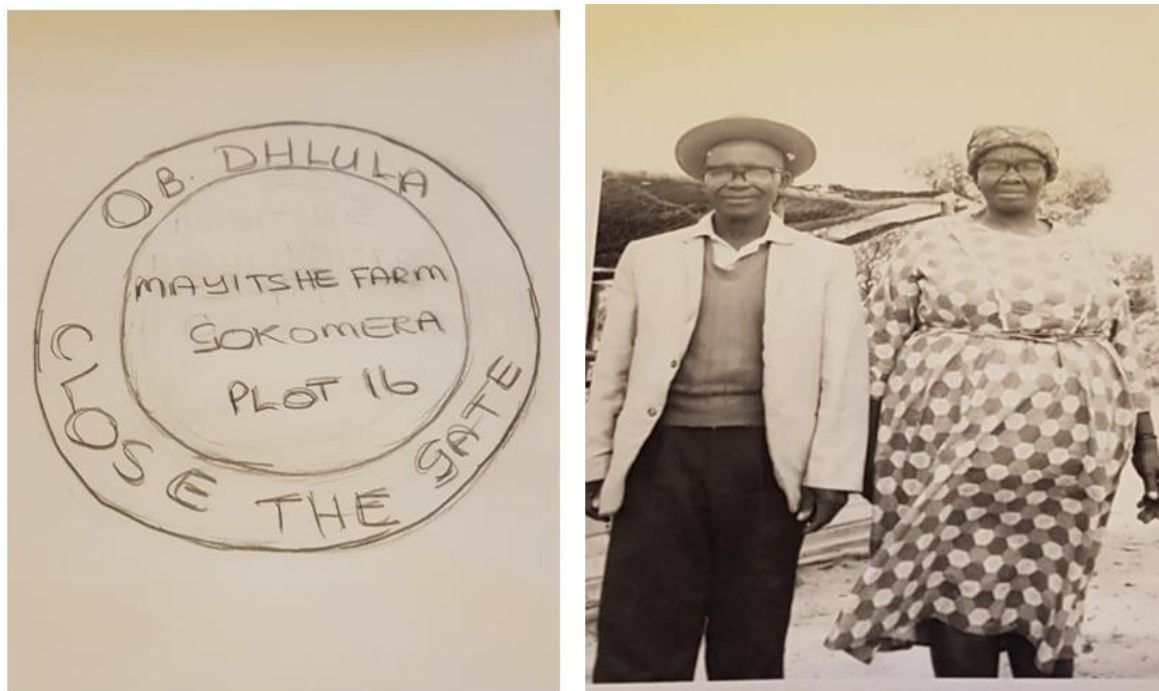


Figure 6.2: (l) *On the Gate to Mayitshe Farm* (Memory drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2017; (r) *My paternal Grandparents at Mayitshe Farm* (photograph by EVS Dhlula, circa 1965)

“On the left is a drawing of the plaque on the gate as you entered Mayitshe Farm. When we drove to our paternal grandparents’ home, there was a bend in the road that signalled that the next turn would be the turnoff to the gate of the farm. Immediately Daddy turned off towards the gate, we would start reciting, ‘OB Dhlula, Mayitshe Farm, Gokomera, Plot 16, Close the gate!’ In December 2016 my mom, my sister and I, the three remaining members of our nucleus family at the time, visited the farm again and, when we turned towards the gate, we recited the slogan again. The nostalgia of my memories of these visits and the people who had passed lasted for many days.

On the right is a photograph of my paternal grandparents, Oliver and Maria (generally pronounced as 'Aliver' and 'Maraya'), otherwise called 'Tat'omkhulu' and 'Makhulu' respectively. They were of South African origin but had migrated to the then Rhodesia. Daddy was the second-born child and the first to be born in Rhodesia. They had eight children: six sons and two daughters, and six of these children had four children or more each. One son had one child and the other left home when he was quite young, went to look for a golden future in South Africa, and never went back home. News of his passing reached the family when I was a teenager. This picture is of the Matriarch and the Patriarch of the clan." (Oral presentation at a Critical Friends' Support Group session: 23 June 2017)

I learnt so much from my visits to my paternal grandparents' farm (Mayitshe Farm), which was 26 km from Gweru. We lived in Zimbabwe's second-largest city, Bulawayo, until I turned 8 in 1966. After that, we lived at a rural mission (see Chapter Four) which was 6 km further on past Mayitshe Farm. We always visited my paternal grandparents over Christmas, as did my cousins and their parents.

At Mayitshe Farm there was a farmhouse (*Indlu enkulu*) and from the gate to the farmhouse was about 75-100 m of straight road with a dam on the left about halfway to the house. The house had a veranda facing the gate and *Makhulu* would sit on the veranda wielding her sewing machine with her spectacles almost falling off her nose. If she heard the sound of a vehicle she would look up over her glasses and shout that visitors were coming to whoever else would be at home. Near the farmhouse, the road encircled a flower garden and cars would go halfway around it and stop in front of the house. In the homestead there was '*intanga*' (isiXhosa – *iintanga* is plural) where the sons who were grown up each built himself a stand-alone room (the shape would be up to him) where he and his new wife lived after their marriage. My dad had one, so whenever we visited Mayitshe Farm, we would sleep in his room...his *intanga*.

Being the children of her favourite son (we sensed that he was her favourite as young as we were) my siblings and I we were afforded the elevated status generally reserved for *abatshana* (grandchildren who were a daughter's children). *Makhulu* thus never really expected of us to do any chores. Two of her sons lived on the farm and, between them, they had 13 children. The eldest had 6 and the middle son had 7. There were three other children: Sis Bee (see Chapter 5), a son, and another daughter born of my elder *Dad'obawo*, *S'omkhulu*. The latter two grew up on the farm and lived with my grandparents. Altogether, there were about 16 children of various ages on the

farm. This is a rough estimate because there were almost always a few others that I never knew how they were related to me.

Older girls were expected to fetch water from the dam and generally do the chores around the homestead. My sisters and I also wanted to carry buckets of water, but we were each given *ithunga* (a small bucket generally used for milking) to carry. These buckets were not carried on our heads but by hand. They were not made for this purpose, so they were flat-bottomed and we could not carry them on our heads. That came later when we were older. Our older cousins taught us how to balance buckets on our heads in the African tradition. Thus we learnt that part of our heritage collaboratively. We became quite adept at it as it was quite a skill to carry water to the house in a bucket on your head without spilling any.

We also learnt other domestic skills at Mayitshe Farm. For instance, we learnt to collect damp cow dung in a metal basin and mix it with water, just so, so we could polish/smear (*ukusinda ngobulongwe*) it on the mud floor in the kitchen. We learnt this from our cousins. Incidentally, the cousins who were most active in events of collaborative learning were from a family of seven children, most of whom were girls. Whenever we were at Mayitshe Farm, we addressed our paternal cousins' mother as 'Mama' and our mother was *Mam'ophakathi* (the middle mom) to all of us. We also knew that, whenever it was time for meals, 'Mama' would take care of us. When we wanted cake and snacks, we went to *Mam'ophakathi* (my mom) and when we wanted laughter and stories we went to *Mancinci* (this is how we addressed the youngest of the 'mamas'). The eldest of them all (*uM'omkhulu*) liked her privacy and kept to her own house on the farm even though it was less than 40 metres from *Indlu enkulu*, but her children often joined us at *Indlu enkulu*.

Our meals were dished up in common bowls and we ate from them using our hands. We were grouped according to age and not gender per bowl. We all had to make sure our hands were clean before eating. We were always encouraged to eat in such a way that those sharing a dish had enough to eat. And what fun that was! As a family my siblings and I ate from individual plates, so I treasured these times when we ate from common bowls. I especially remember us eating *umvubo* (mealie pap/stiff porridge with sour milk) with our hands. As one raised one's hand to put the food into the mouth, some of the sour milk would flow down the arm towards the elbow...of course, the tongue followed to collect and avoid waste...

When *Makhulu* went outside at first light in the morning, she always carried a small bowl with grains of maize. She would hum the hymn *Jesus shall reign where'er the sun sets* and she would scatter the grains in the yard (much like the picture of the sower in the Bible Society emblem). The chickens would come running to eat the grains. It reached the point when all she had to do was walk out of the house and the chickens would gather around her. We would also sing or hum this tune at any time of the day, and the chickens would come running towards us. We had to stop this bit of fun when one of the 'mamas' caught us at it. I can never hear or sing this tune without thinking of *Makhulu* and her chickens. This taught me about conditioning long before I came into contact with educational psychology. I was also taught *ukungqusha* (to stamp meal grain into samp using a traditional pestle and mortar) by my cousins at Mayitshe Farm. I became quite proficient at it. *Makhulu* was very encouraging which motivated me to want to learn all these skills just to impress her, never dreaming that they would one day stand me in good stead as a married woman, particularly as I had to carry water home in a bucket on my head.

Tat'omkhulu and our dads would generally be home only for breakfast and supper as they would be checking on and mending the fences around the farm. They also tended to any livestock that needed attention or inoculations. The boys herded the cattle while the girls were supervised by the mamas and *Makhulu* during the week.

When the evening milking was done, we sometimes went to the kraal and the boys would squeeze the milk so that it streamed directly into our mouths (*Ukukleza/ukukreza*). I always found this experience exciting. The girls were also expected to assist with the preparations for supper. There were always strangers and I was not certain how we were related. I remember a very sickly woman who had a little daughter. The mother eventually died but the little girl grew up as part of *Makhulu's* household and, like her grandchildren who lived on Mayitshe Farm, she was afforded a chance to go to school. I learnt that *Makhulu* and *Tat'omkhulu* had found the mother and child in town. *Makhulu* had walked past the woman and her baby sitting on the pavement. When she came back the same way and they were still sitting there, she asked why. The woman had run away from her abusive husband. They were both hungry and desperate as she did not have a penny to her name. She was of South African origin and wanted to go back home. After consulting *Tat'omkhulu*, they brought the woman and baby to Mayitshe Farm and *Makhulu* intended to nurse them back to health. The plan was that once she was well, the woman would be assisted to find a job and save money to go home. I suspect my grandparents must have noticed just how unwell the woman and her baby were, hence this plan. The mother passed away a few months later and the

daughter became one of my cousins. However, she has since died and is survived by her husband and children. I also remember that *Makhulu* nursed an old, sickly man until he breathed his last and was buried on the farm. He was of Malawian origin and had also been found begging for food in town.

Another family that lived independently on the farm was that of *Tat'omkhulu's* sister, *uGog'uFlossie* (Granny Flossie). Although I never saw her husband, she had some children. Her children and grandchildren were also part of our extended family and were always present on days of celebration such as Christmas and New Year. *Tat'omkhulu* and *Makhulu* were the custodians of the Xhosa identity and they guarded it jealously by ensuring that we honoured Xhosa traditions such as initiation, food traditions, and marriage rites. All our dads married Xhosa-speaking women and this greatly contributed to our identity. The isiXhosa language was maintained, although for us it was diluted because at school we had to learn isiNdebele, a dialect of isiZulu instead of isiXhosa. We maintained our Xhosa identity through some of the rituals that were performed. For example, our brothers attended traditional initiation schools when they had reached the right age.

Another aspect of establishing our identity was the performance of other rituals such as going to church. Whenever we were at Mayitshe and it was a Sunday, *Tat'omkhulu* loaded us into his car (*Nkom'iyahlaba*) and we would go to the Anglican Church in the morning. In the afternoon, he would take us to the Orthodox Church, referred to as *iTopiya*, where he would sometimes preach.

A prayer was also said just before supper every day without fail. The prayer was not conducted according to any denominational ritual, but the family had its own custom of Bible reading, singing a hymn, and then we would sing the Lord's Prayer in isiXhosa. Then one of the adults would pray, and then we would sing grace just before supper. The custom of saying prayers at Mayitshe Farm and in our household was deeply entrenched in our family. We learnt hymns in isiXhosa, which was not a language native to Zimbabwe. I was not sure what the connection between *Tat'omkhulu* and the Methodist church was until I had a chance to talk to Mama about it. His family had been Methodist and the church leaders once asked him to become a priest. He felt affronted that, uneducated as he was, they had asked him, so he left the Methodist church. He reasoned that the Methodist church leaders were not serious enough as they dared to ask someone who could not read the Bible to be a church leader. Looking back, I think he might have felt overwhelmed too. On the other hand, he might genuinely have been disturbed because of his respect for education and the role educated leaders should play in the community.

After supper and before bedtime, one of our fathers would tell us a folktale or a fable. This is called *intsomi* in isiXhosa or *inganekwane* in isiNdebele. There was a myth that these stories could not be told during daytime as the narrator would grow horns. We would sit around the fire in the kitchen or outside. I remember a story about *uMvundla no Nteletsha* (the rabbit and the hare). In the story, they each agreed to get into a pot of water whilst the other one would light a fire under the pot. When it became too hot, the one inside would shout and the other would remove the fire and take him out. This was so they could keep warm on that cold day. *UMvundla* went in first and when it got too hot, he shouted and *Nteletsha* took him out. Then *Nteletsha*'s turn came and, when he shouted for *Mvundla* to take him out, *Mvundla* did not do so until *Nteletsha* was cooked and *Mvundla* ate him. Afterwards, *Mvundla*, with a full stomach, walked around singing:

'Pereregu pe!

Sas'phekana; (We were cooking each other)

Pereregu pe! Sas'phekana;

Mina ngasila, uNteletsha wavuthwa (x2). (I survived *Nteletsha* got cooked)

Of course we all joined in when this song was sung. The other animals somehow knew that *Mvundla* had killed and eaten *Nteletsha* and *Mvundla* was banished from the animal kingdom. No one was prepared to forgive him no matter how much he pleaded for forgiveness. The moral of the story is: know who to trust in life/crime does not pay/even when no one sees you, the truth will come out eventually. Consequently, whenever I thought of getting into some mischief, I would remember this fable and the song. Sometimes, especially if we sat around a fire outside, someone would tell a horror story. Because these always scared me, I quickly forgot them so I do not remember any. All I remember is the feeling of fear as we sat with our backs to the dark while we all faced one another across the fire.

Christmas was always a special day for my family. We woke up too late, *Makhulu* always told us, to see the sun dancing on Christmas day. No matter how hard we tried, we could never catch the dancing sun! During a discussion after my presentation in 2017, Nad linked the concept or myth of the dancing sun to indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) and his work in Cultural Astronomy. He was familiar with the concept of the dancing sun because, in an interview with some students, they had told him that on Christmas day they had looked for the dancing sun but, like us, they had never been able to catch it.

My critical friends offered valuable comments about learning and songs. Daisy said:

“In the singing, everything together is what amounts to the meaning-making of your life and I am wondering if songs could be brought in... because I think it is such an embodiment rather than only academic.”

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Nad added his point of view:

“Singing is very important because part of preserving cultural knowledge is not just your experience, but your songs and the way it [a story] was told ... the emotions, the context, and I think it is the vital part of the story and the words that are in a language. That is a vital part of cultural preservation. So sometimes, if we leave that out, we miss out on the essence of the culture.”

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Kathleen and Daisy summed it up:

Kathleen: “But even then, what was it...that woke you up in the morning wanting to see the sun dancing? What was it that made your Gran keep on singing to the chickens? However, I think also, what we are pointing out about storytelling and singing is fundamental archetypal human activities: collaborative, supportive networking kind of activities are things we can explore more.”

Daisy: “We can call it the climate. There is a way...it is the three Cs around communication, how you make meaning. But even around the fireside it is about storytelling because everything...the dancing...the action – it was in singing and all of that...”

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These comments reminded me that I really love and enjoy music and simply singing. Sometimes I do not even hear myself humming. As I can so easily remember the activities and the songs that I learnt and enjoyed, I should consider encouraging my students to feel free to use singing and music if they should feel it would be a valuable method to use when they do their presentations.

Kathleen’s question about what it was that had made us try to see the dancing sun and the memory of *Makhulu* singing to her chickens challenged me to consider ways of motivating my students so that they will internalise the will to get up and feel excited about coming to class or going to their classes once they start working after obtaining their qualification.

Tat'omkhulu was a fencing contractor and he always had a car (*Nkom'iyahlaba*) and a truck that he used for work. We used to play with the old truck tyres. One would fold him-/herself into the inner circle of the tyre and another one would roll the tyre down the road from the farm gate to the house. It was fun but, after I had watched the movie *e'Lollipop* in my teens, I came to realise just how dangerous this game could be. There has to be a lot of trust between you and the person pushing the tyre. Luckily I do not remember any of us ever landing among thorns or in the dam.

One of my critical friends, Nad, commented as follows:

“I can relate to your experiences because it was almost identical to the early childhood that I had ... playing with tyres and a large family. I am the youngest of nine and a twin as well, so the kind of experience that you share is quite beautiful in a sense that I never thought that I would be able to... share those experiences outside my family. In addition, even within my family, everyone has forgotten about history. So I think there's a lot of value in just giving some of the incidents...the highlights that happened...”
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Although Nad and I grew up in different countries, some of our childhood games were the same. This lesson is that I should find some commonalities in the experiences my students and I had so that we can move from the familiar to the unfamiliar as I guide them to become teachers in their own classrooms. Secondly, although his nucleus family was larger than mine was, both experienced learning through ‘family togetherness’.

I only learnt when I was an adult that *Tat'omkhulu* never went to school as he and his siblings had to labour on the farm where they grew up in the Port Alfred area in South Africa. He would stop other children on their way back from school and beg them to teach him all they had learnt at school. This is how he learnt to read the Bible after a fashion. This need to know and his perseverance were what made him a successful farmer and contractor. In the 1950s, together with my dad and his brothers, he fenced the roadsides between Gweru and Bulawayo, a stretch of about 160 km.

I particularly remember that on Christmas day when *Tat'omncinci* Bonakele, one of Daddy's cousins, would come down from the gate to the house literally hidden in branches and brightly coloured pieces of fabric tied around himself. He would be dancing and singing a song that we also happily danced to:

“Bantwana Jabulani, bantwan’i Happy Christmas, bantwana jabulani, bantwan’i Happy Christmas, Jabulani... yi Happy Christmas.....” (Children rejoice! Children, it’s Happy Christmas!)

It was one of the highlights of the days that I spent at Mayitshe Farm. *Tat’omncinci* knew us all by name and his performance always made Christmas exciting – he made me feel he really cared about us as part of the family, and this instilled a deeper sense of family love amongst us.

Then there was church. We would pile into any car – Daddy’s or *Tat’omkhulu’s* (named *Nkom’iyahlaba*) – and we were all dressed in our best Christmas outfits wearing new dresses and shoes. The church service was held in isiNdebele. One hymn that I always enjoyed listening to when *Makhulu* sang it was:

<u>The IsiNdebele version</u>	<u>The English version</u>
<u>Muzi wase Bethlehem</u>	<u>Bethlehem, of noblest cities</u>
1. <i>Muzi wase Bethlehem,</i> <i>uyedlula yonk’eminye,</i> <i>Kwakuvel’inksosi kuwe,</i> <i>Engu Jesu uMsindisi</i>	1. Bethlehem, of noblest cities None can once with thee compare: Thou alone the Lord from heaven Didst for us Incarnate bear.
2. <i>Yabe inhle inkanyezi</i> <i>Kunelanga ekuseni</i> <i>Ebikela emhlabeni</i> <i>Ukuzalwa kukaJesu</i>	2. Fairer than the sun at morning Was the star that told his birth, To the lands their God announcing, Hid beneath a form of earth.
(From memory)	(Prudentius, A. C., 1908)

I enjoyed the second verse more as there was this mysterious ‘dancing sun’ that we always missed as well as the star we were told was only visible along the route travelled by the wise men from the East. *Makhulu* had a beautiful voice intonation and she used this with great effect when she sang this hymn. She would embellish the tune with harmonising and interjections at the end of a phrase. Somehow, every time I went to the rural mission Christmas service, we never failed to sing this hymn. *Makhulu’s* ‘decoration’ of the song never varied. Fortunately, I shall always remember listening to her voice as she sang as I left the country long before she stopped attending church at

the rural church.

During one Christmas service I was so entranced with my dress that was decorated with *iphephezela* that I did not notice an elderly person and thus did not cede my seat to her. This was a dress with a lace frill (*iphephezela*) down the front, the neck and the sleeve hem and was the height of fashion at the time (see Figure 7.8). I was teased that I had considered myself too smart for the rural elder and this embarrassment was a lesson that I learnt very early: respect your elders and the disabled no matter what.

The highlight of every Christmas was dinner cooked by our Mamas. Watching the Mamas working as one at their different stations to make our day unforgettable was a joy to behold. *Makhulu* sparkled on these occasions. My sister also remembers this and recently demanded that red jelly and custard should still be on the menu on family occasions. We were reminiscing about our growing up days when every special meal, such as Christmas dinners, was always followed by red jelly and custard. Such simple elements of our traditions have gone a long way towards affirming my identity and my understanding of who I am.

One skill that I learnt together with my cousins and sisters was fetching water. This knowledge came in handy after my marriage and when I went to live in Matatiele in South Africa. We lived in a village not far from my in-laws' farm and I not only fetched water in a bucket that I carried on my head, but I did it with a baby on my back. Another skill, *ukusinda ngobulongwe* (smearing cow dung on a floor), came in handy at the church we attended in Mafube village in Matatiele. This task was done together with other women of the church. *Ukungqusha*, which was a task that I performed while I lived on my in-laws' farm (Charles Brownlee Farm near Matatiele), was when we would grind mealies for 'samp' to feed the family and the farmhands. This was another skill I had learnt at Mayitshe Farm.

When I discussed what I had learnt from these experiences, Nad offered the following comment:

"We don't often see our family as [an opportunity for] collaborative learning – we just take it for granted that we are going to learn from each other. I like the spin that you put on it... I think there are some deeper insights that you can extend. With the network sharing, there's a lot that can come out through collaborative learning. And also, collaborative learning that happened in the family, you've taken it further and passed on to the next generation which

is important in cultural knowledge and in trying to generate new ideas, new identities – but not forgetting the past.”

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Nad’s comment confirmed my notion that the lessons that we learn from our elders are always important as they allow us to share experiences that the younger generation can always learn from. This is something I sometimes do in my classes when I share my experiences.

When we moved from the township in Bulawayo to the rural mission where Daddy had been deployed in 1966, we had more frequent interaction with our grandparents. They came to church every Sunday and had tea at our home without fail. After tea we would walk them to their car (*Nkom’iyahlaba*) near the church. I remember one such occasion when Xoli and I were teenagers and *Makhulu* suddenly had the urge to educate us about the opposite sex. I was walking a little ahead of them with *Tat’omkhulu*. *Makhulu* called us and told us that when a boy proposed love to us, we should not just say yes, but let him sweat first, otherwise boys would regard us as ‘easy’. She did this when she gave *Tat’omkhulu* (referring to him as Aliver) a hard time in their days. “*Wathi esithi, Maraya, Maraya...*” (“When he said, ‘Maria, Maria...’”) “*Ndathi, ‘Uthini Aliver, uthetha nam?’*” (“I said, ‘What are you saying, Oliver? Are you talking to me?’”). *Tat’omkhulu* must have felt embarrassed because he pulled me aside and asked what *Makhulu* had been saying. I found this interaction very touching as it demonstrated that *Makhulu* cared about us and that they still had a loving relationship. This exchange was also reminiscent of the *Ubuntu* philosophy where we talk about a village raising a child. She was playing her part in our education as young women. Their relationship was one of caring. Daddy went to town almost on a daily basis and he regularly went to Mayitshe Farm both on his way to and from town. One day I was with *Makhulu* on the veranda and she looked up and remarked that there was a car approaching on the road. It was strange at that time of the day, but sure enough, it was Daddy who came home to fetch a shopping list she had compiled. His concern of her needs was touching.

I remember a time when we had to travel with Daddy to Bulawayo – we still had friends and cousins there – as he had a church meeting to attend as superintendent of the Anglican mission. On our way back from town a few days before then, he drove into Mayitshe as usual. *Makhulu* came to the car and exchanged some pleasantries with us. Then she asked Daddy what he thought of her ‘adjustment’. He seemed not to remember, and she whispered something into his ear. He told her not to worry, it was all sorted out, and we proceeded on our way home. As he was driving

out, he asked us if we knew what his mother's 'adjustment' meant and we said that we did not, he told us it was a suggestion. *Makhulu* had expressed the wish to go to Bulawayo with him (her two daughters, my *Dad'obawos*, lived there) and she had suggested that he should leave us behind if there was not enough space in the car. He seated us all nicely and we enjoyed this journey together.

In our teens, I remember us spending New Year's eve at Mayitshe Farm. One of my cousins, *Bhut'Sipho*, was also there on this particular day. He was *Tat'omdala's* second-born son. He was quite a bit older than I was. For some years he had been absent from these holiday celebrations. He had a portable radio and we all sat near him under the stars and listened to music. We had been told that, at midnight, the sky would split into two and we would see the old sky giving way to a new one, signalling the New Year. I remember the songs *Guilty* and *Distant Drums* by Jim Reeves and *Bhut'Sipho* sang along as they played on the radio. Then, at the stroke of midnight, he switched off the radio and we waited in silence and...nothing happened! A myth was busted on this night. We could not wait to tell our parents that there was no truth in their New Year's story. Daddy gave his usual answer: '*Sasinikhulisa!*' (We were growing you!). Years later I still remembered the song *Distant drums* and that it was probably the last time I had seen *Bhut'Sipho*. The next time I heard about him was when he came home from the war. He was the one (under a *nom de guerre*) who had raised the Zimbabwean flag on the attainment of independence in 1980, by which time I was married and had left the country for South Africa. Perhaps he was listening to some distant drums of war calling his name on that special New Year's eve. I shall never know because, much as we communicated by mail after his return home, we never met again before he passed away.

When I was in my third and final year at college, *Makhulu* requested that I make a dress for her. Mama must have known what fabric *Makhulu* had in mind because she assisted me in finding a few patterns from her collection and advised me what to watch out for so that the pattern would help shape the dress to fit *Makhulu's* figure perfectly. By this time, I was quite adept on the manual sewing machine as Mama did not have an electric one. It took me a day to make a dress, two hours to make a skirt and a full morning to make a blouse. I caught a lift with Daddy and he dropped me off at Mayitshe. We looked at the fabric and patterns, two generations of sewing experts, and then agreed which pattern to use and I started. *Makhulu* could not sit still and watch as she was used to doing all the sewing herself. She left me to it but kept bringing me snacks to enjoy – she must have taken the trouble to prepare them especially for this day. By late afternoon her dress was ready, and she was very happy. She heaped praises on me in gratitude. She even gave me a lovely piece of fabric as a gift, saying it was her wedding present to me and that I should make myself a dress.

As I started clearing up the sewing area, she dropped a few pearls of wisdom: I should make sure to pick up and burn all the little threads from the sewing area and leave nothing because I could lose my skill to evil spirits that worked against any good one did. I interpreted this as her way of making sure that I always picked up after I had made a bit of a mess. *Makhulu* was superstitious, but she never really imposed her beliefs in this regard on anyone.

When I narrated these experiences and insight at a meeting, a critical friend, TT, commented as follows:

“I was born in a rural area and my family is there. Most of the things that we do, some of the things our parents just showed us to do but without teaching us why or telling us why. If we had to go and fetch wood for making fire, they just taught us how to tie them together, how you take that group, that pile and how to lift it...they were telling us lots of things. For example, if you got home you had to make sure that you untied the pile. You should not leave it like that. They were teaching us something, in fact, by telling us stories...trying to teach us something that if you start, for instance, if they say you mustn't leave that pile tied, untie it because your family member will die, then we get afraid. Instead, they wanted to tell us that if you start something then you have to finish it. You must not urinate in water and, if you are a girl, ‘you will turn into a boy’. They were telling us some scary things but they were teaching us something. We should not sit in the way where people passed as you would get ‘boils and blisters!’ [Quite a few of us chorused in agreement]. In other words, they were trying to scare us. If you came home from school, you just went straight home.”
Critical Friends’ Support Group session: 23 June 2017

Nad commented on the fact that there was a lot of orality in my stories and we needed to evaluate these in terms of collaborative learning:

“But often that's what happens; you know the old ...celebration significantly... And like for example learning respect, those ethics and morals came through, that is what we're talking about. These examples of learning morality and ethics [came out in stories]. They did not hit you but told you do not do this or something negative would happen. It is a kind of way to instil discipline in children without subjecting them to corporal punishment and so forth.”
Critical Friends’ Support Group session: 23 June 2017

Yes, this is how we learnt. Our parents and grandparents had creative ways of keeping us in check. Today the youth are technologically oriented and go onto the internet to search for the truth when older people make claims such as those TT and I referred to above. Modern education thus requires that educators – both parents and teachers – are more innovative. Unfortunately, stories alone are no longer sufficient.

According to Mama, using my skill to do something for her ensured that I got *Makhulu's* blessing. This reminds me of a relay metaphor where one runner passes the baton to another – just like *Makhulu* passed the baton of sewing to me. Ironically, an extension of this relay metaphor is that the elder of my two *Dad'obawos (S'omkhulu)* was a Domestic Science teacher before me, just like I was a Home Economics (then Domestic Science) teacher.

Daddy was the second-born and industrious, but his elder brother (*Tat'omdala*) was work-shy. He used to work on contract truck driving jobs only when money was needed in his household. He would sometimes sit with us on the back of the mission van on our way to town and had us in stitches with his jokes all the way. One of his favourite stories was about how he failed to get an education past Standard 6/Grade 8. According to him, *Tat'omkhulu* sent him to an agricultural school where he would fall ill because *iintlanga* (the heathens, or the non-Xhosas) would bewitch him until he had to go back home. Once he was home he got better, but back at school he would fall ill again, until he and his parents gave up. We wondered how he managed to obtain a driver's licence at all. As we drove through town he would point out a particular house on the outskirts of Gweru and declare that once the Whites were driven out he would take over the house.

My college education occurred in two stages. The first two years were skills-based and the third year focused on learning to teach as all the Educational Foundation and Teaching Practice modules were offered in the third year. I attended a teacher's training college in Gweru in my third year and met other student teachers who had started their skills-based training in other practical subjects such as Woodwork and Carpentry, Building, and Agriculture. Gweru was the nearest town and most accessible to my family from the mission. *Tat'omkhulu*, then 83 years old, took ill in 1977 and was hospitalised at the state hospital in Gweru. He was in hospital for quite some time before he passed away. I was able to visit him occasionally as my studies and transport opportunities between town and the college allowed. He passed away some time in the middle of that year. When he knew his time had come, he called his sons to his bedside and told them that there was enough space on the farm and he was leaving it to all of them. Daddy stated that he had obtained a good education and did not think he should get a share as he already had property, but *Tat'omkhulu* argued that he had given all his children the opportunity to study and make something of themselves and that it was not Daddy's fault that the others had not done so. This was *Tat'omkhulu's* way of showing fairness and ensuring that his family remained united.

The paternal side of my family was hit quite hard by the deterioration of the economic-political situation in Zimbabwe to such an extent that most of my generation and the next find themselves in a state of diaspora. We maintain contact and share family news and reminders via social networks such as WhatsApp and Facebook. For instance, during this study I communicated with Mama, my cousins and sister when my memory was hazy. Members of my nucleus family are scattered across two countries: I am here in South Africa, Xoli is in the United Kingdom, and the eight children of the four original siblings are scattered across Zimbabwe, Botswana, South Africa, and the United States of America. I acknowledge that the Internet and social media are two of the greatest means of communication ever invented.

6.4: Ekoloni – EQhoboshane



Figure 6.3: EKoloni (standing back): Palesa, Monde, Ncinci Snaye, Mandisa, Naledi, and Didi, (Standing front): Ncinci Zozo, Itumeleng. (Crouched Front) Malum'uMonwabisi, Thembelihle and Sicelo. See p. xxIII (Photograph by EVS Dhlula, 1974).

I chose this picture because at least one child of each of Mama's siblings is depicted here. Also, her three youngest siblings (Mama's two half-sisters and a brother) are in the picture. They were all younger than I was. Of the two siblings not represented here, one passed away as a college student, and the other's first-born was only 6 months old. In a way, this photograph represents a

portrait of Mama's closest family. Bhut'Sonwabo must have been chasing girls somewhere and Xoli had not come with us on this trip as she had started her nursing training earlier that year. We are standing at Daddy's Chevrolet Biscayne, 1965 model.

The title of this section comes from the way we used to refer to Mama's home area in those days. *Ekoloni* refers to the Cape Colony, which encompassed the current Eastern and Western Cape Provinces, and *Qhoboshane* was the way we pronounced and wrote the name of the village. Now I know it is a corruption of *Qhobosheane*, which is the Sotho word for 'a fortress'.

For this journey, Daddy had put in new springs (in readiness for the luggage) at the back so that when the boot was empty, the back was higher than the front as he sped the car around corners and bends. It was also the last of the four-yearly road trips we ever took as a family. This was 1974 and I was 16 ('...going on seventeen') and had just completed my 'O' level examinations. I was awaiting my results so I could go to college to train as a teacher the following year.

All Mama's siblings and their families accompanied us on this trip for two reasons other than spending time together as a family. First, we unveiled the tombstones of *Tat'omkhulu* (he had passed away in 1970), *Makhul'uKhesa* (Mama's mother who had passed on in 1956), and *Makhul'uMandaba* (a sister-in-law to my grandfather who had died before either of the two). During the service in the church, before the actual unveiling, the twins, *Malum'uGambu* and *Ncinci* (twins are regarded as special people) were asked to go to the front of the church and say a prayer each. *Ncinci* went first and then *Malume*. Each led the congregation in the singing of a verse of their choice hymn before the prayer. I cannot remember the hymn *Ncinci* sang, but *Malume* sang *Z'uhlale nam ngoku litshona nje...* (Abide with me, fast falls the eventide...) in a tune I had never heard before (which is probably why I remember it). It was a very poignant moment that has stayed in my memory all this time. The two women's graves were at the old home on the mountainside and *Tat'omkhulu's* was in the mission graveyard near where the home was by then. As we travelled between the two sites, the children rode on the back of a truck and sang all the time. I remember the hymn *Bongani, Bongani iNkosi yeZulu...* that we sang in a fresh and lively tune to which we also danced each time we got off the lorry. Singing is one thing in which Mama's family is very strong. Secondly, the wives of both the younger *Malumes* (*Gambu* and *Dumisani's*) were traditionally welcomed into the family. Even today, in many communities, during such ceremonies a sheep is slaughtered and the *makoti* (daughter-in-law) is given a name by which her in-laws address her. To show her respect, she is not expected to call her in-laws by name. The wives are

also dressed in a way that distinguishes them from their husbands' female family members, which shows that they are now married women. My maternal *Makhulu* (Khesa) gave birth to six children: two sons, Mama, twins (*Malum'uGambu* and *Ncinci*) who were four years younger than Mama, and finally *Malum'uDumisani*, who was born in 1948, fourteen years after the twins. My parents got married in January 1953 and *Bhut'Sonwabo* was born in December of the same year at a Hospital in Durban. In 1955 they moved to the then Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). In July 1956 Xoli (my elder sister, and only surviving sibling) was born and *Makhulu* passed away later that year. Two years later *Tat'omkhulu* remarried and had three more children, two girls and a boy (now late) in the middle. All of them are younger than I am. This means that Mama's stepmother was the only *Makhulu* I knew, though I feel I got to know Khesa quite well from Mama's stories.

Mama's eldest brother, Carmichael Mdingi (Carmy), passed away in 1950 in a hospital in Durban after a long illness. He had attended a college in Durban. This sad event occurred on Mama's twentieth birthday. Because he had been the head boy when he first took ill, the school requested the family to let him be buried in the mission cemetery there, to which the family acquiesced. Mama was a year behind him in school. When she first arrived at Adam's College, *Malume* and Daddy were best friends. Before *Malume* passed away, he made sure that Mama would say yes when Daddy proposed...

Whenever we visited my mother's family in South Africa, we went to three places. The first was *Malum'uGambu's* place in Rockville, Soweto. We usually spent two days there before proceeding to our grandparents' home in Qhoboshane village in the Herschel District. My grandfather was the Principal of the BC-Bantu Community School in the village and this is where this picture was taken. We then travelled to East London to visit *Ncinci* and her family, where we usually spent Christmas. On our way back to Zimbabwe, we spent two more nights with *Malum'uGambu* and his family over the New Year before the final leg back to Bulawayo. It was in *Qhoboshane* where we engaged in group-play the most on these trips. On one side was the Tele River, a tributary of the Orange River that borders the village. Across the river is Lesotho. The Tele Bridge (of Donald Woods/Cry Freedom fame) provides border access to Lesotho.

When I studied this picture it took me back in time to my first visit to Mama's home. This was in 1963 when I passed my Sub-A (Grade 1) and the first (as far as I can remember) of four-yearly trips that we took to my mother's home. At the time her home was in a mountainous area so we had to leave the car near a shop, cross the road, and climb down towards the river to get to the

house which was halfway down the mountainside. The road leading there was long and the drive was slow with a sheer drop to the bottom of a steep valley. I remember looking down saying confidently: “It’s a long way to down!” Xoli, who was just a year ahead of me at school, laughed delightedly at the grammatical error and I was embarrassed, but my mother quietly corrected me and praised me for the effort. Years later, my sister would quote me and laugh. By then I had learnt to laugh with her.

It was on that trip that I saw a snake for the first time. Xoli, who was playing outside the rondavel, stated, “*Nank’ucikilishi omhle!*” (Here is a pretty lizard). She was about to run her hand over the ‘lizard’ when my grandmother, who was about to enter the rondavel, shouted at her, lifted her up and threw her aside with one hand and picked up a stick and hit the snake’s head with the other. This seemingly happened all at once. Ever since then I have always associated snakes with great fear because, if a person as strong and commanding as my grandmother was afraid of a snake, then my fear is justified. I cannot even look at a picture of a snake or one on television or a movie screen!

I also learnt on that trip that, just because I was older than my little sister, I could not easily lift her on my back and walk where I pleased. Mama’s home had been built on steep rocky ground and there were different levels in the yard. My younger sister, who was born at the end of 1961 (nearly four years after me), demanded that I carry her on my back, and I did. She was no small toddler. Once, when I attempted to walk up to a next level in the yard, I tripped and fell forward and hit my forehead. I could not let go of her so I was unable to break my fall. I had a badly swollen forehead and Daddy called it my ‘stoplight’ on one of my front ‘corners’. He did not say much else except to quietly tell me my sister was too heavy for me to lift anymore. He was comforting me and the sweet that he gave me from his pocket helped a lot.

I remember that, on that first trip, my cousins taught me games with recitations. The one that stands out in my memory is the following:

First-person: “*Wena Nomathemba, ubethwa ngubani?*”

Second one pointing at a third one: “*Yile ndoda.*”

First-person: “*Khawuyibiz’izapha.*”

Second person (shaking her head): “*O, Hayi ndiyonqena.*”

First-person (pointing to one side): “*Thatha nal’ihashi.*”
 Second person (shaking her head): “*O, hayi ndiyonqena.*”
 First-person (pointing to another side): “*Thatha nank’uBless.*”
 Second person (shaking her head): “*O, hayi ndiyonqena.*”
 All together gyrating downwards: “*Atsho ehl’amathamb’ukubhek’ezantsi.*”
 All together gyrating upwards: “*Atsh’enyuk’amathamb’ukubheka phezulu!*”

At our primary school in the township in Bulawayo where Daddy was Principal, we always had a concert for the entire school at the end of the year. In 1964 Xoli and I roped in our paternal cousin, Noma, to perform a Xhosa a song and dance. Xhosa was not spoken in the area and we were very confident that our unique performance would be popular and thus we were not shy. The audience cheered as we came on stage and we waited confidently until the noise had died down. Together we sang:

Nodoli Nodoli
’S’udlala ngombona
Umbon’unqabile
Sidenge somfazi
Ndevu zeBhulu
Hamb’ofun’ibhotolo!”

After the last line we left the stage with a dismissive wave of our hands amidst more cheering from the crowd.

It was on the visit that I referred to above that *Malum’uLanga*’s baby boy passed on. Daddy made a small coffin in which the baby was buried. When we asked how he had learnt how to make a coffin, Daddy told us that he had acquired this skill as a student at the college of education in Durban where he had met both *Malume* and Mama. He could not always travel home to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) for the June school holidays, so he used to do carpentry work during the holidays which involved making coffins for the poor at a hospital in Durban.

At Mama’s home in Qhoboshane, we were *abatshana*, which means children of a daughter in the family, as well as the children of *Mafungwashe* (the first daughter). This made us special, particularly to the Uncles (*ooMalume*) who adored their sisters and respected their brothers-in-law (*ooSbali*). Our grandparents did not expect us to do anything, but our mothers (Mama and *Ncinci*) did. We and our cousins therefore worked together to finish the daily chores. I especially

remember how we carried the laundry to the Tele River (it was quite shallow at the point near the house). We poured water from the river into a galvanised iron bath and washed the clothes and then rinsed them one by one in the river as the water flowed slowly by. We would then place the washing out to dry on the surrounding rocks and bushes and go home with dry laundry. It was all teamwork with the older cousins doing the washing and hanging it on the rocks and bushes and the younger girls rinsing the clothes in the river. It was also a very enjoyable way of keeping cool in the hot summer months.

The older girls discouraged us from crossing the river as they claimed that there was a deep pool in the river before we would get to the other side, which was Lesotho. We heeded this warning. I am glad we did as the river which comes from the Drakensberg mountains flows throughout the year into the Orange (Senqu) River and can be quite deep in places. While the clothes were drying, which did not take as long as we wished, we played in the water and bathed. The older girls filled buckets with water and carried them back home on their heads. It was quite a steep climb up the slope and rocks from the river.

6.5 Conclusion

I learnt the importance of maintaining relationships through family closeness and family gatherings. Even today, surviving and young family members try to meet as a family at least once a year, but we always keep in touch on social media. Fortunately, Mama was also conversant with WhatsApp and so we included her in conversations and family groups. I also became a member of my class WhatsApp group and have some of my past and current students as friends on Facebook. I also learnt just how important it is to share whatever one has. Though I might not afford to share materially, I always ensure that any interaction I engage in with my students, friends and even strangers must have some value, most commonly in the form of shared wisdom, lessons learnt about life, as well as just sharing one's love of fellow humans. *Makhulu* taught me that even chickens can learn behaviour through conditioning long before I came across the term in Educational Psychology. I also learnt to recognise, accept and assert my own identity. The Xhosa blood of my father runs strong in me, but I was born and brought up in a country that is not Xhosa territory. Many people still ask how I come to know Xhosa so well when I am a 'kwere-kwere' (a denigrating term used by South Africans to refer to other Africans that are not South African). I just laugh and quote my names, which are both Xhosa. I grew up to understand that one can always

take chances and learn regardless of one's circumstances, which is what *Tat'omkhulu* did and what I did when I decided to conduct this study.

As an educationist and a scholar I acknowledge that learning in this environment can only occur when one makes use of supportive networks. During such opportunities one engages in dialogue and learns from other people who may have experienced a particular or similar challenges (East, Jackson, O'Brien, & Peters, 2010). In the classroom situation, I utilised this collaborative learning strategy by requesting senior students (4th years) to share their school-based experiences with junior students (3rd years). The senior students were present when the junior students were preparing their lessons and presenting them in microteaching sessions, and they then gave their opinions in support of the process.

The role that parents play in ensuring that children get to know and interact with their grandparents is a norm in our culture, and my parents were no exception. In this way they contributed intimately to my journey to maturity. My siblings and cousins and I were always in touch with our history and our culture which were important influences in our lives from a sociocultural perspective. Also, because our core family was interwoven with our large extended family in which our grandparents were the nucleus, they were also an important part of the village that grew us. An example is when *Makhulu* advised us on how to respond to boys' proposals of love. In so doing, she acknowledged that the relationships between boys and girls are a normal way of life, but we were well prepared to respond appropriately. My parents also prepared me well for my physical development but initially alluded to my relations with the opposite sex quite vaguely. But *Makhulu* went straight to the point, thereby playing an important part as a member of the village that grew me.

My grandparents' interest in my growth and development was especially poignant at tea time at my home after church every Sunday. We had to make and serve tea and small cakes and my grandparents always wanted to know who the baker of the day was and then offered pleasing compliments. Since we were young my grandparents exposed us to praying, singing, storytelling and learning by playing games in a language that we would not have learnt if we had not been exposed so closely to them. These experiences went a long way in developing our self-identities and self-confidence.

Looking back, I remember that my siblings and I always anticipated the journeys to our grandparents with excitement. We would remind one another of some previous experiences and remember them with joy. Because we loved visiting our grandparents, I shall never forget what I had learnt with and from them and the rest of my family during these visits. I therefore understand that I need to motivate my student teachers to value their learning to the extent that they should look forward to coming to class and be ready to link each lesson with previous lessons in readiness for the next one – and this should occur by working and learning collaboratively.

When I reflected on this chapter, I knew that I had learnt to value the way our grandparents made us feel. I also learnt to make other people feel that I value them and I enjoy this feeling. Thus writing about my memories of how I learnt collaboratively through my interactions with my grandparents was an eye-opener. I never realised there would be so much that I would remember from my past. I shall embrace these lessons and would like to keep what I learnt at hand as I go forward with my education of student teachers as they will be of help in instilling the practice of self-reflection in my classroom.

My grandparents valued all of us (*Babesixabisile*) and, knowing this, made us feel free to be ourselves as we basked in their warm affection. Looking back, I realise that my student teachers need to feel that I value them unconditionally so that they should feel free to try out creative behaviours in their learning with the assurance that they will always receive feedback that will affirm them and make them feel valued. Through my narratives and reflections of my lived experiences I have come to realise that my core and extended family nurtured and modelled my understanding of the need for collaborative learning. Therefore, my students need to see the value of family for their growth and development and they should be encouraged to use what they in turn learnt collaboratively in a positive way as teachers one day.

The comments that my critical friends made after my presentation of our times at Mayitshe Farm clearly indicated that many of my experiences were not unique. However, what Nad identified as unique was the fact that I wrote the memories down and used them as a foundation for my learning. I must confess at this point that I did not think I could use these memories before I embarked on my study. However, I have now learnt that I should make my students see the importance of their lived experiences as the foundation for their collaborative learning and the kind of teachers they will become (Bullough, 1994).

Taking into consideration that life is one major journey made up of a number of small journeys, I plan to capitalise on my learning based on my experiences of my family travels by creating a travel metaphor for my class. We could imagine being part of a larger family that travels together on the teacher education journey. I could constantly refer to factors they need to take into consideration when preparing for and travelling on this road. They need to know what preparations they need to make for the journey of becoming a qualified teacher and what activities the family could engage in as part of collaborative learning. They could also determine what challenges they face and how to deal with them, how to deal with the people they might meet on the journey and what lessons they could learn from them, and what other lessons could be learnt such as reading and interpreting the road signs and calculating the distance (i.e., in time and effort) required to reach their destination of becoming a qualified teacher. I envisage that this should happen right at the start of our contact together so that we can tick off the boxes of the milestones we have reached as the year progresses and we collaboratively reflect on each step. I feel this could prepare them and me for a better collaborative working relationship.

My student teachers need the motivation to get up and come to class, much as we used to get up early on Christmas morning anticipating that we would see the dancing sun. They need to feel the excitement of another class session and another day of learning. This will encourage my students to achieve their goal of becoming qualified teachers. I need to encourage them to question and find answers for themselves as we did when we tested and proved the myth about the dawn of a new year. Information that you question and then prove the veracity or lack thereof always feels infinitely more valuable than merely imparted information such as in a chalk-and-talk teaching approach.

Singing and poetry played a very important role in the times when I learned collaboratively and established my identity setting. Engaging in singing and reciting poetry in isiXhosa helped to keep us grounded in the language and tradition of our family. Even today, whenever there is a family gathering on either side of my family, we always engage in singing for pleasure, regardless of the reason for being together. Because singing/music and poetry have always been a part of my life, I am usually singing or listening to music when I have nothing to do. I thus need to use music to encourage my students to be more creative in the process of collaborative learning and in their presentations, and one day they will enliven their own classes with the joy of learning through music and poetry. I believe it will be valuable to share bits and pieces of my personal history and what I have learnt with my students as examples of what it means to strive continuously towards

improvement. I believe that I have had, and will continue to have, students who are gifted in these skills – however, because they have become used to classes that are so solemn, they might believe that there is not much fun in learning. I wish to change this attitude!

I managed to partly address the first research question by reflecting on my personal history and recalling special memories of the times I had spent with my grandparents. By analysing and linking the experiences I had and the lessons I learnt I have come to understand the value of collaborative learning in my life. Through the guidance and leadership of my parents, I was exposed to the wisdom, compassion, faith and values of my grandparents. I was fortunate in that I got to know my uncles, aunts, cousins and other more distant members of my extended family who were part of the lessons I learnt. All these people had – and some still have – an impact on who I am today. We were individuals but together we formed a familial unit, much like the units I realise I need to encourage my classes to form. I learnt skills that have influenced, and will continue to influence, the teacher that I am and intend to be. By looking back at my personal history I have gained a better understanding of my identity as a person and I realise that this was due to interactions with my grandparents, among many others. Moreover, because my identity was so firmly established at a young age, my teacher identity emerged strongly because I know who I am. My grandparents made me feel valued, and this powerfully contributed to my self-confidence as a person and a professional. I thus want to use these experiences to ‘pay forward’ and make my students feel valued too.

In conclusion, the narratives in this chapter continued my quest to address the first research question: *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* I looked for episodes of collaborative learning that occurred during the times that I, my siblings and extended family spent with our grandparents who always demonstrated the high regard they had for each of us. I commenced the chapter by narrating the way in which my parents prepared us for journeys to visit our grandparents. These journeys were all smooth and problem-free. I narrated memorable episodes involving my grandparents and discussed how my grandparents’ values and care helped shape and form me.

In the next chapter, I shall recall memories of my siblings and reflect on the role they played in my life. I shall also recall and evaluate interactions with some of my maternal and paternal siblings and cousins who contributed to and enhanced the collaborative learning episodes I was exposed to in order to partially address the first research question.

CHAPTER SEVEN: *ABANTWANA BAKODHLULA* (THE DHLULA CHILDREN)

7.1 Introduction

The focus of my self-study research was collaborative learning. To address the research questions, I looked back at my personal history to explore instances and situations when I learnt valuable lessons collaboratively. The main aim was for me to understand what drove me to become a teacher as well as what made me become the teacher that I am now. I looked particularly at how I learnt collaboratively during my years of growing up and my professional life in my quest to better understand the student teachers that I teach at university as well as myself. The overarching aim of my study was to improve my professional practice to become the best teacher educator that I can be. In Chapter Six, I narrated how Mama and Daddy ensured that we had good relationships and interacted with our grandparents. I also explored how my sense of identity and self-confidence was nurtured by a feeling of being valued. The care of my parents and how they modelled positive values also influenced how we treated them and others of their generation when we grew up.

In this chapter, I continue to address the first research question *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* One of the best gifts that parents can give their offspring is a name to be proud of. I look at how the influence of my parents, as the designers of the pattern that is my life, shaped my siblings and me to become the people who were (and often still are) generally referred to as *Abantwana bakoDhlula*. I also explore how we learnt so many lessons collaboratively. In this chapter I look specifically at each of my siblings and the lessons that I learnt from our interactions.



Figure 7.1: Abantwana bakoDhlula-1, l-r: Mandi (3rd born), Monde (4th and last-born), Bhut'Sonwabo (1st born and only son) and Xoli (2nd born) (Photograph by EVS Dhlula, circa 1965, 179 BF)

This photograph was taken around 1965 when I was seven years old. We were seated on the couch in the sitting room. It is one of the very few photographs of the four of us together. To tell the truth, I do not remember sitting for this photograph but looking at it made me see just how alike we all looked at that age, which is something I have never really thought about. We have many photographs of three or two siblings at a time, but in this photograph it is easy to see the similarities among us. For once, we all look relaxed as opposed to some of the photographs taken by Daddy when we were small.

7.2 Bhut'Sonwabo: My Brother and My Teacher

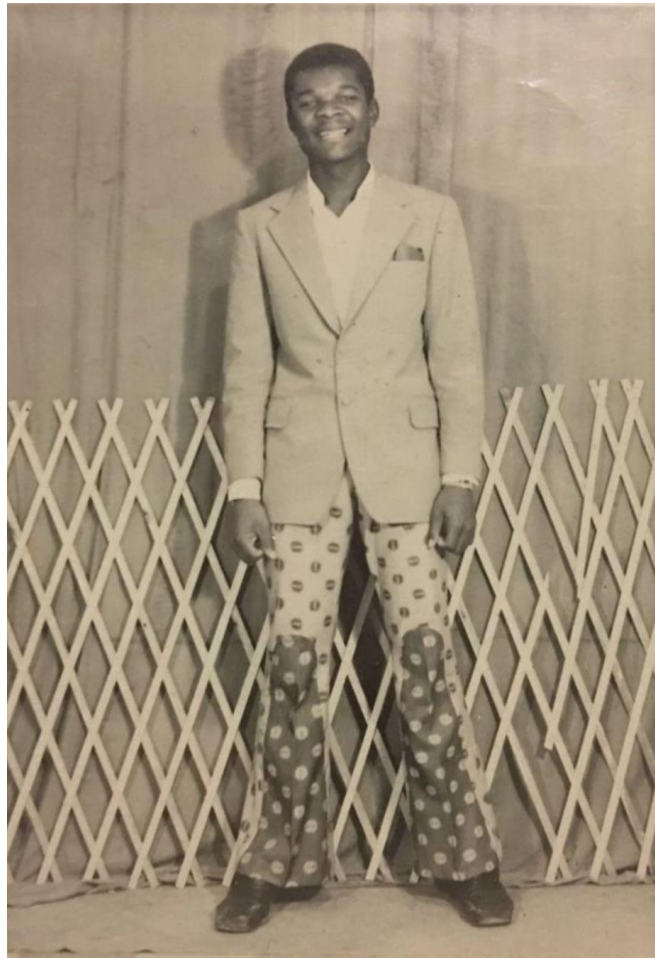


Figure 7.2: Bhut'Sonwabo (Studio photographer unknown, circa 1975, Bulawayo)

When this photograph of Bhut'Sonwabo was taken, he was working and living at 179 BF while the rest of the family lived at the rural mission in Gweru. He loved to look good and fashionable, and his bell-bottom (boot-leg) trousers were the height of fashion at the time. When we were small in the early 1960s, the only jeans on the market were the Levis brand. That was how he referred to jeans throughout his life. I remember when a cousin asked him what she could buy him, he asked for a pair of 'Levis'. She was horrified because the brand had become one of the most expensive on the market. Fortunately, I was around and explained that, to Bhut'Sonwabo, 'Levis' just meant a pair of jeans...

Bhut'Sonwabo was the first of four children. He was born at a hospital in Durban where my newlywed parents lived. Daddy worked at a college, which was their *Alma Mater*, and Mama worked at a primary school nearby. He was born in December 1953. The family then moved to

Rhodesia at the end of 1955. It was not much later that a doctor noticed that he was both deaf and dumb. Because he could not hear himself he also could not speak. His deafness was a congenital condition and incurable. According to Mama, it was a very traumatic time for them when this diagnosis was made. They went from shock to guilt to praying and bargaining with God, and finally they accepted their son's condition. I always appreciated that our parents never treated him any differently from us. We accepted him as he was and learnt to communicate with him in special ways. It was only when he had reached adolescence that I became aware that he was different from other people around him.

When he was small, he loved pets, especially his cat, and would share his meal with it. This made me understand that he always had a soft spot for those he perceived as being weaker than he was. However, Xoli, who was born after him, bore the brunt of his insecurities. I think she was the first person to make him feel different as she was a very petite girl compared to his stocky build. Despite this, he loved her and was very protective of her.

As siblings we had a pecking order. Whenever Xoli and I quarrelled, he would take my side and, if he saw the need, he would threateningly stop her. However, we never had fistfights as siblings. If I quarrelled with Monde (the last-born), I had to bear the brunt of his wrath. He always championed the one he perceived to be the weaker. So because Monde was the youngest, when we grew up we all knew and accepted that Monde was his favourite sibling.

Bhut'Sonwabo attended boarding school at a special school that was run by the Roman Catholic Church. Here he learnt how to lip-read in English. Unfortunately, we did not speak English at home so he devised some signs that we used when we communicated with him. He also learnt to call our names after a fashion. He would also sometimes write down what he wanted to say when it was very important. As children, we were not all that patient in involving him in our conversations as we felt it would be too much trouble to communicate with him, but he always made it a point that we did not forget him. He would tap a shoulder and ask what we were talking about. We would have to explain, albeit in a summarised fashion and, sometimes, he would understand that he was not getting the whole story and showed some impatience.

In 1976, when I was 9, Mama and the four of us travelled to her home in *eKoloni* outside Sterkspruit in South Africa by train and bus in the August-September school holidays. Daddy did not go with us. It was very cold at that time of the year in South Africa. On our way back we had

to wait for a Government bus that came from Lesotho in the very early hours of the morning. We were at the stop just outside the Tele Bridge border gate as early as 03h00 because the bus could pass through anytime from then. We had one big blanket to share as we waited in the frosty night. I remember crying as it was so cold because *Bhut'Sonwabo* had taken up most of the blanket and Xoli and I had to forfeit some warmth as he made sure that he and Monde were well covered. Whenever we travelled long distances by car, Daddy would seat him in the front between himself and Mama because we would have a hard time with his practical jokes and teasing.

As mentioned earlier (Chapter 4), Mama taught him, Xoli and me how to bake. He was also on the roster to bake for our grandparents' visits on Sundays for tea. When it was not his turn to bake, he would pass through the kitchen repeatedly and, with each passing, pick up a small cake or two until the baker for the day realised that the cakes would not be enough for Sunday tea. We would then hide the cakes where he could not find them. However, our efforts were in vain. He would go into the pantry, collect everything he would need to make a cake (Mama had a small square cake tin), and make one for himself, something we did not dare do without Mama's permission. By then he would have eaten so many of the small cakes that we dared not eat any more. We would beg him to give us a piece of cake each. How he loved that! He would cut small pieces and throw them up in the air for us to catch! By the time he made his cake he would have eaten quite a few small ones, and he would quickly get bored with his cake and give the rest to us. We never learnt to wait for him to get bored! We always begged for the pieces he tossed at us. Of course, the leftover cake came on condition that whoever got it would wash up after him and clean the kitchen.

As teenagers, we loved loud music and he would join in the dancing. I was never able to establish whether he felt the music through sound vibrations. He also loved movies and we would sit late into the night watching them on television or we would go to the cinema when the family moved back to Bulawayo. I remember that he and I used to go to the midnight movies on New Year's Eve and sit through two movies until dawn. One of the last midnight shows we went to was *The Battle of Isandlwana*, the one battle that the British army lost to the Zulu *impi*/army. He cheered so loudly as the Zulus won that the other cinemagoers ended up cheering because of him.

When he graduated from the special school, he found a welding job at a plant in Bulawayo. The family lived at the rural mission by then and my parents let him stay at 179 BF. He earned enough to buy himself a car and he did so without consulting anyone in the family. One day he decided to drive to the mission that 190 km away to surprise the family. Unfortunately, because he had grossly

miscalculated the quantity of fuel he would needed, he got stuck even before he had gone a third of the distance. Fortunately for him though, as he was hiking a lift back to Bulawayo to buy fuel, Daddy happened to be on his way to Bulawayo and saw him. After that, Daddy taught him how to calculate the fuel required according to distance.

A few weeks later, he received a traffic fine and had to go to court. Daddy went with him. No court official could communicate with him and the magistrate asked the audience who could assist, and Daddy volunteered. Once the magistrate realised that my brother could not hear, he declared him a danger to himself and other drivers and barred him from driving. (Mama must have rejoiced at this piece of news because she had worried herself sick from the day she had heard he had a car). It turned out that his offence had been that the car had no hooter! From court, he went straight to the man who had sold it to him and demanded all his money back. When the man tried to lower the refund amount, Daddy advised him not to as he could see his son getting worked up. He was tall, hefty, and could be violent.

He did not get into fights, but he turned violent against whoever would be responsible for his rage, never giving them a chance to retaliate. Fortunately, he was very loyal and protective of us as his family, so we were protected against outsiders. When we first lived in the township, the boys never tried any tricks on us, such as bullying us out of our pocket money, as they did with other girls. They knew, and reminded one another, that these were Sonwabo's sisters, even when he was away at boarding school because if he came home and heard that someone had ill-treated any of his sisters, they would get a thrashing they would never forget.

Bhut'Sonwabo loved money and was very stingy about spending it, which could have been the main reason why he had not filled up his car to get to the rural mission that time. He would ask people, especially family friends and his brothers-in-law, how much money they made, much to Mama's embarrassment. I remember him asking Daddy what the value of his plot was and calculating how much he would get if he sold it after our parents' death. Daddy was not amused. In his calculations, *Bhut'Sonwabo* always envisaged sharing the proceeds equally amongst the four of us, which showed that he recognised that we were a unit that had equal rights to any inheritance they would leave us, even though my brother was the eldest and only son. According to our culture, only the eldest son inherits from the parents and, if there is no son, a closely related man then inherits. *Bhut'Sonwabo's* attitude was a testimony to his sense of justice and fairness as well as his unconditional love for his siblings.

After I got married and I visited my home, *Bhut'Sonwabo* and I spent a lot of time together. We also wrote letters to each other when I was away. When I was home and cooking, he would help with any chopping and peeling, which always came as quite a surprise to those who lived with him – my parents, his wife, and our domestic worker. It was after his passing that Daddy made me understand why he behaved differently towards me. I then understood the importance of giving one's time and patience to someone else. Seemingly, *Bhut'Sonwabo* appreciated the time and communication he and I shared and he enjoyed doing those chores with me as it meant that we spent more time together.

He dearly loved his wife and two daughters and took pride in showing them off to his families on both sides of the border, particularly Mama's extended family. He also wanted us as his sisters to have close relationships with them. He named his first daughter Mandisa after me because, on the day she was born, I was travelling home to go and leave Naleli, my daughter, with the family so she could attend school there. He declared his baby girl had waited for me. He named the second-born Rebecca. I am not sure where this name came from, although the first-born goes by the name of Lolwakhe and the second-born goes by the name of Sivuyile. By the time they were born, he was no longer working and they lived with our parents on the plot. Largely through Mama's efforts, both his daughters are now university graduates. Everybody in the family knows that *Bhut'Sonwabo* would have cried copious tears of happiness at their graduation and he would have boasted about their achievements.

Bhut'Sonwabo was scared of illness. Therefore, the fact that he died of a massive stroke without going through a long illness was a blessing in a way, as he would have been a very miserable and impatient patient.

7.3 Mafungwashe (Xoli) – The Eldest Daughter, My Teacher and Nurturer



Figure 7.3: Xoli graduating as a nurse (Photograph by a professional photographer, 1983, City Hall, Bulawayo)

Xoli started her nursing training in 1974 but had to drop out in her final year in 1976 when she fell pregnant and got married in 1977. After doing other jobs for a bit, she was readmitted into training. Even though the authorities first said she should start from scratch, she only did a six-month reorientation and then the final year for a total of eighteen months. This day was the culmination of her dream to become a nurse. She had received the flowers from her husband, Nga. She wore shoes I had posted to her from South Africa once I had heard she was going to graduate. (Sending parcels by post was still common at the time). Upon receiving the gift, she wrote me a letter to thank me and mentioned that she was going to stand from the others in her 'CGs' ('can't-gets') as her shoes would obviously be different from those of local Zimbabweans. One of the lessons instilled in us by our parents is to appreciate whatever one receives from someone else. Xoli is very good at making me feel like I have conquered a mountain just by giving her something, no matter how small. This photograph is also symbolic of Xoli's personality. She works very hard to attain her goals, regardless of the challenges she might encounter along the way. As my 'Big

Sister' she leads by example and this has always motivated me to work towards the goals that I set for myself.

I was born nineteen months after Xoliswa (Xoli). I do not remember her ever behaving jealously towards me as I sometimes see in children whose age difference is small. She easily and readily accepted my presence in her young life. In January 1963, when I was four going on five (in February), my first day of school arrived. In those days, school readiness was determined by checking if the child could raise one arm up and over the head and touch the ear on the other side. When this was accomplished, the child was ready for Sub-A (Grade 1). Xoli had prepared me for this day and I could already count to 20! We walked from the township mission house, where we lived, towards the school in the same yard. As we walked past the house, one of the priests who also lived on the premises greeted us and congratulated me on my first day of school. He gave me a shiny sixpenny coin (*uzuka*). The currency of the time was Pounds, Shillings and Pennies (£, s & p). Xoli offered to look after my coin in case I would lose it, and she would meet me at break time when I could spend it on goodies sold at the tuck shop. Knowing that my sister knew school life better than I did, I acquiesced. Break time came, and my sister told me that my coin had gotten lost on the playground where they had gone for Physical Education, but that she had picked up another one which was now hers as mine had been lost. I believed her and felt happy when she shared the goodies that she bought with 'her' money with me. I learnt, though, to look after my money in the future as the old adage *Once bitten, twice shy* is good advice!

She also had a similar sense of humour as *Bhut'Sonwabo* as she could easily laugh at others' gaffes. On our first trip (Chapter Six) to my Mama's home, when I looked down the very steep mountainside and said, 'It's a long way to down!', Xoli laughed her head off at the grammatical error and I was embarrassed, but Mama quietly corrected me and praised me for the effort. I remember her also laughing at my effort to pronounce the name of the then capital city, Salisbury, but she also corrected me. She still laughs at blunders family members make, but I have learnt to understand her sense of humour and I enjoy it immensely now, even if it may be at my expense sometimes. I have also learnt to laugh at myself.

Xoli was my first teacher. My first memory of learning was before I attended school (there were no crèches for Black children then) as she would act as a teacher and teach us what she had learnt at school. She was rather heavy handed with the stick, though! She did not stop teaching us even when we started attending school. We continued to have play class until I was in Standard 3 (Grade

5), but she always wielded the stick quite readily...

She was very generous with her knowledge, though, and always shared what she had learnt, be it subject content or music. I remember how we enjoyed her parodies of some of her teachers. For instance, she used to imitate her Geography teacher who seemed to have a flair for the dramatic. She would imitate his posture and voice when he explained that, “Relief are the ups and downs of a country!” and another who pronounced amoeba as two words, ‘amo-eba!’ She still finds quotes and stories about people that make us laugh.

She used to play tricks on Monde and me. Whenever we uncovered a trick and reported her behaviour to Daddy, he would laugh and say, ‘*Uyanikhulisa!*’ (Literally: “She’s growing you!”). One time, when we lived in the Principal’s house at the rural mission (Chapter 4), she told us that we should only speak English on the phone otherwise it would explode. We believed this of course as the actors on television only spoke English when they used a telephone. One day the telephone technicians came to install a phone in the Principal’s house where we lived. Daddy was there to make sure they installed it where he wanted it, and *Tat’omncinci* Lex, who was the school clerk, was there too. As soon as the technicians had finished, *Tat’omncinci* walked to the office and called the house. Daddy picked it up and answered in isiXhosa! We were sitting near the door to see if the phone would work and, as soon as Daddy spoke isiXhosa, we realised that it had been a hoax. Afterwards, when we reported our naughty sister, Daddy laughed and said, “*Uyanikhulisa.*”

I remember her making us do the chores she was too lazy to do by complimenting us. For example, she would comment on how well I chopped cabbage or swept the floor and could I do it please. I used to fall for this hoax and did my best to please her till after my marriage and I had lived some distance from her. Then, on reflection, it hit me! When I visited our home, she tried the same trick but I told her it would not work anymore, she could just ask me. We laughed about the fact that her ruse had worked for so many years.

At boarding school, Xoli and I were best friends. Our relationship was strongest when we attended the high school in Plumtree. Students lived in boarding school houses and siblings were placed in different houses. If more siblings enrolled they were accommodated in other of the four houses. Xoli and I were placed in houses that were opposite each other. Every morning I would walk across the girls’ hostel grounds to her dormitory and we would go to their ablution block together. Then I would walk back to mine to dress and be ready for breakfast. Somehow, we always left our ‘dorms’ at the same time.

Of course we also had other friends as part of our group as we were both free to choose the friends we wanted. But if any of the others had negative things to say to one of us about the other, we would drop her from the group. It was that simple – we allowed no one to divide us. Of course, I took my cue from her as my ‘big sister’ and she reinforced what our parents had instilled in us. When I was going through very difficult time in my marriage, I wrote long letters to her about my frustrations and my situation. I really felt out of my depth, but she would write back in a supportive manner. She would point out my good qualities, remind me of the values and principles we were brought up with, and generally tell me how precious I was to my family back home. She reminded me never to forget my self-worth. She also sent me message cards, such as birthday cards, that expressed her sentiments exactly. I would cry on reading these letters and cards but afterwards would hold my head high no matter what was happening in my marriage. She is still very supportive of my efforts to empower myself and always reminds me that I should be a priority to myself in terms of my health, comfort and goals.

Xoli, like Mama was, is technologically challenged, but once she has grasped a feature or application she gets so excited that we all have to learn to use it. Examples are the use of SMSes, WhatsApp and WhatsApp calls, Skype, E-reading, and so on. Xoli has always been a very loyal, loving and supportive sister and we have been best friends to this day.

7.4 Monde: My Teacher and Mentor



Figure 7.4: Monde at a ‘Y’ conference in Kenya (Photographer unknown, 1987, Nairobi)

Monde attended the YWCA's End of the Women's Decade Conference in Nairobi, Kenya in 1987. She was the one person who always knew who she was. Her attire in this picture depicts her pride in her identity as she is wearing 'umbhaco', a Xhosa traditional skirt, tastefully accessorised for the time and occasion. She wore this on the final evening before the delegates travelled back to their respective countries. She lived her life on her terms and made no apologies for it, and she was very loyal to her own.

The last-born daughter of the family, Nomonde (Monde), came when I was two months' shy of my 4th birthday. Either she had a strong personality or, by the time she came along, our parents had become too tired to be as strict with her as they had been with us. She was the only child who refused to call our father Daddy and she called him *Tata*. When she started pre-school, she demanded to be woken and washed by Daddy instead of Mama. (Xoli and I would never have thought of making such a demand!) Whenever she had learnt some rhyme or song at the crèche she attended, she came home and performed it for us and we would end up singing or reciting it too. I remember the following nursery rhyme that Monde taught us:

*Hey, diddle, diddle,
The cat played the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon;
The little dog laughed
To see such a sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon.*
(From memory)

She always insisted on a perfect performance with all the appropriate gestures. What fun we had as we learnt what she shared with us at home! She had a vivid imagination. Once she insisted that she had seen an elephant under a tree not far from the road as we were driving between Bulawayo and Gweru. Unfortunately, she was the only one who had seen it but she was quite insistent that it **HAD BEEN** there.

She was very inquisitive and always asked, 'Why?' She asked Daddy why his head was bald. He was taken aback at first but quickly replied, "Because you all give me stress." She once asked how John the Baptist had died. She was not curious about the cause of his death, but about the attitude and emotion he displayed. I understand now that this expressed her concern about the person inside rather than the things that happen to them. As a mother, she always challenged her children by

asking why they had made certain choices, even if they were good ones. She wanted them to be sure of their decisions and actions and to take responsibility for them. Sadly, she passed on when they were only teenagers.

She was the most brilliant of the three girls. I exclude my brother because it is difficult to compare anybody with him because of his physical challenges and his experiences at the special school he attended. Monde was ready for Sub A (Grade 1) at the age of 4 and she turned 5 in December of that year after passing this grade with flying colours. Later, whenever I had to make a fast and complex decision, I relied on her for good advice.

Of the three sisters, Monde was the only one who did not take the Needlework and Dressmaking option at high school. She hated sewing, which was compulsory up to Junior Certificate level and was nationally examined after two years of high school. She did eventually design her own wedding dress but recruited adept seamstresses who would make her clothes – and I was one of them. I did not resent this – quite the opposite – as I had learnt the value of sharing the things one could do well in a true collaborative spirit.

However, Monde could be very impatient. Daddy used to claim, “Monde does not suffer fools gladly!” This was a case of the pot calling the kettle black as Daddy had the same character trait. As close relatives my parents, siblings and I got a tempered version of her impatience as our parents had instilled in all of us respect for our elders and loyalty to family. In collaborative learning situations, one is expected to respect the other members of the group.

She valued the symbols of family unity. A good number of photographs in this document came from her photo albums. She discovered another branch of the Dhlula family in Botswana (where she lived after marrying a *Motsoana* man) and made sure that contact was established and maintained. By the time she passed away, she had attempted tracing the family tree. Now that family is part of the Dhlula social network, and some of our children’s generation have even met.

Her family ties were very strong. She therefore ensured that, even though her siblings lived in different countries, her children knew that Xoli and I were also their mothers, and our children knew they had a mother in her. She was very protective of our parents and, when they grew older, she initiated discussions that resulted in them moving to live comfortably in a suburb of Bulawayo (where Mama still lived till her death in 2018). They had lived on a rather isolated plot that was a

good 25 minutes' drive out of town. She would buy supplies such as towels and toothbrushes for them and then scolded them if she found them unused and ask them who they were keeping them for.

After her marriage, Monde lived in Botswana with her family and she became an IT specialist. I consulted her on which computer to buy in 2000 when I got myself a PC as a birthday present. I had had a little typewriting experience so accessing the keyboard was not difficult. At the time, I typed with only two or three fingers. Monde sent me emails daily and insisted that I reply every evening and type messages to practise typing on the computer. In this manner I gained more advanced typing skills and soon became more familiar with the computer.

A few months after I had acquired my computer I registered for a Computer Literacy course on her advice. When the tutor found out that I had a computer at home, he lent me a touch-typing tutor CD with instructions on how to download it onto my computer, which I did. I am glad to say that I was first in the class! Thanks to Monde, I am more comfortable with the use of my computer than I would have been without her mentorship. She also mentored me in the use of my mobile phone and satellite television – in fact, all things computer-related. She even introduced my parents to both satellite TV and mobile phones.

Siblings Through Time



1. Sonwabo



2. Xoliswa



3. Mandisa



4. Nomonde

7.5 Siblings Through Time: The Curated Photo Album within the Extended Curated Photo Album

I collated an additional album of photographs of my siblings and I, particularly of the three girls as *Bhut'Sonwabo* spent a lot of time away at a special school. One insight that these photographs provoked is the important lesson I learnt from wearing identical (or near-identical) outfits that not only made us stand out, but ironically also depicted our uniqueness as a unit with a special identity as the Dhlula girls who spoke isiXhosa. Some of the outfits were worn (the 'mini' skirts and the dresses from Abidjan in the Ivory Coast) were what Xoli referred to as the CGs ('Can't gets').

The Xhosa people are generally indigenous to the Eastern and Western Cape provinces of South Africa. They are part of the tribes of a more generic term 'Nguni' that share many commonalities. My great-grandfather's family and others that were related to them travelled to the then Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and arrived there in 1918. They migrated with their farmer bosses who falsely promised to give them farms in Rhodesia. Other Xhosa families also migrated to this region – I am not sure how or why – and their descendants are concentrated at Mbembesi, about 30 km outside Bulawayo in the direction of Harare. Through the years, these Xhosa groups have kept their language and customs. All the boys of our generation went through the ritual of initiation. According to this custom they were circumcised and taken through some teachings as their introduction into manhood. Like the South African Xhosas, Xhosa women in Zimbabwe also wear black (mourning weeds) when they lose their husbands and a black 'doek' (headscarf) when they lose a child. They are a proud people, although I know that this is a characteristic of all ethnic groups.

I collated the additional album in response to my research question *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* The main lesson the siblings and I learnt as we grew up was to be content in one another's company. We did not go to other children's homes to play (or 'sleep over' as children do today) as it was not done much in those days. We would socialise closely with our immediate neighbours (whose children were younger than I was) and our cousins two houses away from the semi-detached house no. 179 BF and 181 BF (Figure 4.2). We also associated closely with *Tat'omncinci* Lex's family at the rural mission. Other than these, we played with children of our parents' friends, some of whom were mentioned in Chapter 5. So most of our skills, both practical and verbal, were learnt collaboratively within close-knit circles.

The photographs I selected range in time from when I was 6 years old in 1964 to the time Daddy passed away in 2006, some 42 years later. The culture in which we were grown taught us to know who we were both as individuals and members of our groups. We were Xhosa and were brought up in a mainly female household, which was a fact that both Daddy and *Bhut'Sonwabo* had no problem with. Daddy was very supportive of the efforts of all the women in his household and encouraged Mama as a member of the YWCA who had to travel both nationally and internationally quite a lot. He also valued whatever input we made when we got older and there were family decisions to be made. In some families of our culture, if there is a shortage of sons and a decision has to be made, then a relative's son is brought in to assist in making the decisions just because he is male. We were lucky in that we had the freedom to learn to assert ourselves whenever there was the need.

We were brought up to always respect anyone older than us, even siblings. The eldest would sit in the front seat of the car if we were with one of our parents and the youngest sat in the middle in the back seat. The eldest would enter a room first and the youngest would enter last. The eldest would serve himself first and the youngest would do so last. This 'pecking order' was often not easy for me as the middle child as I was not only expected to defer to Xoli as my older sister, but I also had to defer to Monde because, as Mama would say, '*Ngumntwana, awunakuzilinganisa nomntwana*' (This means she was a child and, because she was a younger child, I could not compare myself to her as a child.) I would often ask myself in private if this was fair as I was a child too...but because I loved her, I never bothered to ask the question out loud. We were loyal to each other as members of the family.

We respected *Bhut'Sonwabo*, but he was such a practical joker that it was sometimes difficult to feel safe in his presence as one would not know when he would think up some 'diabolical' prank to play on us. But we always knew that he loved us dearly and that he would defend us, especially against outsiders.

Mama had a very good fashion sense so we learnt to dress well from her. However, my sisters were always more adventurous than I was in their dress sense. We learnt, from Mama's example and as our self-concepts developed, that looking different showed one's uniqueness, and thus we enjoyed wearing special outfits, traditional or international, whenever we attended functions. We

wore traditional Xhosa clothes and accessories and dresses from West Africa in Zimbabwe long before they became the rage there.

I refer to the photo album I collated as a symbol of love and unity. None of us chose to be related to the others, but we consciously or subconsciously chose to love one another and this promoted unity in the family through the leadership and guidance of Mama and Daddy. The two of us who are left, Xoli and I, are both best friends and siblings. There is nothing we do not discuss or advise each other on.

When I look at the photographs in this album, I always remember mainly the good times, although there was tragedy and heartache as well. But I always remember my experiences with gratitude for having been born into this family and to be blessed with the relatives that I was gifted. I remember the good times and the laughter. Although I miss those who are gone, I always feel they are in an upper room looking down on us and making sure our lives go on. Monde was especially good at cementing the relationship between the siblings. I want to foster the same kind of loyalty and sense of belonging in my classes as we all work collaboratively to become the best teachers that we can be.

7.5.1 Abantwana bakoDhlula

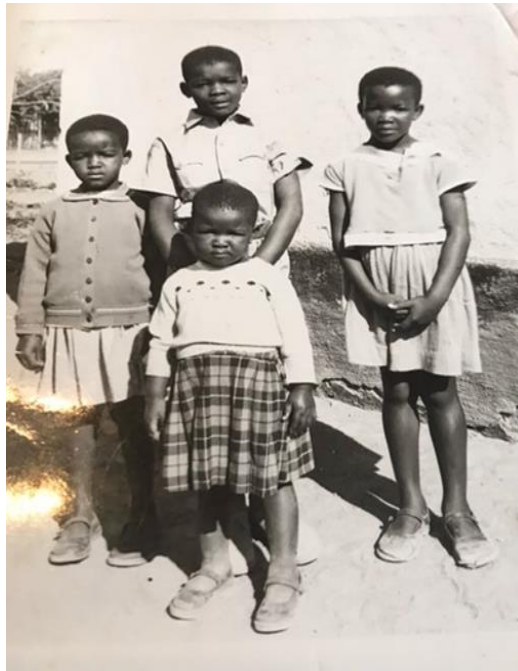


Figure 7.5 Abantwana bakoDhlula-2, l-r: Mandisa, Bhut'Sonwabo, Xoli, and Monde in front (Photograph by EVS Dhlula, circa 1966, 179 BF)

This photograph must have been taken around 1965 at 179 BF when I was about 7 years old. I suspect Daddy must have interrupted our play to make us pose for this photograph, hence our gloomy facial expressions. Could he have been testing his photographic equipment or filling up a spool/film so he could take it for development? Or maybe he wanted to capture a special moment he wanted to be preserved forever? I am inclined to go with the last scenario...

I do not remember the photograph being taken, though, but we were facing away from the house towards the big fig tree where we had our hiding place (see Figure 6.6). To my right behind us (not visible in the photograph) was a road that curved away towards our back to the grocery stores where we used to buy our cakes and 'itshongo'. The road also curved around the Barbourfields Stadium, opposite our house, where big matches are still played to this day. I do not even remember the clothes we wore on that day.

What I do remember is the fun we used to have when we played together as siblings. Mama and Daddy never encouraged us to go play at other children's homes unless we all went visiting as a family. They encouraged us to be content with and within ourselves. This encouraged us to become a unit whose members grew up to be close, regardless of distance, and to remain loyal to one another.

I also do not remember what *Bhut'Sonwabo* used to do to occupy himself; but we three girls loved playing with our dolls and engage in domestic make-belief while he did not. I remember that he rode his bicycle and he probably spent most of his time with Noma's brothers, Themba and Thobile. Perhaps our communication with him was limited as he was rarely home from boarding school. I used to look forward to his homecoming for holidays – he was like our 'special magic' that appeared during the holidays and went away again when the schools reopened. I remember that I was very proud and happy to have a brother. This photograph must have been taken on one of the few times in the year when *Bhut'Sonwabo* was around. We wore our old school shoes during play, with Xoli's looking the worse for wear. This was a form of recycling which was a custom as we also wore hand-me-down clothes, which was obviously a way of saving money.

I remember some of the songs we used to listen and dance to in those days: *My boy lollipop* by Millie (she died in May 2020), *The Twist* by Chubby Checker, and *Kweminy'imizi kugcwel'ifenitsha*, among others.

Xoli, like me, does not remember anything about this photograph and when and why it was taken. She commented: "I feel as if I was apart from the rest of you; maybe it's the way I was standing. I had the worst shoes on, was the thinnest..." She was the most slender of us all growing up, but looking at this photograph she felt that she was really thin. On a positive note, she observed that she was the cleanest-looking of us all. Looking closely I observed that she and Bhut'Sonwabo each had a 'widow's peak' (a hairline with a slight extension on the forehead) which they inherited from Mama and her side of the family. I knew about Bhut'Sonwabo's hairline, but I only noticed hers as we looked at and discussed this photograph.

Discussion held on 2 April 2018

7.5.2 Our 'tree time'

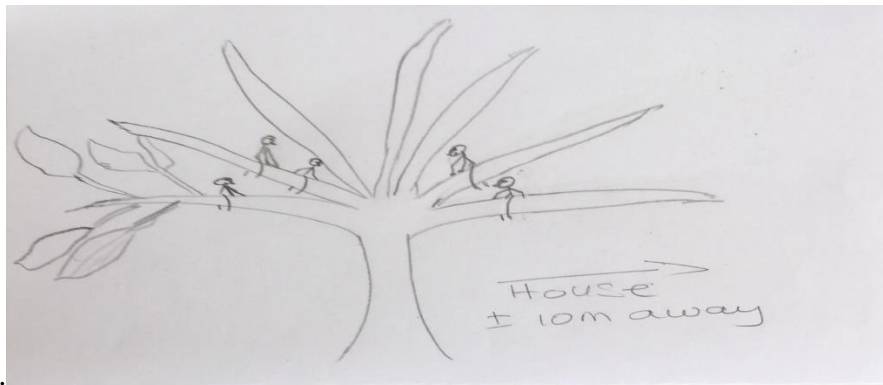


Figure 6.6: Our tree hideaway (Memory drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2017)

From our bedroom window at 179 BF we could see the fig tree that grew a little distance from the house. It had large leaves and was big and strong. When you are a child, you want your time to play and be a child, but a strict mother and her even stricter domestic worker always wanted to see that we were 'constructive'. So we would retreat and hide in that tree. The drawing depicts us sitting on its thick branches. We were innocent and did not know how to be deceptive because we always forgot we were hiding and would be caught easily due to the sounds of jubilation coming from the tree...

The siblings were usually joined by our cousin Noma because she only lived two houses away. Monde was too small to climb up the tree with us. We would at first try to hide and be quiet – “...whisper-whisper...” – but soon we would forget and start laughing aloud or maybe singing. Of course we would be caught and be given more work to do as a form of punishment. In my child’s mind this tree was huge and about 10 m away from our home, but when I think about it now it could have been 3 or 4 m ... but you know how, when you were a child, things seemed to be so much bigger than they were.

We could never hide successfully up our tree as Mama and her helper soon found us...and I suspect that Monde played a part in the discovery of the truants. She was four years my junior and too small to join us. I wrote the following for a presentation: “So I don’t think we went up the tree with her, so she would go and tell on us, I think...” (Critical Friends’ Group: 28 September 2017). After this presentation, a discussion followed about the point I made above about our using the tree as an escape from Mama and her helper to just be ourselves. The following are some of the inputs made by my critical friends:

Kathleen: You know, just thinking about the tree...I read an interesting article about the tyranny of being on task. Like how we always force [our students]. We walk into a classroom and say 'good class' if the students or the children are on task doing what we want them to do. This person was saying, actually, children and adults need brain breaks; they need time when they are not on task and it's ok, it's necessary. So your time in the tree was your break from the work. The work the adults wanted you to do was necessary. So how do we create 'tree time' for our learners and our students, where they don't have to be on task and it's ok because sometimes that time when you're not on task becomes the time when most of the creative learning can happen?

Lungi: I was just saying it's more for us to feel like we've achieved something in the classroom. Because when they look like they are not focusing on what they should be focusing on we look like we're not achieving anything...

Kathleen: The tree also reminds me...I'm sure we all have these stories. When I was a primary school learner, you know, you would sit in the same classroom. I would always have a novel open in my desk. We had these desks, you know this desk [miming a desktop that could open] and when I just got too bored I would open my desk and pretend I was looking for something, and then I'd read a chapter and close the novel. And I thought the teacher didn't know, but she told my mom she quite liked the idea, it was a good thing. She thought it was a good idea reading a chapter now and again... just quietly, actually...

Mandisa: ... so I would carry the *YOU* puzzles or the *Bona* magazine [to staff meetings] and just put them like that [showing how he hid them under something] and I would not lose any thread of the meeting. I would do my puzzles and participate in the meeting. But then somehow I do not have puzzles much anymore. I have a game on my cell phone. Now you put your things there and you're playing a game and immediately the chairperson goes, "Mrs Moruri, can we have your attention?" But with a puzzle, I could always put a diary like that [hiding magazine under diary] ...

Kathleen: So I think we need to think about these things in relation to our students... and how do we give them 'brain breaks'? To not be on task [all the time]. Or even like physically go out of the room we're in.

Chris: I once experienced...I was on a six-month digital workshop. She [the workshop facilitator] said, "Look, while I'm busy talking I'm giving you work. You must do whatever you want." And I often found that while she was busy talking I would just get up, walk around, stand there and listen, and walk that way and... having to sit down all the time, you just feel trapped, but if you

should just stand up and you listen to the person talking... It just seems like it's...the same thing [that happens] with my students. You will be talking and they will be busy, they won't look at you they'll be busy scribbling, not writing but they'll be busy scribbling. She just pointed out that some people listen better, and some people look better and they just need to do something else. It's almost like they need to do that to focus on what you're saying, just focusing.

Inba: Yes, well, there are theories of learning...auditory learners, tactile learners, all the learners [learning styles]. But we want to treat everybody the same. You just want them to sit and listen to you.

Kathleen: So maybe the important part in encouraging collaborative learning is also encouraging diversity in...?

Inba and Kathleen: Learning styles!

Kathleen: ... of giving different opportunities for learning.

Critical Friends' Support Group session: 28 September 2017

This discussion brought more than one matter to mind. First, I need to bring some fun activities into my classes so that my students are not always focused on school work. 'Brain breaks', as Kathleen called them, could ensure more productivity among my students. Such breaks will also help us all to refresh our minds. Secondly, Lungi's comment on how there is a tendency to make what happens in class about us as teachers but, in reality, it should be about the students and their learning. Their welfare should always be at the forefront of our minds. This was a very powerful reminder. Third, it was clear from the personal examples that were offered that, while we expect our students to be attentive for long periods, we find it difficult to concentrate for long periods without 'brain breaks' ourselves. This reminded me that I need to put myself in my students' shoes and ensure that we collaboratively find ways of giving ourselves some breaks. Of course, being in a collaborative situation means that I will need to encourage my students to display their creativity in this respect as not all the ideas should come from me alone.

7.5.3 The mock wedding



Figure 7.7: A mock childhood wedding as a creative collaborative activity: (l-r) Maudie (officiating priest), Thobile, Monde (the flower girl) in front of him, Noma (the groom), Xoli (the bride), and Mandisa (chief bridesmaid) (Photograph by EVS Dhlula, circa 1966, 179 BF)

The picture depicts a day we held a mock wedding. I do not remember the names of those children not mentioned in the caption. Noma was the groom but I don't remember where we got that pair of trousers from. Xoli was the bride, I was the chief bridesmaid and Monde was the flower girl, but she was of such stubborn nature that we couldn't tell her what to wear to conform to our idea of a flower girl. We had cake as well! This 'wedding' was held when we lived in the township about 75 m from grocery shops where they sold cake for sixpence. (At the time we used pounds, shillings and pennies in the then Rhodesia). If we were able to collect enough pennies (a donation of even half a penny or a farthing, which was a quarter penny was always valued) to collect sixpence, it was a lot of money and we would go buy cake, especially for birthdays. These cakes were normally glazed with icing sugar mixed with water that was poured over the cake. On this occasion we had what we called 'itshongo' that was sold at one of the shops. It was made from a mixture of miscellaneous bread and cake crumbs and, at times, as you were eating you would find some little stones. We were not discouraged though as we would be having a celebration and we would eat it all, and we were none the worse for it. We sang songs we had heard at weddings. I had been a flower girl at a real wedding. I used to be the chief bridesmaid most of the time on these mock occasions, though. After the 'wedding', we would then play 'house' with Xoli as the mother, Noma the father, and Monde and I the children who were disciplined quite a lot by the

mother who wielded her stick (Xoli seemed to enjoy this, even in general play). The father would sometimes caution her and, at times, 'beat' her when he would come home 'drunk'.

Critical Friends' Support Group session: 28 September 2017

I am excited to refer to this collaborative and creative activity that stands out in my memory. I was between the ages of five and eight when we lived at 179 BF and we planned and executed a mock wedding. Most of our creative moments were collaborative because we spent a lot of time together as the female siblings. *Bhut'Sonwabo* was at boarding school and his school holidays were shorter than ours. At this wedding, and at all real such occasions, we sang the common isiNdebele wedding song, *Londolozela. Ukulondoloza* which is about to care for, to nurture, to love. The song goes like this:

<i>Londolezela, londolezela</i>	look after, nurture, care for, love.
<i>Londolezel'uMama</i>	care for Mama (the bride)
<i>Angakutshay'ublaleke</i>	if he beats you run away
<i>Londolezela (refrain)</i>	
<i>Uyomceba kuMama</i>	and go report him to your mother
<i>Londolozela (refrain)</i>	
 <i>Londolezela, londolezela (refrain)</i>	
<i>Londolozel'uBaBa</i>	care for the husband
<i>Angakuhluph'umbuyise</i>	if she gives you problems, take her to her home
<i>Londolezela (refrain)</i>	
<i>Sizomlaya kakutsha</i>	we can teach her anew how she must behave
(the weddings guests would then ululate)	

Nowadays some songs cut across cultures and languages that are sung at weddings, but I do not remember when I last heard *Londolozela* being sung. Looking at and reflecting on this photograph filled me with insight. There was collaborative learning as we engaged in role-play and, as we imitated what we had seen our parents/elders do, we divided the tasks for preparation. We all had roles to play according to our traditional pecking order and customs: Xoli was in charge and lead the decisions on the dresses that we should wear, her 'bridal' attire, who the groom should be, and who would be the bridesmaid and flower girl. She knew our strong points and cast each in a

specific role. Photography was one of Daddy's hobbies. He even had high-quality cameras and the equivalent of a video recorder and player complete with screen, although sound was muted.

A question I asked myself was *How can I make use of what this photograph depicts or the scenario it represents in my classroom?* I teach Curriculum Studies in Consumer Studies (CS) (it used to be called subject didactics). There is a rule that what we teach at college should be aligned to the school syllabus (currently referred to as Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, or CAPS). Using such a photograph would stimulate ideas about the topic on food practices of consumers – thus how culture, religion, and socio-economic status are lived experiences that should be incorporated into lessons both at college and at school. Another idea would be how to plan to budget for the cake or the meal for the wedding and how to collate a suitable menu. Thus entrepreneurship, which is one of the critical cross-field outcomes at university, may be addressed. Food preparation and budgeting are also topics in Consumer Studies (CS) and these skills need to be applied when our students are required to plan for such occasions. Aspects that need to be covered are the different planning steps, costs, implementation, evaluation, and so on. This photograph covers so many of these aspects that I became quite enthused when I reflected on it to encourage similar use of photographic artefacts in my lessons.

When I presented the foregoing paragraph, it did not sit well with my critical friends. The following is a compilation of the comments they made:

Chris: And your role-play of the wedding sounded like so much fun. Then you start explaining about Consumer Studies...

Thelma: Yes... [disappointedly]

Chris: you took all the play out of it!

Thelma: Absolutely, Chris, that is my one beef.

Mandisa: Ok, I should not have brought in the application to my...?

Thelma: She took the fun away!

Lungi: She has become her father. You know, why I'm saying that is because when you look at the photograph, your father stopped the fun. After all, none of you are smiling in the photograph, except for one little darling... When I look at it, it was like nobody wanted to pose for this photograph. Your dad... It was like, why are they interrupting us?

Mandisa: Oh my gosh! [I had never looked at the photograph from that perspective.]

Lungi: So you put the brakes on the fun!

Critical Friends' Support Group session: 28 September 2017

Thelma and Chris added the following suggestions:

Thelma: Ya, definitely your application. I was actually thinking you were going to possibly say, "How could I do an activity like this, but then in Consumer Studies?" Like what did you make as a child, like what products did you make in your childhood?

Chris: You might even have to reward them for the variety or the diversity of response. So here, like in a group activity like this then they cannot just perform, there just has to be some writing, like writing wedding invitations...?

Thelma: ... look at all the joy and value you got out of this; like, you know, as if you robbed the children of their joy. Like, "But this is for my study, not for my class, my class has the curriculum now..." Actually, there is a lot in something like that that may be linked to Consumer Studies. Maybe they can draw on what they did to see how they could integrate it into their classes, or whatever. Geez man, I mean, gosh!

Critical friends' session: 28 September 2017

Comments about the singing, which I had also offered during a presentation that I had made (Chapter 6), elicited the following from Inba Naicker, one of my critical friends:

Inba: I just want some clarity on the singing. I see you do not talk much about your singing. Was there any collaboration in singing? Was there any collaborative learning in singing?

Mandisa: Ok. There was because to start the songs for weddings, we had them when there were weddings and then we practised them together such as, you know, when we had this wedding.

Inba: So you do not think it is significant, the collaborative learning coming from singing?

Mandisa: Yes, I realise that now. Singing in my family is taken so much for granted...

Inba: And I think singing is a part of you.

Critical Friends' Support Group session: 28 September 2017

Indeed, singing was – and still is – a part of my family and me. We sang hymns and the Lord’s Prayer every day during the evening prayers at home. My sisters and I were in choirs at the primary and secondary schools we attended. At primary school, I was in Mama’s choir (I think each class teacher had some singing/choir time on the timetable) and at secondary school, my sisters and I were in Daddy’s choir. Mama was also in the staff choir (comprising primary and secondary school teachers, the matrons, and the nurses at the mission hospital) with Daddy as the conductor. I already shared how, in December 2016, Xoli, Mama and I had travelled 190 km to Mayitshe Farm after hiring a vehicle and driver and sang the whole way there and back. When we disembarked at our home on our return, the driver said he had never enjoyed a trip as much as he had enjoyed that one. In my house, when my children were growing up, we always sang as we travelled or cooked Sunday dinner, for instance. I taught them some songs and they taught me the ones they had learnt from their school/s and friends. Moreover, all my family members – both on Daddy and Mama’s side – and the Moruris sing and continue to take singing for granted. The Moruri family sing more formally as they use hymnbooks with tonic sol-fa notes. My ex-husband was a music teacher by profession and my parents-in-law presented me with a Sesotho hymnbook in the first year of my marriage, which I treasure to this day.

Whenever there are occasions such as funerals, families generally worry if their church choir will be available to sing, but that has never been an issue in all the family groups I have been part of as we sing naturally from memory and the heart. Making music together in a group of people is a highly collaborative activity with clearly defined roles because, if not managed well, the music might become discordant and false and just noise. After a celebration, whether we had been involved or not, we sang as we relaxed, especially in the evenings. For formal occasions we generally sang hymns while we might sing choral music or just some fun music for lighter occasions. We also danced and moved our bodies to the rhythm of the songs we sang. At one occasion a cousin played CDs, but we did not like that and she had to switch it off. She was taking the fun out of our time together. To this day, singing and movement are part of my life.

Kathleen: The question is, Mandisa, do you sing in the classroom, with your students?

Mandisa: No.

Kathleen: So that is something to think about.

Mandisa: Definitely.

Chris: Ya, and you could be sitting there with a class of singers that are there frustrated...

Inba: Ya!

Chris: And maybe some of them can even make up their own songs!

Critical Friends' Support Group session: 28 September 2017

When I consider the focus of much of what we said about 'having fun' in class, I am honestly intending to lose some of the seriousness of my sessions with my students. We all still have that child within us that wants to come out and play, so there are definite opportunities that I have been neglecting in the collaborative learning sessions with my class. Throughout my years as a teacher educator, I have always noticed that some of my students were members of a campus choir, so using singing to teach and learn is worth pursuing in class. What is more, with the variety of music genres these days, I am quite certain all my students could find a niche from which they could capitalise.

After this input, there was a sharing of examples of some members of the group, myself included, where we had experienced singing/music as a teaching method when we were at school:

Inba: Because you know, Chris, what you are saying, there is a guy in CT who teaches mathematics through song, and it's quite effective. There was coverage of him on ENCA [a local television channel]. He is quite impressive and bright.

Mandisa: Daddy taught us the times table by singing it. In Form 1 when he found there were gaps in some of the pupils' 9x-table, I remember us going round the classroom singing and dancing.

Thelma: Singing mathematics! I mean, good gracious me! What a wonderful idea!

Refilwe: In Biology that is how they taught us. "Backbones connected to the...what-what..." We were singing!

Mandisa: Ah [singing] Dry bones, dry bones, dry bones...

Refilwe: That is how we learnt!

Critical Friends' Support Group session: 28 September 2017

When I mentioned Daddy's maths class, I was taken back in time as I remembered the scenario. I realised that this teaching method had been modelled for me, and I started wondering why I have never used it in my class/es with my student teachers. Siza Makhanya, another critical friend, made the following suggestion:

Siza: ... maybe make a recording of some of your music, the songs, and ... sing them!

Kathleen: For her thesis?

Siza: Yes!

Kathleen: Ya.

Mandisa: Ok, because after the Mayitshe Farm presentation, I found the scoresheet for *Makhulu's* hymn that she had sung to call the chickens. But for the other...I think singing it would be better than looking for someone to put it into notes.

Kathleen: That could be really nice ... you would have a song for every chapter and sing with your thesis.

Critical Friends' Support Group session: 28 September 2017

When I sent this piece of writing to Kathleen, I commented that no one in my family ever thought I was creative and that I believed them. Kathleen brought that to the discussion as follows:

Kathleen: I think what is interesting about this activity is [that] Mandisa was saying she is not creative, and it's obviously not true. She said she's not creative but she demonstrated her creativity in several ways in this presentation. But I think, as adults ... we often got the creativity weaned out of us. But as children we were all creative in our play. Imagine the games that we played and the things that we could make together. So, when we remember that, when we see that, and we have photographic evidence and we draw a memory drawing, then we cannot say anymore that I am not creative, because we are. And then, maybe if we can remember that creativity, we can harness it for our teaching and learning and see how we can discover our evident creativity that we are comfortable with.

Critical Friends' Support Group session 28 September 2017

These comments made me realise that my creativity was not as obvious as that of my siblings when we grew up and that we are all different. But I accept now that I am creative and can harness this creativity in my classroom to encourage the creativity that is undoubtedly in my students as well.

7.5.4 Imhuli yonke (the whole family)



Figure 7.8: The family, helper/domestic worker and older cousin (Photograph by EVS Dhlula, 1966, 179 BF)

1966: 179 BF

The whole family as well as an older cousin living with us (Sis Kholiwe Mafanya) and the helper/domestic worker, Aunt maVundla, are depicted in this photograph.

Monde wears flip-flops and not school shoes – or maybe she had not yet started formal school. If she had, she would have worn shoes similar to ours.

Xoli and I are wearing our ‘Christmas dresses’. Daddy had an account at Topic stores and he always insisted that, for Christmas, each of us could choose any dress we wanted. On this occasion Monde and I had identical dresses (although she is not wearing hers in the photograph). Maybe at this point we had not yet reached the stage of making independent choices.

The dress I am wearing here was the one I discussed in a Mayitshe Farm Christmas day story (Chapter Six). It had *iphephezela* (lacy frills) down the front to the waist, neckline, and at the sleeve hems. Xoli’s had the *iphephezela* at the neckline only. This must have been on a Sunday after church. The leaves of the big fig tree can be seen peeping in on the photograph to my left. Whenever I look at this photograph, I am reminded of how it used to be in the family. Everyone was treated the same. I grew up regarding the domestic worker as part of the family and one disrespected her at one’s peril. This attitude is also one that I instilled in my own children. Any other person living with us was a full member of the family. Because Sis Kholiwe and Aunt

maVundla were older than we were, they also were part of the village that grew me and did so collaboratively with our parents. My parents were also playing their part by raising Sis Kholiwe collaboratively with her own family. By their example, they instilled the principle and practices of *Ubuntu* in us. Wherever I go, I am aware that we all are all entitled to respect for our human dignity and that we need to recognise humanity in one another. I also expect of my students not only to show respect when addressing the support staff at the university, but to also show them respect by leaving whatever space we occupied the way they would like to find it and, in this manner, to promote *Ubuntu* that requires of us to consider other people's welfare and feelings.

Back to the photograph: Xoli remembered that the dress she wore was a light blue one with a collar of soft lace and that she loved it very much. Looking at the photograph, she remembered “the warm days growing up” – warm not just in temperature, but familial warmth within the family circle. She also had fond memories of our domestic worker, maVundla, in the back third from the left, whom she remembered as being quiet and well-behaved. This photograph also made her feel “emotional, remembering all those who have gone”. Only she and I are still alive at the time of writing.

Discussion held on 2 April 2018

7.5.5 The three sisters in 'mini' skirts



Figure 7.9: The three sisters in 'mini' skirts (Photograph by EVS Dhlula, circa 1967, at the rural mission.)

Late in 1967, 'mini' skirts from South Africa became the fashion. Mini is in quotes because what is considered to be mini these days is extremely mini. This photograph was taken outside the church at the rural mission, so it must have been a Sunday. Monde and I were wearing blue skirts while Xoli's was red. The tops were white. For once, Monde fully conformed right down to her shoes...a sign of growing up? Earlier, in the Rhodesian August-September school holidays, Mama and the four of us had travelled by train and bus to visit her family (Chapter Six) in Johannesburg, Sterkspruit and East London, and she had bought us these 'mini skirts' in East London. I remember the women sellers at the bus stops speaking in SeSotho and I fell in love with the language, unaware that I would meet, fall in love with and marry a Mosotho man 10 years later.

I also remember that we travelled by train and that it was hauled by a coal-fired engine. Mama felt sick because of the smell of coal as the smoke entered our compartment. We had to keep the windows closed after that.

Looking at this photograph, Xoli observed that she was standing apart from Monde and I, much like she did in Figure 6.5 above. She also commented on Monde's "pose". We first thought the

position of her feet was natural, then we remembered that Monde had loved to pose for photographs when we were small. In this photograph, and the one below, we wore the same shoes, so these must have been bought at the same time. We also saw similarities between Monde and people close to her in her face and smile. She reminded us especially of her son, Wandi, but also of *Tat'omncinci* Jimmy/Lex.

Discussion held on 2 April 2018

7.5.6 In our CGs ('Can't Gets')



Figure 7.10: In our dresses from the Ivory Coast (Photograph by EVS Dhlula, circa 1969, at the rural mission Principal's house)

1969 Dresses from Abidjan:

This photograph is of the three sisters with the daughter of the Matron (Mama's friend) and a paternal cousin who lived with us at one stage for over a year and was at the same school level as Monde, even though he was two years older. He was deemed too small when they first enrolled him for Sub-A. Big Sis's dress was a different colour and she wore headgear. Mama brought these dresses for us from Abidjan in the Ivory Coast (Cote d'Ivoire) where she had attended an African YWCA conference.

This photograph was taken at the front door of the Principal's house at the rural mission. Behind it was the dining room. Out of sight to Monde's right was a window behind which was the Singer sewing machine corner. This was definitely on a Sunday. I think we all loved looking different and unique wearing our CGs ('Can't gets').

Xoli remembered how much she had loved her dress, and observed how her legs look different from Monde's and mine. My response was that she got her legs from Mama while Monde and I favoured other relatives. We were impressed at the ensemble (dress and jacket combination) that Vivian was wearing. It was the height of fashion at the time. Looking at our cousin, Yolo, we were reminded of his late mother (uM'omkhulu) whom he favours in looks.

Discussion held on 2 April 2018

7.5.7 The three 'Divas'



Figure 7.11: The three sisters: Turn of the Millennium (Photographer unknown

This

photograph was taken in December 2001 at the graduation celebration of the child of a family friend of Xoli and Nga in Bulawayo. We stand in order of seniority from left to right. My sisters are cracking jokes across me, leaving me in stitches. The title was supplied by Monde when she sent it to us. I remember us talking about the new millennium that had seemed very far off as we grew up.

I was two months' shy of my 43rd birthday. I remember saying that inside of me I still felt like I was 22. It was a time when I declared the over-40s to be old...yet there we were, still feeling young! What is always amazing to me each time I look at this photograph is that our clothes were so perfectly matched. We could have been living in the same town, but I had come from South Africa, Xoli from the United Kingdom (UK), and Monde from Botswana.

My sister remembered the fun we had at this party. It was common for us to be happy together wherever we were, and we could dance the night away. She also remembered it was at the end of her first year in the United Kingdom and she had come home for the first time since she had gone there. Earlier in the holidays, there had been the unveiling of *Bhut'Sonwabo's* tombstone, as he had passed on in 1999.

Discussion held on 2 April 2018

7.5.8 On the road



Figure 7.12: The sisters travelling far to stay close (Photograph taken by NV Xaba, 2003, Francistown, Botswana)

This photograph of the three sisters was taken in Francistown, Botswana, in the 2003 March/April school holidays. Xoli and Nga (who is not quite in the photograph to the right) drove from Bulawayo and I travelled by public transport from Mthatha and we converged at Monde's residence in Gaborone for a few days before we drove home to Bulawayo with Monde's children in a two-car convoy.

We spent a night in Francistown with Monde's husband before we proceeded to Bulawayo on the following day. Monde's husband ran a nightclub and the two men spent the evening there. My sister and I agreed that not much happened on this day, as we were just relaxing in transit.

7.5.9 Time to say goodbye



Figure 7.13: Time to say goodbye l-r: Mandisa, Xoli, Nga (Xoli's husband, Bangani), and Monde (Photograph by Nga's cousin, 2004, Francistown, Botswana)

This photograph was taken in Francistown in January 2004 after the last Christmas Monde spent at home. We were dropping her off to proceed to Gaborone while we went back to Bulawayo. This is the last photograph taken with Nga...he passed away suddenly barely six weeks after this photograph was taken.

We were five in the car driving from Bulawayo to Francistown, with Nga's cousin (he took the photograph above) and the two men sitting in the front, and the three sisters sitting in the back. On the way back to Bulawayo we started singing in the back. Xoli sang Soprano and I sang Alto while the men engaged in conversation in the front. On the following day, at some gathering, Nga's cousin told other family members that they had been travelling with the Sunday school in the back seat, which sang them all the way to Bulawayo. ☺

My sister recalled that, by this time, our elderly parents had already agreed to move into a house on the outskirts of Bulawayo. The plot where they lived was a good twenty-five minutes' drive from town. Both Monde and Nga were pushing for this move to happen as quickly as possible. We had all agreed that we would be happier with them near town as, at the plot, they were quite isolated from their neighbours and travelling to town was becoming costly. They were able to move before Nga passed on. Xoli seemed convinced that this was in January 2004 because we had spent the New Year's celebration with some friends of theirs. She also remembered that she had come home with her son BJ (he lived with her in the UK at the time) at the insistence of Nga who had also bought the ticket for him. Sadly, this was the last time they spent with him. Nga passed away suddenly in February 2004 after our parents had moved into the new house.

Discussion held on 2 April 2018

7.5.10 Ookanina (maternal sisters)



Figure 7.14: After Monde's cremation (Photograph by NV Xaba, 2005, Johannesburg)

This photograph was taken in February 2005 after Monde's cremation in Johannesburg. Xoli and I stand with our maternal sisters (ooKanina – children of sisters).

L-r: Mandisa, Itumeleng, Xoli, and Naledi, after whom my daughter Naleli was named. Because our moms were so close, we grew up to be close too, even though we lived across borders.

7.5.11 Ookayise (paternal sisters)

Figure 7.15: At a granddaughter's birthday (Photograph by NV Xaba, Bulawayo)



April 2007: Xoli and I with our paternal sisters (ooKayise – children of brothers).

L-r: Dorcas (Dolly), Xoli, Sisana, Mandisa. All I remember is that this photograph was taken after Daddy's passing (the second last of the four members of our family to pass away).

Dolly came to live with my family when *Makhulu* came as she was regarded as her doll – she was the daughter of *Makhulu*'s last born (See p. xxii) who never married but passed away in 1980. She was the last daughter in my family, although only Monde was still not married when *Makhulu* and Dolly came to live with our parents. All the traditional rites were performed for her at home, such as getting married and her children knowing Mama and Daddy as their maternal grandparents. Sisana was the last-born to Daddy's younger brother, Johnson, and her mother passed away when she was quite small. She spent some time with her dad's siblings. These reflections remind me of how the children in the family were grown collaboratively.

This photograph was taken in Xoli's house in Bulawayo. We could not agree on the exact date of this visit and photograph because I do not remember Daddy being there at all on this trip. (He passed away in 2006). We both thought it was in 2005 when Xoli arrived as a surprise. Only the two of us knew she would visit for her granddaughter's (Zena's) third birthday, but the factor of Daddy puts a question mark on the truth of the dates. On the other hand, in 2007, after Daddy's passing, Zena turned 5 and her birthday party was held elsewhere. Mama could not remember, so she could not be of assistance in this regard.

Discussion held on 2 April 2018

7.5.12 Farewell to Scorpie



Figure 7.16: Farewell to Scorpie – Xoli, Mama and Mandisa (Photograph taken by NR Moruri-Mafa, 2006, Bulawayo)

Prominently seated in the front row are the three surviving members (at the time of writing) of the nucleus family at Daddy's funeral in November 2006. Because he had taken so much trouble to ensure we knew who we were (we were Xhosa in a land not of our origin) and because he had always recognised that even as women we had a voice, particularly in family matters, we honoured him by wearing traditional Xhosa attire (imibhaco) at his funeral.

I suspect that wearing identical outfits was no big deal; after all, we had been doing it quite a lot as we grew up. After the funeral, Xoli's incorrigible son drew the attention of the other children of his generation to this and mentioned that he had gotten a very good idea of how we used to look as children in identical dresses...

Xoli's first comment was that we "really looked tired" in the photograph, and I reminded her that we had not slept well as there was a shortage of sleeping space. So many family members had come both from the maternal (South African) and paternal (mainly from Gweru in Zimbabwean) sides. We also noted the other people sitting in the rows behind us. The two sides of our families sat together. *Malum'uDumisani* is just out of sight to my left and his wife, *Malumekazi*, is visible just behind me. There was a lot of support from the family as a whole. She commented, "It was very hot on that day", but it was an honour to be dressed in our warm Xhosa attires. Mama and a few other ladies visible in the background wore their Anglican Mothers' Union uniform. Mama showed her support for Daddy's having been a priest by wearing the uniform'

Discussion held on 2 April 2018

7.6 Conclusion:

Writing this chapter and narrating the events of my childhood that were linked to my siblings and parents felt right. It provided closure to my narratives of my significant family members and what I had learnt from each of them as a sister, cousin, niece, friend, and more. This chapter was thus the last step on my journey to generate knowledge in response to the first research question *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history* because, in the next chapter, I start on my quest to learn about collaborative learning from my professional practice. My exploration of what I learnt when I grew up and interacted with my siblings and cousins generated a deep understanding that the wealth of trust and support that we had for one another had been

nurtured by our parents. Although typical conflict between siblings was not uncommon, one theme that recurred strongly is the values of *Ubuntu* that were instilled in us. For example, we were expected to treat our elders, no matter their background or situation, with respect, and that is why people such as our domestic worker and the cousins who spent some of their growing-up years with my family will always be remembered with fondness. I also learnt to clean up after myself and to leave the space I occupied in mint condition. These, and many others, are certainly values I have tried to instil in my own children and students.

An important lesson that I learnt from my critical friends is not to take anything for granted. There was a lot of singing in my family whenever we were together and we could naturally harmonise different parts – soprano, alto, tenor, and bass (if our male siblings and cousins joined us). This harmony in singing now also represents harmony in our different abilities and personalities. These two lessons, among others, have shaped and will continue to shape me into the educator that I am. Looking back at them makes me want to keep going back in my mind so that I can maximise the effect of the exposure I had to my family in order to improve my professional practice.

I also learnt the value of working together with others as this usually leads to a confluence of different skills that complement one another to make a harmonious whole. Therefore, in collaborative learning, there is room for all types of people who learn together to produce successful learning for all the group members. At the same time, I learnt not to take family loyalty for granted as this is a powerful foundation for growth and development. Individuals in my class will therefore need to regard the others as family. This, in turn, will generate a sense of loyalty and this will help my students to see one another's positive attributes that they can capitalise on for learning. Moreover, I have an open-door policy and my students generally feel free to come to my office for advice and support.

I realise that I seriously need to loosen up my control in the classroom situation and allow both my students and myself to be who we are. Furthermore, I also need to break down my preconceived ideas of how I need to improve my classroom practice and take to heart the suggestions made here. For instance, I was reminded to be kind to students who are always playful (which is often seen as being 'disruptive'). So maybe I have tried too hard to conform to what is expected of a 'stoic' lecturer to the detriment of my student teachers' sense of creativity. I need to nurture this playfulness in light-hearted moments for them to be the most effective they can be. In this process, I am sure I shall also learn from them.

In the next chapter, I generate knowledge to address my second research question *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional practice?* I will look at what made me choose a career in teaching and I explore the educational journey I had to travel to achieve this goal.

CHAPTER EIGHT: *UKULUNGISELELA UBOMI*

(PREPARING FOR LIFE)

8.1 Introduction

This chapter is an extension of the previous chapters in which I presented data to support my self-study research that focused on learning about collaborative learning. The two main aims were to explore my personal history to illuminate the times that I learnt from and with others, which are experiences that I refer to as collaborative learning. I envisaged that this process, and the insights that I would gain, would assist me in better understanding the forces of learning that made me the teacher that I am now. I also needed to unpack my professional history and utilise my learning to better understand my current and future cohorts of university students as well as myself. This process was adopted in the knowledge that I would improve my professional practice and that it would guide me on my journey to become the best teacher educator that I can be.

This chapter introduces part of my history that would address the second research question *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional history?* I start by looking at three of my teachers who greatly influenced my choice of profession and how I came to make the decision to become a Home Economics/Consumer Studies teacher. I also recall my collaborative learning experiences as a student teacher

Part of what contributes to becoming a good teacher, in my opinion, is how one decides to become a teacher. I thus felt that I needed to unpack the factors that influenced one of my most important decisions in life, which was to become a teacher. The narrative that follows elucidates how I addressed the forgoing statement as I sought to generate a response to the second research question.

8.2 My ‘Influencers’

In this section I present my recollections of the three teachers who most profoundly influenced my decision to become a teacher. These people were Mama, Daddy, and my high school Needlework and Dressmaking teacher.

8.2.1 Mama was my teacher and role model



Figure 8.1: Mama: My teacher and role model (Photograph taken by EVS Dhlula, circa 1969)

The photograph above depicts Mama in a serious teacher mode. This photograph is reminiscent of Mama's attitude towards her job and calling. Right up to her passing at the ripe age of 88 years, she took her role as teacher and role model seriously. Towards the end of her life she was mainly a consultant, advisor and parent. She had always embraced to development of her and Daddy's former students and they also wanted to return the favour by regularly checking on her and asking for her advice.

At the beginning of 1969, I was due to start my Grade 7 (a new nomenclature for Standard 5) which was now going to be the exit point from primary to high school. The external examination that was normally written in Standard 6 was going to be written in Grade 7. My elder sister was in the last cohort of Standard 6 that year, so we went to secondary school (Form 1) together. I had just scraped through Standard 4 in ninth position but with a Grade 3 (lowest acceptable) average pass. Mama was one of the Grade 7 teachers, but I was not going to be placed in her class. I suspect that the Headmaster knew that Mama was one of his best teachers as he asked her if she wanted her daughter in her class. She told him he was the headmaster and she would accept whatever decision he made on the matter.

He came to my classroom and asked me what my class position was in Standard 4, and I told him. He told me to take all my books and stationery and follow him to the next-door classroom. I then swapped classes with a learner who had achieved at the same level as I had.

I was only going to turn 11 that February. I was so immature that this change of classroom made no difference to me. One of my older paternal sisters (Daddy's brother's daughter) was also in my new class. Her name was Mabel (or 'Thembeka' when Mama was displeased with her). Two boys, whose mothers were Mama's home girls from South Africa (Glen and Ambrose) were also in the class. Mama treated the four of us the same as any other learner in her class, except when one or more of us displeased her. Then she would say, "*Glen, Ambrose, Mandi noThembeka, ndizanibetha ndinibulale! Ndigqibe ndiningcwabe, ndithwale iqhiya emnyama! Emva kwenyanga eziyi-6, ndiyethule ndiqubeleke nobomi bam!*" (Glen, Ambrose, Mandi [her tone changed when she was on the warpath] and Thembeka, I will beat you until I kill you! Then I will bury you and don a black 'doek' (headscarf)! After 6 months I will take it off and get on with my life!") That always motivated me not to get on her wrong side.

I managed to stay clear of her wrath, but only after 'getting burned'. I remember that at the beginning of the year she gave us a composition to write and hand in on a specific date. I wrote the composition but for some reason I did not submit it – I still do not know why. She did her marking in the evenings at home after supper. I saw her mark the compositions and it did not even occur to me to shove my composition book amongst the others! When she returned the books to the class, she called the names one by one and all my classmates received their books. I could sense her anger brewing, or I sensed my fear growing, am not sure which it was. After she had handed out the books, she looked straight at me and asked where my composition was. By then I had put my book on the desk. I picked it up and told her that it was there. She picked up a switch from her desk and made me hold out my hand...I do not remember how many lashes she gave me, but I was determined not to cry. When I sat down, my desk mate was astounded at the severity of the punishment and this comment opened the waterworks. The one thing about Mama was that she always made you understand exactly why she was punishing you, even at home. In this instance, I understood her point and the only person I was angry with was myself. I told myself that I would never give her cause to punish me again as long as she was my teacher, and I managed to keep my promise.

She gave us an Arithmetic test (We only did Mathematics from Form 1) and seated us in sections based on the results. Section A was for those who had done very well, Section B was for the average achievers, and C for the strugglers. Ambrose and I were in Section A and Glen and Mabel were in Section C. This brought a bit of reprieve from Mama's eagle eye. Mabel and I sat next to the windows of the class at opposite ends of the front row. She had a very sharp eye and could see the smallest thing from afar. On her side of the classroom was a big tree that towered above the gabled roof of the two-classroom block. One morning, just after class had started, Mama suddenly shouted, "Thembeke!", and we all looked to see what she had done. Her attention was not on the lesson but on the tree. She told Mama that there was a snake in the tree outside the classroom. Mama took a stick and beat her, asking if she had come to class to look for snakes or to learn. Then she continued with the lesson. The windows were open, and after a bit I heard something hit the window frame next to me. I was startled and jumped in my chair. Mama sternly said, "Mandi!" I sat upright and pretended nothing had happened. On my side of the classroom was a door. Some of my classmates arrived late for the class. As they approached the classroom at a run, they suddenly stopped in plain fear and then took a roundabout way to get to the classroom door. Mama could see them, and she finally asked one learner what they had been running away from. She was told there was a snake below my window! The whole class broke into laughter as we realised that Mabel had indeed seen a snake, which must have been what had startled me when it hit the window on its way down. Unfortunately, I do not recall if Mama apologised to Mabel or not...

Treating me like the other learners in her class could not have been easy for Mama. As an adult, I learnt that her dad and a host of aunts and uncles had taught her when she was in primary school. The relatives were openly stricter with her than with other learners. They would punish her more often, mark her work more strictly, and even beat her for not getting full marks. Her dad was more devious – he would not say anything in class, but at home he would call her and thrash her for any misdemeanours at school no matter how minor. It was fortunate that she was very bright and usually came first, which was a redeeming factor. She was a hardworking teacher. I believe that, if she had not been my class teacher that year, I would not have passed Grade 7 as I was very young still and very playful. I needed her strict demeanour at that point in my life.

One of my classmates from the village neighbouring school broke her arm on the playground one day, and the headmaster requested Mama to drive her to the hospital in town as the mission hospital ambulance had already left. Besides him, she was the only teacher with a car. She took the child, waited for her to be treated, and came back with her in the late afternoon. When the parents came

to thank her and offer some money for her fuel and the hospital fees, she and Daddy refused. She and the principal demonstrated *Ubuntu* by showing care for the child as they behaved *in loco parentis*.

In that year Mama was also our class choirmaster. The song *Sangoma* stands out in my memory and I still love it. She did not know any IsiNdebele or Shona songs (the indigenous languages spoken in the midlands of Rhodesia/Zimbabwe where the rural mission was situated), so she taught us songs in isiXhosa that were all part of our choral repertoire at home.

8.2.2 Scorpie as my teacher and role model

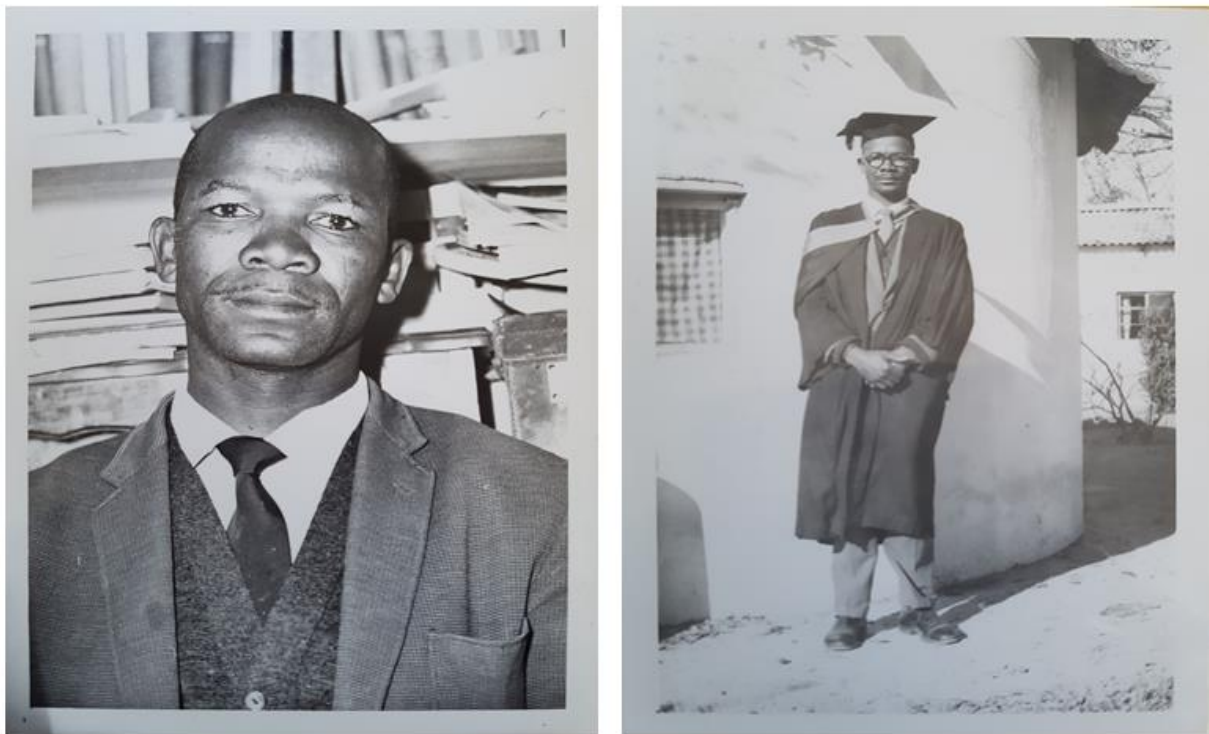


Figure 8.2: Scorpie as my teacher and role model (Photographs taken by EVS Dhlula)

These photographs are reminiscent of the way Scorpie always dressed professionally. On the right he is in his academic regalia after he attained his degree at a distance university in South Africa. In the photograph on the left, Scorpie is sitting in his study where he spent a lot of time studying for his degree. The manner of his dress indicates that this must have been a school day. In the photo on the right, he stands next to the rondavel that was the spare bedroom at the Principal's house (see Figure 3.7). To the right of the photograph is the wing of the house where our bedrooms were. In my view, Scorpie not only modelled professionalism as can be seen in these photographs, but also lifelong learning.

At assembly on the morning of my first day in secondary school where I was a boarder, the Principal (Daddy) introduced the staff to the students. He ended with the following words, “The speaker is the Scorpion. Those who like me call me Scorpie and those who do not like me call me Scorpion.” I loved Daddy’s wonderful sense of humour.

My sister and I had moved from the Principal’s house to the girls’ dormitory the day before, like all the other boarders. In Rhodesia, all secondary schools, except those in towns, were boarding schools and no day-scholars were allowed. At the time, the school went up to Form 2. As senior students are wont to do, some tormented us as newcomers (*amanyhunyu*) as a form of ‘initiation’. When they wanted to involve me, I straightaway refused participate, and they backed off. One of them told them that this was Scorpie’s daughter and I would probably tell on them, so they left me alone. From then on, even Daddy addressed me as “Scorpie’s daughter” at the school. I addressed him as “Scorpie” to the end, but never in class where he was “Sir” and I was “Mandi”. Whenever I did or said something that reminded her of him, Mama always reminded me that I was Scorpie’s daughter.

He was my teacher in Mathematics (commonly referred to as Maths) and Bible Knowledge up to Junior Certificate (JC), which was externally assessed after two years of secondary school. My sister and I were put in two separate streams – I suspect this was to separate us as well as those who had written the last Standard 6 national examinations from the first cohort of Grade 7 learners. When he came to class after a previous one, the class monitor of that class would accompany him and bring his briefcase. On his way out, our monitor would take the briefcase either to his office or to the house if it was tea or lunch break. My sister or I would often waylay the monitor (and call the other) and take the briefcase ourselves during one of the breaks, especially if we felt peckish at tea break or we had something to discuss with Mama, who by then had been retrenched and stayed at home.

I remember that when he taught Bible Knowledge, he would infuse some fun into the lesson by contextualising the Bible stories. One example was when he taught us the parable of the prodigal son. He added that this young man took all his money and spent it on loose women (I did not know what this meant at the time) and parties. After the lesson, our homework was to draw any scene from the parable. Most, if not all of us, drew pictures of fashionably dressed young people dancing the night away. I distinctly remember my drawing was of a young man and a young woman. I

‘dressed’ the man in bell-bottoms (bootleg trousers) and the woman also in bell-bottoms and a blouse with long bishop sleeves. They both had afros (an African hairstyle) and lots of jewellery. His comment was that he had given us spiced food, and when he asked how it was, we talked about the spices only. From this I learned that, even though adding a fun element to a lesson is important, one should always bear in mind, and emphasise, the object of the lesson.

He made Maths fun. He used the drill method (rote learning) to instil some theorems. I remember one he taught us, “When two straight lines intercept, the vertically opposite angles (pause) are equal!” after he had demonstrated it. I remember doing times tables as we went around the classroom singing and dancing to the tune of a popular song. Like Mama, he was also a strict teacher, but he taught in a way that made his classes very enjoyable to young impressionable minds. He made the subjects he taught seem easy, and those who did not take him seriously did so at their peril. After having been taught by Mama in my last year of primary school, I could ill afford not to take a teacher-parent seriously.

At one time a new way of writing t, b, and d suddenly came into fashion, and we all applied it in a test he gave us. When he returned our books, he told us not to use the new way of writing these letters. Not long after this incident, he gave us some homework to do and we submitted our books. A few days after that, just before his class, a number of us ran to the bathroom and, when we returned, he had everyone standing in line with his or her exercise book that Daddy had brought back with him. He gave us ours and made us get in line. We all opened our exercise books to the work we had submitted and those who had still written the letters in the way he had warned us not to were punished.

To those of us, like me, who had taken his warning to heart, he said that we had been saved from “the sting of the scorpion”. He was left-handed and, when he put the lash to one’s hand, the pain did not come immediately. We thought that was where his nickname had come from. I discovered later that he had earned the nickname at the first school where he had taught because his horoscope sign was Scorpio as he was born on 13 November.

Sometimes he would take us outside for class, especially for Bible Knowledge, when we did not always have to write down anything. As the Principal he was also the Superintendent of the mission as a whole. One particular day we sat just off the road that wound from the mission hospital to town. The ambulance appeared from the direction of the hospital and the driver stopped the

ambulance next to where we were seated, got out, and brought some documents for him to sign. As he was signing, he asked the driver why he had such a full beard. The man replied in Shona, '*Ndebvu ndedzevarume*' ("A beard is for men"). My dad scratched his shaven chin and asked if this was so, and got an emphatic yes. We were hard-pressed not to laugh, as that would have been rude to the driver. Immediately he had driven off, we broke into laughter. Scorpie turned that story and made it relevant to the lesson. He may not have grown his beard, but he was one of the best men we knew.

One of his favourite pieces of advice was, "If you don't get what you like, you like what you get." He used this advice both at home and at school. This had the effect of liberating me whenever I felt dissatisfied about something and knew there was nothing I could do about it. On the other hand, it had a limiting effect as I sometimes felt the saying inhibited me from striving for more, and this resulted in some missed opportunities. For instance, when I graduated my diploma, I was awarded the Vice Chancellor's award which included a cheque from Huletts sugar company. I missed an opportunity by not applying for support from Huletts to further my studies because 'I liked what I got'...

He was the choirmaster of the school choir. He also taught us both Xhosa and English songs. Whenever we sang to his pleasure, he would exclaim, "If you sing like that, you will not die, you will simply walk into heaven!" I remember *Inggina*, *uLoliwe* and some Negro spirituals such as *Oh Peter, go ring them bells*. The many songs we sang remained part of our repertoire whenever we had a singing marathon like the one I mentioned in Chapter 6 when we travelled to and from Mayitshe Farm and sang the entire way.

8.2.3 My high school needlework and dressmaking teacher as my mentor and role model

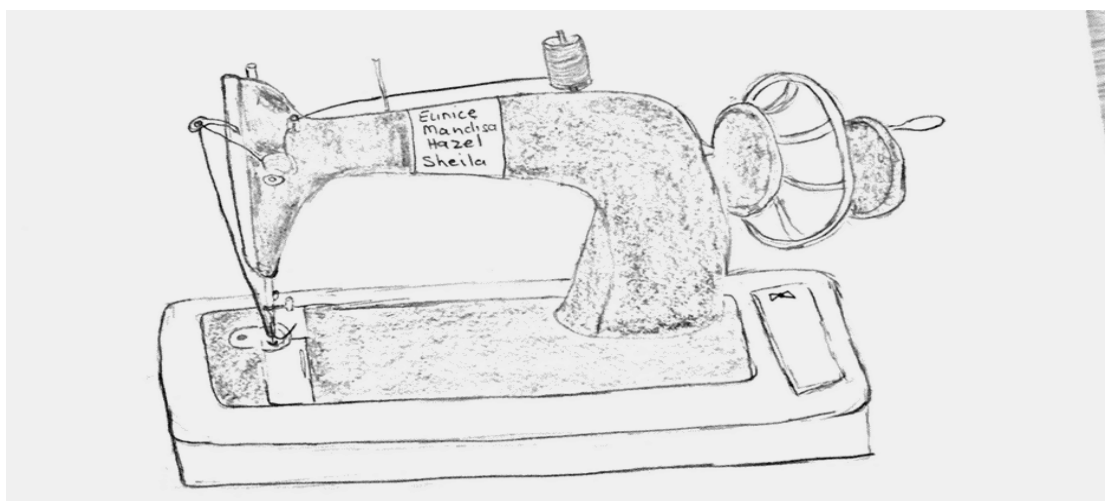


Figure 8.3: Illustration of a sewing machine in my teacher's Needlework and Dressmaking class (Memory drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2017)

At high school Needlework and Dressmaking was one of my subjects of choice and also one of the two subjects that I passed with distinction. Our teacher taught the subject, especially the practical aspect, in a highly empowering manner. The list of names in the illustration is an example of how she instilled responsibility and accountability in us for our own and our group mates' learning.

In high school I chose a subject combination that included Needlework and Dressmaking. I first wanted to be a doctor, but I gave up on that dream because the school would not allow me to take Physical Science as a subject. I was told my Mathematics mark was not good enough. I had passed my Junior Certificate (JC) examinations with Needlework and Dressmaking as one of my subjects so when I went to high school I had had exposure to using a sewing machine. The subject combination I had was thus a choice by 'default'.

In the first few periods the Needlework and Dressmaking teacher explained the theoretical aspects of a sewing machine and she demonstrated her remarks. This lesson included learning about various problems that could occur when using a sewing machine. We learnt about the causes of malfunctioning and what needed to be done to remedy the problem. Then she allocated sewing machines to groups and a list of our names was attached to the machine we were supposed to use (see Figure 7.3). She did not allow any learner (girls only in those days) to use a machine that did

not have her name on it. If a girl raised her hand to report a malfunction, my teacher never rose from her chair. She would simply ask what had been happening, what the cause of such a problem was, and how one was supposed to correct it. She then told you to fix the problem. If you abandoned a machine that needed attention, and the next student raised her hand to report that she had found the machine faulty, my teacher could easily trace the culprit who had to use the machine before. She always insisted that we left the machines in good working order for the next student to use.

Because of the way we were taught and the skills we learned at school, I was able to repair faulty sewing machines when I became a teacher at a senior secondary school in Matatiele. I discovered 21 sewing machines but only three were in working order. The Home Economics teacher was at her wits' end. I dedicated one day to the machines and managed to repair 18 of them. I could do this by using the parts of three machines to repair the others.

My teacher also explained the theory of needlework by referring to the steps to follow when making a garment. She reminded us of the sequence of first preparing the pattern by checking its fit, then placing the pattern on the fabric, then cutting the pieces, and finally sewing them together to make a garment. When you had prepared the pattern and raised your hand to indicate that you were ready for her to come and check on it before you placed it on the fabric, she would ask you questions that made you assess yourself and, if all your answers were correct, she would tell you to go ahead and place the pattern on the fabric. If you were not sure, she would tell you to make sure, otherwise your garment would not fit and, if your answers were all correct, she would tell you to go ahead and cut out the garment. She also recorded the date of each step.

When you started sewing, you already knew the sequence of the steps you needed to follow to sew a garment perfectly. Each step was checked: for example, the type of seam you made, the measurement of the width/length of a seam/dart.... She would not look at it, but simply note the date of completion in the table with our names and the steps we had completed. She would do the same until you had finished the garment and only then would she collect it and allocate marks. I found this approach empowering and a lesson in self-assessment. You knew what the different steps entailed and you were able to assess your work yourself as you proceeded to make the garment.

Reflecting on the illustration above and the memories I recalled made me understand that my teacher was well ahead of her time as her approach was founded in outcomes-based education principles where objectives are clearly stated and guide to the assessment process. I try to apply the same principles and give my students a rubric when they do an assignment so that they know what I expect of them. This also encourages them to assess themselves before they submit or present their work to the class. In dressmaking, if the process is not followed properly, the garment will not be a good fit, and the desired outcome will not be attained. Moreover, in times of uncertainty the other learners and I were free to consult one another, and in this manner we achieved the outcomes collaboratively and successfully.

I always think of my teacher with affection because she taught us to be responsible, accountable, and independent. If I had not been able to become a teacher, her influence would still have empowered me to make a successful living in any other career of my choice. She was one of my role models but her strongest influence was my decision to study for Home Economics (Consumer Studies) teaching. I have never regretted this decision and still enjoy my career some forty-odd years later.

8.3 End of Innocence: The Last Night of High School

In Rhodesia we wrote three examinations at high school: The Junior Certificate (JC) at the end of Form 2, which was nationally examined; the General Certificate of Education (GCE) or ‘O’ (Ordinary) level at the end of Form 4; and the GCE ‘A’ (Advanced) level at the end of Form 6. The latter were both examined and marked by Cambridge University in England. After the ‘O’ level examinations, most of us stopped and went into professional training such as teaching and nursing. An ‘A’ level pass led to university entrance.

At the high school that I attended, we sat for our ‘O’ level examinations at the end of 1974. The school is about 13 km outside Plumtree in a north-westerly direction. The students who were not local to the area, like us, made use of rail transport. We boarded a train from Bulawayo to Plumtree, where we boarded the school bus and the school truck took our trunks. There was always a special train for the students of the school in each direction. I suppose that was because the normal train schedule on that line was international as the train chugged its way to South Africa via Botswana. The transport system was well organised and evidence of collaboration between the school and the

Rhodesia Railways. This was necessary as all the secondary schools in rural areas were strictly boarding schools.

Our teachers were representative of various ethnic groups and were both Black and White. Some teachers had come for short stints from the UK. The teachers were very dedicated and strict, but there was time for work and play. On weekday afternoons, except Wednesdays, we engaged in athletic activities or games (depending on the season) and competed against the girls in the other houses and hostel. On Wednesdays, one had to choose an activity one liked and take part in it, but that was when some would go on detention. No one wanted to miss a chosen fun activity, so there were never many on detention. Each student could always be accounted for on each day of the week, that is how organised the school was. The teachers worked together and were fully involved in ensuring our engagement.

The last papers of an exam would be written on the last day of school. When external examinations were written, the students were allowed to leave when the last paper had been written. The year I wrote my 'O' level examination, the Needlework and Dressmaking paper was written after everybody else had left for home. We were housed together for economic/management reasons. Students who left early would buy delicacies which they sent to those who were still at school by 'bribing' the driver of the school truck, who delivered our gifts first to the girls' and then to the boys' hostel. There would be fish and chips, meat pies, chocolates and potato crisps, to name a few. I never had an opportunity to reciprocate as we left after everybody the year we wrote our last external exam. On the last evening after the final exam, we came together and shared the 'goodies' we had received the day before. We were aware that we were at a crossroads and that for some, this would be the last day as a student. We were going out into the big, wide world – a sobering thought. The following year some, like I did, enrolled for professional training whilst others came back to do their 'A' levels *en route* to university. It was a sombre moment as we knew we had to say good-bye. We talked about our dreams and aspirations and how we did not want to lose touch with one another. We also reflected on our sojourn at the school and expressed appreciation for the hard work our teachers had put in to ensure our success. We also laughed about some of the funny moments we had experienced and shared a sad moment for one girl in our cohort who had been expelled before the final exams. Because I left the country three years later, I had some contact with very few of my classmates. However, thanks to online applications and facilities we now have an Alumni Association which has helped us to re-establish contact.

Of course, when the girls were clustered together we talked about boys. I think all of us had boyfriends at the time. But as much as we were in love, all my friends and I wanted to obtain some professional qualification first. We teased one another about boyfriends. Some had boyfriends at school, but some had boyfriends who lived very far from Plumtree. I fell into the category of those who had a boyfriend at school, but he was a year ahead of me. He was also going to come back to school to complete his 'A' levels while I would move on, and we lived very far from each other. This romance was doomed to failure.

I remember that we all knew what we wanted to do the following year as we had filled in government forms on which we had indicated our first, second, and third career choices. My first choice was to become a nurse and my second choice was to become a Home Economics teacher. I accepted that entering 'A' level would be counter-productive as there was no articulation into the qualification I wanted at the University of Rhodesia, and Needlework and Dressmaking was not offered at 'A' level. I am not sure why I indicated my preferences in this order as I had always wanted to be a Home Economics teacher, but it was possibly because Xoli had made nursing her first choice the previous year and she was already in training at this stage.

That last evening with my school friends was important as I remember feeling that I needed such a conversation with my peers. We needed to put aside the excitement of leaving school and reflect on our school days before moving on to the next stage of our educational growth. It was as if we had all taken off our masks and could share our dreams and aspirations in a very open and honest fashion. I also remember silently thanking my parents for allowing me to go to boarding school for my 'O' levels and not making me stay in the rural mission school where Daddy was the Principal. Moreover, in the absence of my parents the bond of friendship that my elder sister and I shared had grown stronger as we had learned to respect and understand each other better away from parental control. After she had left school, I developed as an individual away from her and the family. Looking back, I realise that my resolve to become a teacher was strengthened at high school as I envisaged myself empowering my students the way my Needlework and Dressmaking teacher had empowered me.

As I reflect on my high school experiences, I am filled with the hope that these memories will help me to encourage open discussions with and among my students about their lives and aspirations. When young people learn and work collaboratively, they influence one another and provide advice and moral support, particularly as they learn to understand where their peers are coming from. By

the time my students arrive in my class in their third year, they know one another fairly well and they have now committed themselves to complete their teaching degrees. I should thus work towards making this dream a reality.

8.4 Preparing for my Future: Becoming a Teacher

8.4.1 College of Education, Bulawayo: 1975-1976

My parents were noncommittal when my final results were released in the middle of February 1975. At one point I asked Mama what was happening as I had indicated I wanted to go to teacher training college. She and Daddy wanted me to be sure that what I decided and what I desired would be the same. I confirmed my decision to go to the teachers' training college. Daddy took me to the college and introduced me to the Principal, who happened to know my parents well. I met the Head of the School of Home Economics who commented that I was tall, which she described as desirable for a Home Economics teacher. There was only one space left in the School of Home Economics and she invited me to take that place, but I would have to catch up with the others as the programme had already started. I was given time to think about my decision.

At the beginning of March, Daddy took me to the college and this time it was final. On one of the legs of these two trips he commented that he had chosen a career in teaching so that he would always be relevant. This inspired me as it was indeed the case. He made a strong impact first as Headmaster of a primary school where we started school, and then as Principal of a secondary school. He was also a member of the College Council and I was thus personally welcomed by the Principal of the college. Daddy was always supportive of our choices, and I often felt that he was particularly sensitive to mine.

I arrived with all my luggage at the college and filled in the forms. The clerk who assisted me commented that they had made an error by admitting me for the 1975 cohort as I had just turned 17 a week or so earlier. The rule was to admit only students who had turned 17 the previous year and who had had a gap year before coming to college. However, my application was approved and I was admitted to the college of education. Catching up was no problem and I was soon on par with my classmates. In the cohort of 20 students, I found a classmate whose home was not far from 179 BF. Her name was Bahle and she lived at 206 BF. We bonded easily and also with other students who had attended the rural mission school. My new friends all supported my efforts to

catch up. Fortunately, catching up in Needlework and Dressmaking, both theory and practical, was no challenge at all due to my school teacher's tutelage that had earned me a distinction. I also did not find Food and Nutrition a challenge because the class was busy on a project to trace and writing up recipes for indigenous dishes. (We suspected that she was doing it for her research and academic advancement, although we never asked.) She left early in the terms and a nun from Germany took over the classes. She had applied for the job as she had heard very good things about the college. The lecturer who taught Needlework on my arrival also left and a nun from Spain took over the class. They were both Roman Catholic, but of different orders. The Food and Nutrition nun wore the white habit and veil while the Needlework and Dressmaking lecturer wore private clothes.

About a month after my enrolment, approval to attend nursing training was delivered in writing to my home. Daddy drove from Gweru to hand it to me in person. He waited for me to read the letter and told me he would be spending the night at his sister's. He left me to make my decision, telling me he would be back the same time the following afternoon. It did not take me long to come to a decision. Xoli was training at a hospital which was a 10-minute walk from the college and, during that time, many trainee nurses had been expelled for some reason or another. Moreover, I was now really interested in what I had registered for. Therefore, by the time Daddy arrived the following afternoon, I had a reply letter for him to post. I thanked the Director for the invitation, but requested another call upon completion of my teacher's training course. I also indicated the relationship between the two programmes from my perspective, and stated that I was still interested in pursuing nursing to use the knowledge I was gaining in the teaching programme as I hoped to eventually become a sister tutor. Daddy read the letter, looked seriously at me for some moments, and accepted my decision. A few weeks later, when the reply to my letter arrived, I was home on holiday. My request was granted. I kept the letter and only destroyed it after my marriage when I was packing to move to South Africa at the end of my teacher training.

I got the impression that the Food and Nutrition nun (See Fig 3.3) was not impressed with the way I got into college. She would mention something about some students using their contacts to get their way, which was a comment that hinted at nepotism. I am not sure if she ever looked at my school results or whether she was just speculating as she commented that some students were accepted even if they had not passed well enough for college. My friends and I realised she was aiming these remarks at me, but that she was protecting herself by not being too specific. I suspect she thought I would run to Daddy and tell on her, but I was much more mature than the Sub-A learner who had run to Daddy for the merest excuse. Therefore, while she could be petty and give

low marks for my practical work as this assessment was largely subjective (it was difficult to record evidence in the pre-cellular phone days), she could not fault me in my theory exams for which I usually earned a distinction. My friends Bahle, Ruth and Selinah, as well as my cooking partner, Beauty, gave me moral support that strengthened my resolve to succeed in my chosen course. I had many friends such as Lizzie, who had been friends with Selinah since their school days (she was in the Primary Teacher's training programme) and another friend whose room adjoined mine in the first year. Generally, the cohort of only 20 girls formed a friendly, supportive unit. Each was there for one purpose: we all wanted to succeed on our own merits.

I remember an incident when we had to cook and set a table. We used little flower vases and, on that day, I was the one who looked for and arranged the flowers. When the Food and Nutrition lecturer came to our table to assess our presentation, she commented that the person who had arranged the flowers should never attempt to do so ever again as it had been done very poorly. Her comment has had a lasting impact on me as it blocked any dreams I had of learning how to arrange flowers. Therefore, whenever I need a floral arrangement, I pay someone else to do it for me. Such negativity is something I shall always avoid when I work with my students.

Ironically, there was no love lost between the two nuns and we capitalised on this. The Needlework and Dressmaking nun (See Figure 3.3) was very easy to talk to and she was interested in our welfare and us personally. I must admit that we shared our feelings about the Food and Nutrition nun with her and she would go the extra mile to support the one who had been hurt emotionally. During a lull in sewing sessions, especially on Mondays, the Needlework and Dressmaking nun would ask us about our weekends and she would tell us about hers. Somehow, she had heard about my boyfriend, Mr Moruri and me. (I refer to my boyfriend as 'mister' because he was actually quite a bit older than me. He was a qualified teacher who had taught for a few years before receiving a scholarship to study music.) She must have been informed along the staff grapevine and she once asked me how I could have such an old boyfriend. She knew about all our boyfriends and laughed when we told her of some of our experiences. She used to talk about a Brother in their order with whom she would go to the cinema or restaurant over the weekends. We would tease her about her having a boyfriend but she would deny it.

The needlework nun introduced us to the *Burda* German pattern magazines which always had up-to-date European fashions. These patterns are still available in haberdashery or some bookshops. Although quite intricate, we used *Burda* patterns to make the garments we were tasked to create.

Although of German origin, these patterns had an English supplement. At the end of our second year we all decided to use these patterns to make ourselves dresses for graduation. As a unique group no two students wore the same dress design. As we did not wear any graduation regalia, we stood out in our smart attires.

In the second year of training, we were accommodated in a flat for a week in pairs for practical training. We were allocated a limited budget which we had to use to manage and account for our expenses to the last cent. We had to have one formal dinner attended by two guests (invitation card, RSVP details, and menu card, among others). Fruit and vegetables that we did not buy could be included. Fortunately for Beauty my 'partner' and I, *Bhut'Sonwabo*, who lived at 179 BF, and *Dad'obawo (Sis'Yo)* who lived at 181 BF, had grown some vegetables and fruit that they allowed us to pick.

The Food and Nutrition nun would pop in any evening to check on how we were doing. Where I was concerned, she never showed any approval or positive feedback. She preferred to remain noncommittal. I was lucky that she never came in the morning. There was an anthracite coal stove that we used for our cooking, and the fire was not supposed to go out for the whole week we were there, but somehow almost every morning we had to get up extra early as the fire tended to go out in the night. Beauty worked hard to keep the stove going, but I had never been exposed to an anthracite stove before. The flat was located on the premises of the Home Economics school, so even during break times we were able to ensure that the stove was still alight. We only managed to keep it alight over the last two nights of our stay in the flat! We were not even supposed to go to the dining hall as we had to prepare all our meals ourselves.

We also did some gardening and reared rabbits and chickens as part of the course. We looked after our livestock on a rotational basis, but each pair had beds of garden to look after continuously. The Gardening teacher showed us how to make liquid manure from the chicken and rabbit droppings and use it to fertilise our gardens. I also remember that he organised a trip for us to his home, where he and his wife had an extensive flower garden with a myriad of different flowers and plants. She gave us a pink-coloured juice to drink and asked us what the flavour was. Because of the colour, we all said strawberry or raspberry, but it was lemonade. This taught me to think outside the box and to appreciate the concept of the village growing me.

During tutorial sessions each lecturer spent time with a smaller group of students one afternoon per week. During these sessions the students could voice their concerns and they would receive advice from the tutor or the other students in the group. These sessions were the epitome of collaborative supportive learning. The tutor was not necessarily a lecturer who taught the students, and we were a mixed bunch from the different programmes offered at the college.

In my tutorial group, the tutor often asked what I had done to annoy the Food and Nutrition nun because she was always complaining about me to other lecturers. He also cautioned me to keep my grades up so that she would not have a chance to fail me. Although he never said it, there were rumours that in staff meetings that nun would demand that a student be expelled or she would leave and withdraw the donation from the Roman Catholic Church. We knew that the Roman Catholic Church had made a significant contribution to building the school and founding the school of Home Economics. Only when our results came out at the end of our second-year stint did I know for sure I would be proceeding with my cohort to the next level, which we did at another college.

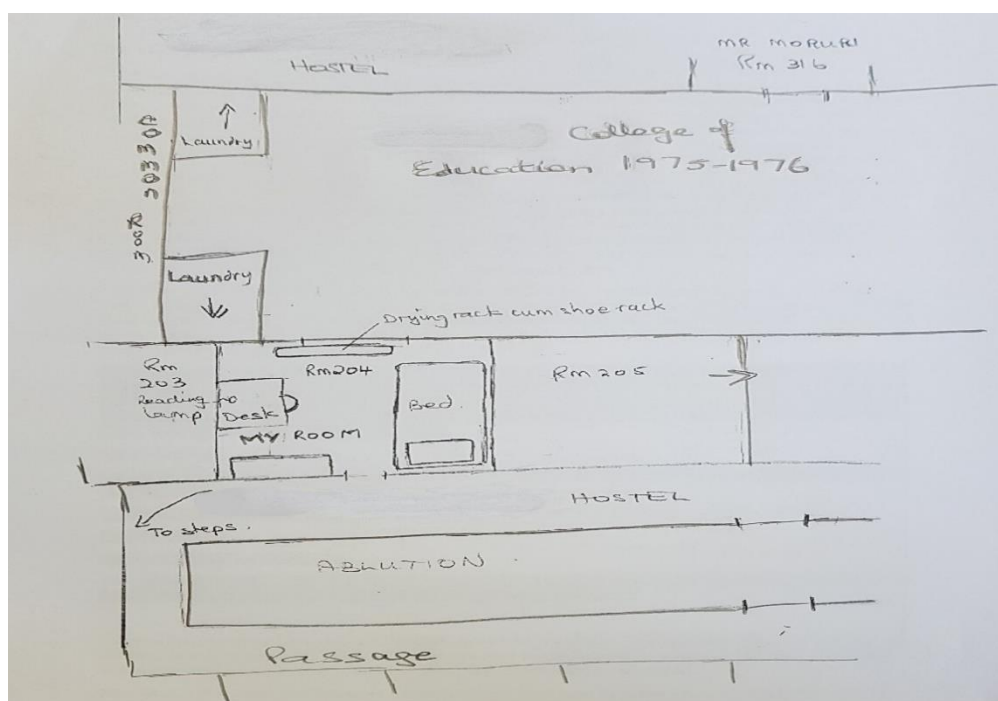


Figure 8.4: The hostel and my room, 204, at the College of Education (Memory drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2017)

All the rooms were identical. I was in a hostel which had been built for male students, but there happened to be more female than male students, hence our placement in this hostel. In the first year I occupied Room 211 while I occupied room 204 in the second and last year at the College

of Education. It was in the first year that I met Mr Moruri, who was one of two students funded by the Transkei Council of Churches to study music at the College of Music which was on the premises of the College of Education. They also occupied rooms in the hostels and utilised all the other facilities of the college. By the end of the first year he and I were 'an item'. From Room 211 I looked out onto the staff parking and the bush near the fence, so I requested to be moved to a room on the other side in my second year. I was allocated Room 204. From this room, I could see the path on which we walked to the dining hall, the library and the classrooms, as well as the common room that was between my hostel and the next one. The last and most exciting thing at the time was that if Mr Moruri and I looked out of our windows simultaneously, we saw each other. He was in Room 316 in the next hostel. So it was that every time we had a rendezvous or would be walking to the dining hall in the morning, we looked out, saw each other, and met in the common room before walking to the dining hall together. After that, we took different directions to go to our classes.

My room was furnished with a single bed, a desk and chair with a wall lamp just above it for reading, a wardrobe, and a stand that doubled up as a shoe rack and a drying rack where I hung my wet washing rags to dry. The drying rack sat just below the window, which was perfect (see Figure 8.4). I only had to bring my clothes as two sets of linen were provided and numbered according to the number of the room. We had to submit our linen for laundry on a specific day and collect it a day or two later. In all honesty, I did not spend much time in the room. We had class sessions up to 16:00 and our meals were in the dining hall. It was always easier to do my assignments in the library in the evenings, but it provided a good base for me. Selinah, Lizzie and I were in the same hostel although they were on the ground floor, whilst my other friend and I were on the first floor. Bahle and Ruth were in another hostel.

Selinah and Lizzie were involved in an organisation called New Life for All (NLFA), which was a 'saved' youth movement in one of the townships. I used to attend some of the sessions with them on Saturday afternoons, but we had to be back on the college campus by 18:00 without fail. What I loved the most of these gatherings was the music. It was wonderful! The sharing of faith also felt good. The youth would get up and give witness to God's presence in their lives and how they were saved. The group later abandoned their efforts to make me stand up and give witness as I told my friends I had always believed in God, there was nothing new that I felt I could do. I also refused to declare myself 'saved' out loud as they expected one to say the date, time, and share the 'Eureka'

moment, which I had not experienced. It was not important to me to demonstrate my strong bond with God.

On other Saturdays, I would go out to watch a movie in town with Xoli, Mr Moruri, or any other friend who would also be interested in any film that was showing, there were many cinemas. That was where most of my pocket money was spent. If I went with Xoli, we made a day of it and she would pay for me and get a taxi to take us back. The movie stopped at 17:30 and we would chase the 18:00 gate closure at the college. We would walk to and from the cinema with all the other people from college. It was a brisk 15-minute walk either way.

The experiences that I narrated in the foregoing paragraphs taught me several lessons. Lecturers (any adults that work together to grow young people) must not open a gap for students to capitalise on their differences. Neither of the two nuns behaved professionally: The Food and Nutrition nun made negative and snide criticisms about her students and the Needlework and Dressmaking nun gossiped about her colleague and allowed us to do the same. In my view, the latter's lack of professionalism was worse. As an educator you need to know about your students outside the classroom, but discussing boyfriends was taking it too far, I feel. At the time, though, we did not mind as we enjoyed teasing her as well as her responses to our teasing. I firmly believe that there should always be a professional distance between a caring and compassionate lecturer and his or her students.



Figure 8.5: Graduation day at the College of Education with Mama handing out the certificates (Photograph was taken by 'The Chronicle', 1976)

Graduation day arrived. Daddy had been invited as the keynote speaker and Mama handed out the certificates. When the Principal stood up to introduce Daddy, he mentioned that they had decided to invite both my parents because I was in the graduating cohort. The Principal turned to us and mentioned the 'young lady' who was graduating. I was humbled by this special attention, especially after the frustration I had gone through during the two years. (This picture appeared in the local daily newspaper in Bulawayo, the Chronicle, on the day after the ceremony.)

I clearly remember that Daddy used the metaphor of lights in his speech. In essence, he mentioned all the routes that led in and out of Bulawayo and that, as one approached town, one first travelled into yellow light but that this light became white as one travelled into town. But as the traveller left town one travelled from those yellow lights into impending darkness. His message was that we had been given white light, so it was up to us to stay there and bring the children we would teach from the yellow light out of the darkness to white and bright light. He stated that it was our choice what kind of teachers we wanted to be – shining a yellow light leading to darkness or being a white light that symbolises enlightenment. His address was not long, but I found it very profound and have striven to bring my learners and students to the white light of enlightenment and empowerment.

8.4.2 Teachers' Training College, Gwelo 1977

The college that I attended to complete my training is still in existence. It now houses a university in Gwelo/Gweru.

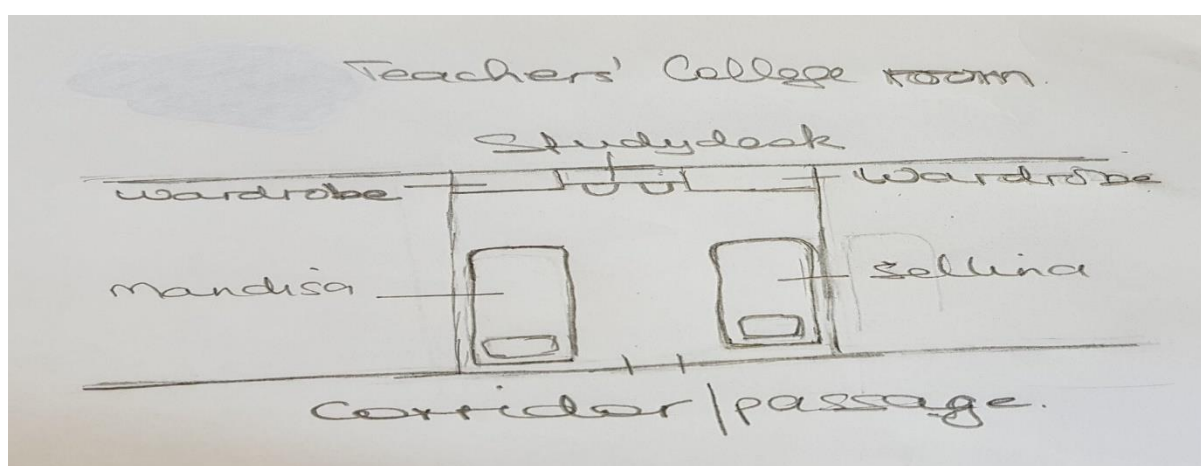


Figure 8.6: My room at the teaches' training college (Memory drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2017)

What a comedown it was for us after the College of Education in Bulawayo! First, it was far from town and a bus only came on a Saturday morning to take us to town and back in time for lunch. Secondly, we had to share rooms in pairs as we were senior students. Other hostels were dorms, with up to eight occupants per room. Furthermore, the Home Economics teacher trainees had to board a college bus to departmental premises away from the college for training in the practical components of the specific subject methodology. I shared a room with Selinah while Bahle and Ruth shared another.

All the student teachers for practical subjects such as Home Economics, Building, and Woodwork, Carpentry and Agriculture converged at the Teachers' College for the third and final year of our teacher training. The first two years were skills-based and the courses were offered at different centres. The third and final year focused on what we now refer to as Educational Foundations, Subject Didactics, and Teaching Practice. *Bhut 'Lindile*, one of Daddy's cousins who was only a few years older than I was, was in the Woodwork and Carpentry group and he made me a wooden box in which to store my pens and small bits of sewing.



Figure 8.7: *The clipboard that I used in my last year at college, 1977 (Photograph taken by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2018)*

The lecturers dressed for lectures in their academic gowns without the caps and hoods. They lectured and woe unto you if you did not take notes! We carried clipboards with A4 writing pads on them and wrote notes for each lecture that we attended. Then, when we got back to the hostel in the afternoons, we would tear the pages out and put them into the relevant subject files. This is the clipboard that I used 1977. I still use it quite often. In the photograph on the left the front of the clipboard is shown. I stuck two pieces of paper with tape on it. The top one was my timetable, and the bottom one was a quotation the Educational Psychology lecturer had made the first time he came to our class, “The effective teacher is the affective teacher”. On the back, (photograph on the right) I printed my name and class group. The lettering is faint but still visible: “Mandisa. Nonceba. Dhlula. T2BIII. HE”

I remember the first Educational Psychology lecture we attended. The lecturer came in, went to the lectern, and pronounced, “The effective teacher is the affective teacher!” He also mentioned who he was quoting, but somehow that bit did not stay in my mind.

The lecturer who taught specific subject didactics was the Head of the Home Economics department at the Teachers’ College. She was the only one we ever saw wearing her academic gown and was the only Black lecturer in the department. The term Home Economics had not long been adopted after Domestic Science, which had generally been looked down upon. In one of her first lectures, she said, “As a Home Ec. teacher, you must be proud of who you are, you must walk with your head held up high like [mentioning herself by name]”. Therefore, we learned to hold our heads up high. We attended her lectures at the main campus. She successfully motivated us as a role model. We held our heads up when the junior students made snide comments about us because we had arrived at the Teachers’ College as senior students and were accommodated in the best student residence there was.

One day at assembly, the Principal announced that he had found a male student in a women’s dorm the previous afternoon. The two lady students who had been involved were suspended. That evening, there was a students’ meeting, which I also attended, where the students who had decided to take leadership wanted all to go on strike for the two students to be brought back. We did not say anything but told ourselves we were not interested in advocating for students who had broken the rules and, after all, they had not been expelled. We were not prepared to sacrifice our budding careers for such a flimsy reason – we imagined ourselves returning home and explaining to our

parents that we had been expelled because we had gone on strike for students who had broken the rules!

On the following morning, we wanted to board the bus to go to the Home Economics department but were stopped by these student 'leaders' who told us to join other students in a sit-down outside the hall, which we did. Some had heard the last communication that no one would be allowed to go to classes and had gotten up early and walked to the department. We had been sitting outside the hall until about 12:30 when an Education District Officer came to address us. He said those who wanted to attend school and continue classes should get up after he had finished talking and go to the dining hall for lunch and to class after that. Those who did not want to should go to their dorms and pack their bags as the college bus would take them to town, and they could go home. We were the first ones to get up, heads held high, and went to the dining hall, and that was that. It was my first experience of a strike action, and I was not amused, more especially when we submitted our assignments a day late and got a 'D' symbol, which was a fail.

There are three terms in the education system in that country and throughout the middle term (except for the middle three weeks) we were placed at the schools around the country for teaching practice. During the middle three weeks, we were at the college for some support and scaffolding. It was during these three weeks that *Tat'omkhulu*, OB Dhlula of Mayitshe Farm, passed away after some months of illness. I saw the body of a dead person for the first time at his funeral as his coffin was open for viewing and saying our last goodbyes.

The lecturers came to the schools where the students had been placed to assess us. Mr Moruri was still at his college in his final year too but would visit me once in a while for the day. He would arrive by train in the morning, catch the bus to my college and go back on the night train to Bulawayo. He wanted us to get married immediately after we completed our qualifications, as he would not come back after that. I had mixed feelings because I had applied for a study scholarship to go and further my studies in England to at least diploma level, which would be a step up from the certificate for which I was training. If we got married before that, I would lose the scholarship because it was specifically for Rhodesian students.

He was in a hurry and was very happy that I ended up falling pregnant just as the marriage negotiations started, though I still intended to have the wedding after my return from England. When I went for teaching practice in Bulawayo, I lived with Mama's best friend, my godmother,

and walked to school. She noticed my pregnancy quite early and alerted *Dad'obawo (Sis Yo)*. Traditionally, I was supposed to confide in *Sis'Yo* and she would tell my parents, but that was not how we communicated in my nucleus family. I wanted to be the one to tell Mama. *Sis'Yo* called me and I admitted that I was pregnant, but asked her not to tell my parents as I intended to tell them myself at the end of the term, which was not far. She told them anyway and when I got home, Mama was beside herself with worry and anxiety. The same had happened with Xoli the previous year, and she had had to drop out of the nursing college. I think she had visions of me not finishing my course too.

I had already made some dresses for myself that had lots of fullness to camouflage my pregnancy. One of our specific subject didactics lecturers caught me when I almost fainted in her class in the final term, but more about that later. During teaching practice, I conducted a practical lesson with a class one day. We made a cake and put it in the gas oven. As we were then dealing with the theory, one student got up to check the oven and reported that it had gone out. This was my first experience with gas and all I knew was that, to light a gas burner or oven, the match needs to be alight before you twist the knob. My mentor was sitting outside in the sun. I went to the stove, lit the match, and opened the oven and “Boom!” The gas that had accumulated burst into flame and went straight to my stretched and curled hair which caught alight. I did not know what to do but was aware that I was the only adult in the classroom, so I had to think fast. One girl took a damp swab and ran it over my head, quenching the flames. Another had gone to call my mentor. By the time she arrived, my hair was no longer on fire, but shock was setting in and I did not know what to do. She took over and saw to it that the oven was switched back on, then she apologised to me for not warning me about the oven (which tended to switch itself off). I was angry with her (she should have been in the classroom the whole time), but did not have the energy to retaliate. The gas stove gave me a baptism of fire, literally, and I vowed to learn how to use it properly after that. I have been using gas cookers in my household for years now without any incident.

After teaching practice, we went back to the college for the third and last term. About three weeks before we were due to write examinations, we were in the class of the lecturer mentioned above, engaged in a practical lesson demonstration and I was wearing high-heeled sandals against which I had been warned. We had stood for some time and I felt dizzy. Just then she lifted her eyes and looked at me. I saw her eyes narrow in suspicion, but I managed to complete the session without further incident. She was also the matron of our hostel. A few days later, I was called to the Principal's office and he was most embarrassed by the ensuing conversation, as he knew my

parents. He kept trying to talk but coughed instead. I felt pity for him, but I was not going to put words into his mouth. Another lecturer, who was one of Mama's friends, had warned me not to admit to or deny anything if I should be called. I had to let the poor Principal suffer through the formalities. What he said was that an allegation of pregnancy had been made against me and he was supposed to act on the report. The college would take me to a doctor for a pregnancy test. Of course, the test came back positive as I was nearly seven months pregnant by then. Another difficult conversation followed for the Principal. They had to suspend me, but because it was so near the final examinations, I could write as a day student. Thank God, I passed. I did not attend the graduation ceremony as I was already married and, on the day of graduation, my husband and I flew out of Rhodesia to South Africa where we would live.

Looking back, I see that the rural setting of the Teachers' College, compared to the College of Education, was an important step in my preparation for my first years of teaching, which was in a rural area in Matatiele, South Africa. I also look back with admiration at the lecturers at the Teachers' College who were very organised and professional in those days. In my experience, visiting schools to assess students during teaching practice is always a challenge and we seem unable to cope with the large number of students. We need to find a more user-friendly way of doing this. This memory should assist me in coming up with suggestions and devising a strategy to ease this process.

The fact that I fell pregnant but managed to stay the course to the end was a lesson that stood me in good stead once I started teaching in a homeland in South Africa, where any woman teacher (both single and married) who fell pregnant was suspended for six months without pay. Therefore, when I fell pregnant with my second and last-born child, I took only two weeks' leave after her birth in 1981 and went back to work.

8.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I started to explore my personal history in order to address the second research question *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional history?* I started by looking at three of my teachers who greatly influenced my choice of profession and how I made the decision to become a Home Economics/Consumer Studies teacher. It was predominantly my parents, who were also my school teachers, and my Needlework and Dressmaking teacher who contributed to my decision to become a Home Economics/Consumer Studies teacher. Although

they taught me at different stages of my schooling, their collaborative modelling influenced my choice of career, hence my reference to them as ‘my influencers’.

The people who influenced me most taught me about professional behaviour as well as the importance of separating the personal from the professional, which I also model and instil in my student teachers as they prepare to go out into the field as teachers. In class we address mainly academic aspects and outside the classroom, even in my office, we make time to address personal issues in an appropriate manner. I interact with my students at a professional level, recognising that each is a unique person.

Mama and Daddy relinquished their control and demonstrated their acceptance that I had become an adult. However, they did not let go completely because they understood, as I do now, that one always needs one’s parents, no matter how independent one may be. Just knowing my parents were there through the years was enough to keep me emotionally grounded. I knew I had them to fall back on whenever life became difficult. This relationship taught me that once one becomes a parent, it is for life. My students keep reminding me of that whenever they keep in touch with me after graduation. In this context I remember Mama’s example: as my class teacher and choirmaster at primary school, she taught us to sing in harmony as a unit. If one part was not singing in tune, there would be discord which took the sweetness out to the song.

Communication is a vital part of one’s relations with students/learners and colleagues. Mama always made sure that her learners were deservedly punished and that they understood why. I have always tried to make sure that my learners, and now my students, understand beforehand what I expect of them as well as the possible consequences of not complying with my expectations. I also try to be consistent in my treatment of non-compliance.

On looking back, I remember the fun that we had in Scorpie’s lessons. Linking this to the enjoyment of singing that I mentioned in previous chapters I realise that, because I thrived from such lessons, I need to bring fun to my lessons too. Unfortunately, I had forgotten about the fun we had had until I started reconstructing my personal history. Furthermore, fun methods took the sting out of Maths, which is a subject that is generally regarded as ‘a monster’. We learned mathematical concepts in a fun way and did so collaboratively. This is why I want my student teachers to stop regarding the classroom they will teach in one day as a place of fear.

I was exposed to the basic values of outcomes-based education in my Needlework and Dressmaking classes at high school. The manner in which my teacher modelled these values has been standing me in good stead as I prepare rubrics for my students whenever I give an assignment. This helps prevent misconceptions and poorly written assignments and teaches my student teachers self-assessment too. Furthermore, at university we teach using the outcomes-based approach and, more often than not, the students are required to do their assignments collaboratively. In this way, I try to instil a sense of responsibility and accountability in them as they are held responsible and accountable for their own as well as their group mates' learning.

I have always enjoyed the practical component of Consumer Studies, which I taught for many years before I changed to Curriculum Studies/Specific Subject Didactics. I thus understand that, by working collaboratively, members of pairs or groups all have definite roles to play which they plan and execute in class.

Separating the personal from the professional spheres of one's life is another lesson I learned quite early in my profession. In class I am a lecturer and a professional, except when I indicate that I am speaking as a parent. In my office and on social networks, I vacillate between the personal and the professional depending on the matter at hand. The main goal that I try never to waver from is supporting my students so that they can cope better.

The discourse that I presented in this chapter was the first phase of my efforts to address the second research question *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional history?* By reflecting on my professional history to identify those special people who influenced the choice I made to become a teacher and to attend college I have, in part, addressed this question. Throughout years I have never lost my passion for teaching. I have thrived on the collaborative nature of my growing and learning, both professionally and personally, and I have tried to become the best that I can be in my chosen profession.

In Chapter 9, I shall continue to unpack the data that assisted me in generating knowledge to address the second research question. I shall thus augment the knowledge that I generated in this chapter from recalling what I had learned collaboratively at a junior secondary school, at a high school, at an in-service learning centre, and at a teachers' training college.

CHAPTER NINE: *UKUBA NGUMFUNDISI-NTSAPHO* (BEING A TEACHER)

9.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I commenced the exploration of my professional history and focused on what I had learned from the people who had influenced my choice of my profession as a teacher. I also traced my experiences along my journey as I prepared for my teaching career. The overarching aim of this exploration was to better understand current and future cohorts of university students as well as myself with a view to improving my professional practice and becoming the best teacher educator that I can be.

In this chapter, I continue to explore photographic and memory data in my quest to address the second research question *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional history?* I trace my experiences as a teacher before I became a university educator and I highlight what and how I learned collaboratively with and from my colleagues.

Part of being a good teacher is to be a lifelong learner. If you do not develop yourself academically, then you run the risk of being underqualified or, worse still, feeling inferior to the learners you teach as you do not keep abreast of newly developed teaching and learning trends. I therefore also refer to my studies in this period as they contributed to my development and transformation into the teacher that I have become. I also embrace the lessons that I learnt as the foundation of my future classroom practices and the relationships that I have and will still forge with my students.

9.2 Stars in My Eyes and a Spring in My Step: Being a Teacher at a Junior School

What follows is a presentation I made to Kathleen's PhD students on 24 March 2017. The attendees listened and posed some thought-provoking comments and questions that further enriched my memories.



Figure 9.1: Brand Me emerges (Photographer unknown, 1978)

Poem

*First-year as teacher
Intuitively aiding Sub-A learner adapt to class
Mentoring teacher trainees to get the best training
Wanting the best for the child
In conflict with college lecturer
For the sake of the profession
And the learner teacher
Creating a brand new Me*

This picture was taken in 1978, my first year of teaching. The setting is at the Junior Secondary School between Matatiele and Maluti in the East Griqualand region of South Africa.

When I studied this picture, I remembered several things about the brand new teacher that I was. I generally felt excited about being a teacher and I had confidence in myself as I knew that that I

would do my job well. I was filled with love for the profession I had chosen for myself, hence the title of this chapter. I still feel the same today, which is more than 40 years later.

This picture was taken in April or May of 1978 when student teachers were doing their teaching practice in various schools, including the one where I was teaching. My school was roughly 3 km from a teacher training college where the student teachers were studying. Some of them can be seen sitting at desks in the background. We would group our learners outside when the weather was fine and allowed as many of the student teachers as possible to acquire experience of teaching practice. They consulted us about the lessons they would teach beforehand so that they could go back to the college and be guided by their lecturers as they prepared to teach the lessons.

I was upset with one college lecturer because the students had to collect information about the required lessons beforehand from me, but when they taught the lessons, they did different work. Apparently, the lecturer had been quite dismissive and had said something like, “*Hayi suka!* (Literally: Go away!). Never mind that one, you teach these.” I allowed the first student to continue without interruption but I asked them to show me what they had prepared. These were not the lessons I had required and I said, “No, no, no, no! You are teaching MY class and you are not going to waste MY time”. So I sat down with them and told them how to prepare the lessons I had given them. Their lecturer probably felt more secure with the lessons that she had given them, but this was about these students’ learning and MY children who would now be taught something that I might have taught already or something that needed prior knowledge support before the actual lesson. At the time it never occurred to me that I might get involved in teacher education. I was just a teacher, but this memory is a reminder that I also need to consider the teacher in the classroom when I task my students when they do practical teaching.

The lecturer was quite miffed and came to see my principal, who defended me without calling me in as I had kept him in the loop. My husband also taught at the college and told me just how enraged this lecturer had been at my seemingly know-it-all attitude. Reflecting on this experience made me realise that I had always had this passion for teacher education right from the beginning of my career. I thus also have to understand that the lecturer should respect the teacher in the classroom who is essentially responsible for what the learners are taught.

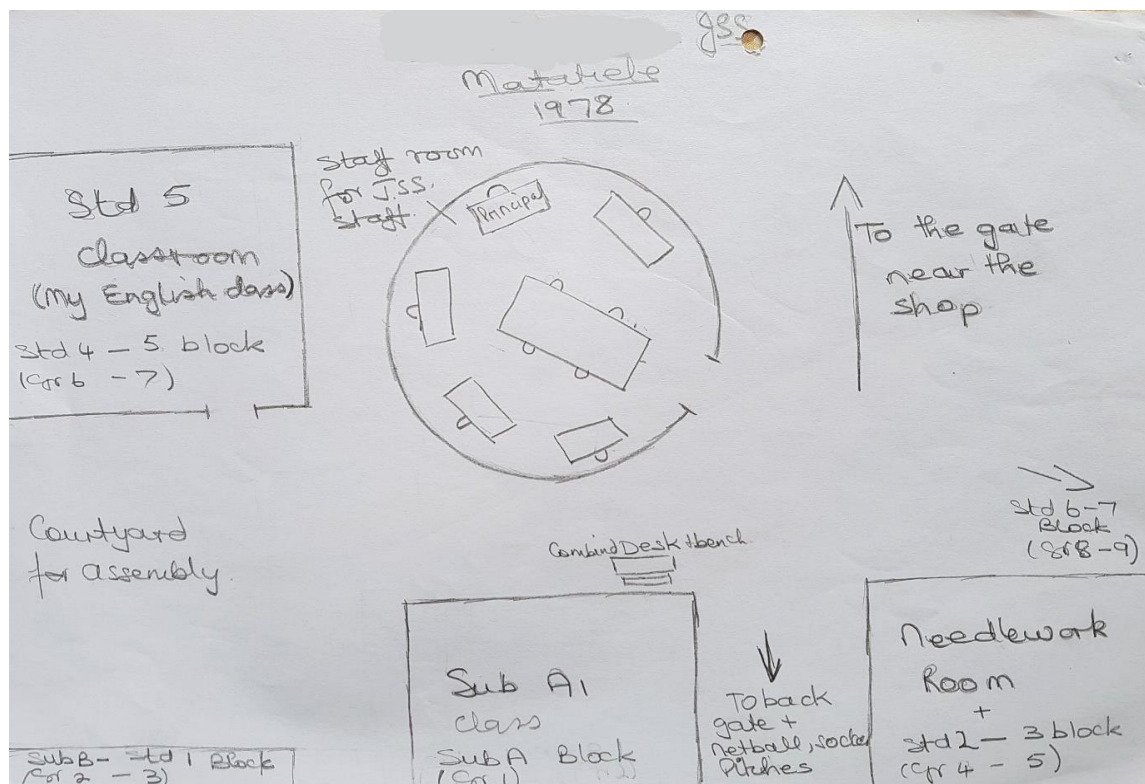


Figure 9.2: Sketch of the central area of my first school

(Memory drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2017)

"I remember a Sub A (Grade 1) child who had a sister in Standard 2 (Grade 4). He did not want to be in his classroom but went and sat with his sister. One day I was sitting outside in the sun marking books. I was seated in one of those desks that had a seat attached to the desk. The Sub A classroom was to my left and the Standard 2 classroom to my right, and I was sitting in front of the staffroom. The Sub A teacher went to fetch the child but he was crying and resisting so I said, 'Just let him come and sit next to me'. He did this, but as he did not know me he was scared of me. I ignored him and continued marking. At break other little children who walked past said, 'Hi Siyabulela!' He looked at me expectantly. He must have thought I would let him go and play, but I did not. I just totally ignored him. There was a shop outside the school gate where the children bought sweets and some of them came to drop a sweet or two in his lap and went on their way. Later on, when the teacher came to fetch him, he went docilely to class and he NEVER gave any problems after that day. The mother always thanked me for that."

Presented to Kathleen's PhD students' group on 24 March 2017

This event started a friendship with this mother that lasted until she passed away. My behaviour had been intuitive because I had had no time to think about what I was going to do. My own baby

was only a few months old at the time so I had no experience of children of that age. I discovered that one should trust one's intuition as this evokes natural behaviours when one interacts with people.

When I presented the poem that I presented above and the illustration of the school setting, Chris seemed interested in how my intuition guided me:

Chris: Mandisa, do you still have lots of intuitive things that you do?

Me: Hmmm...yes, I do.

Chris: It's not like you have become a hardened professional; you know – what you are doing still...

Me: I do have that sometimes, but generally when a student comes to my office and maybe makes an excuse for a task that was not done, I just wait for them to tell me why. Sometimes I don't ask questions, sometimes I do. For example, a student came into my office and I said, "But you were not in my class," and she said, "Yo, Ma'am, I'm HIV positive". Then she explained that she had gone home for the holidays but her medication had been changed and she had had a bad reaction. Later on, after her graduation, she said to me, "You know, I know I'm not the only one, but we used to come to your office and say so many of our private stuff but we never ever heard them being talked about..." I also know that I work better on a one-to-one basis when someone has a problem. When we are in a group like that, I may say something, but I would give the best advice to them when we are in a one-on-one situation.

Presented to Kathleen's PhD students' group on 24 March 2017

Throughout the years, students have come to me and made such positive, affirmative statements as the one quoted above. Some have even come bearing gifts to show appreciation of the positive impact I had made on their lives. I believe that this comes naturally as I go about my day-to-day business without thinking much about the impact of my words and actions.

I was married in 1977 and moved to South Africa in December of the same year. My son, Thabiso, was born in January 1978 and his sister, Naleli, three years later in 1981. I started a new job when he was just a month old while 1978 was also my first year as a wife. I experienced many adjustments that year. However, the school environment was comfortable for me as a new teacher and, having just completed my teacher education, I was very confident in myself.

The environment in which I found myself was not too strange as we had gone on trips to the Herschel district in the then Cape Colony (Eastern Cape) near the Tele Bridge, one of the border posts between South Africa and Lesotho, to visit Mama's family. The Herschel and Matatiele

districts are very similar in terms of their mountainous landscape and climate. Each time we visited Mama's family and heard people speak Sesotho, the language fascinated me, but I only learnt it after my marriage to a Mosotho man. For the first few months I rented a room near the school in the village while my husband lived on the premises of the nearby college where he taught Music. Each morning, when I left my room to go to school, I would find some Sub A/Grade 1 learners waiting to walk to school with me. They did not know any Xhosa but would converse with me in Sesotho on the way to school. If I used a wrong word or mispronunciation, they would laugh heartily and I joined in. If there was any word or term I failed to understand, I would ask my colleagues to clarify it. Those Sub A/Grade 1 learners were my main Sesotho teachers. I learnt Sesotho in conversations about real situations from and with them and my colleagues in the staff room which I valued as collaborative learning. By the time my son started talking, I was very fluent in his father's home language.

My other main teachers of Sesotho were the old women in the village. The people in the area were poor and many of the young men and old women drank methylated spirits and a very potent illegal homebrew they called '*qoarlane*'. I remember that an old woman knocked on my door one Saturday afternoon. She came in and I offered her a seat. We chatted a bit, going through the pleasantries. She spoke Sesotho and used a mixture of Sesotho and broken isiXhosa. Then I got up to light the primus stove to make us a 'cuppa'. As I picked up the methylated spirits that I used to ignite the stove, she held out her hand for the bottle and drank it all. She told me I was being wasteful when I used the spirits to light the primus stove. She had come to welcome me (a new young teacher – a *makoti* – and bride who had come from a far-off country) and to tell me she was never going to speak to me in isiXhosa, so I would have to learn Sesotho. When she left, I put my baby on my back and walked with her for part of the way so I could go and buy another bottle of methylated spirits as she had finished it all.

During my presentation of this narrative, a critical friend, Lungi, expressed her view of the poem which I presented above. This led to more discussion:

<p>Lungi: When I look at it, some part of it has a different meaning. For instance, you talk about mentoring teacher trainees to get the best training, but I knit that with the second line [and it means] wanting the best for the African child. For me it as if in your head you're training them, not for their own sake but for the child that is in the classroom. So the child is always at the forefront of your business... And [in terms of]</p>
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conflict I'm thinking that the person that you were then might have been in conflict with the professional you. I don't know...

Chris: ...also, when you were talking about the conflict you were quite adamant about MY children; you cannot do that to MY children. It is like there's a real emphasis on wanting the best for your children; like everything else is subservient to that.

Mandisa: At the end of the day it is about the children...

Presented to Kathleen's PhD students' group on 24 March 2017

Kathleen took the discussion to the classroom:

Kathleen: That also made me think, when you're sending your own students out for teaching practice, do you make them aware of that as well? That they have to go there and adopt this and try and do the best for the children rather than teach the lessons you have given them? And do you, as you emphasise that they should do, do the best for the children now that you've become a college lecturer?

Mandisa: I do. Sometimes I appeal to their consciences and say that they must imagine if they were the learner, and someone comes and doesn't do the best for them, and I ask where they would see their future in such a situation.

Kathleen: So it's like what Lungi says a manifesto of being a teacher educator for you, but you have learnt it nicely [based on] experiences of the past. So what I think is these things are important when you are a teacher educator.

Presented to Kathleen's PhD students' group on 24 March 2017

I believe that a teacher does not deal with the child as a learner only because the child is a whole being. This means that a child's learning is largely affected by his/her life outside the classroom. I believe that a teacher needs to know more about the child's life in order to treat the child appropriately in class. This belief influences what I try to model for my students, as I give them opportunities to visit me in my office whenever they feel challenged. My critical friends also offered comments based on my photographs that I entitled using the word 'brand':

Lungi: I find it interesting that you created a 'brand'. When you [use the word] brand, what do you mean? How do you see yourself as a brand?

Mandisa: What the student said about where their trust in me comes from. [This] kind of made me think that, ok, they actually say these things to me. And some have even given me presents. Another example is that of a student who gave me a blanket that has the colours and emblem of my mother's Union and she said, 'You know, I started my training and had to drop out. When I came back, you called me to your office

and you asked me what the problem was, and then you told me that I could still do it.' So she came to say thank you. Such examples have made me think that maybe I'm kind of different, unique. I'm a particular 'brand'.

Lungi: Hmm...

Kathleen: So maybe part of your memory work, part of your personal history is your understanding of how that brand came to be...what it actually means.

Presented to Kathleen's PhD students' group on 24 March 2017

When I refer to myself as a 'brand' or as 'Brand Me', I realise that I shall get to a point where I shall have a better understanding of what 'Brand Me' exactly stands for. For now, it is a work in progress.

Thelma also asked for some clarity on another line in the poem:

Thelma: What's that 'in conflict with college lecturer' bit?

(I explained who this person was, as explained in the narrative above.)

Thelma: So it's another person, it's not your identity...I see!

Me: It was the lecturer of those students.

Kathleen: Could be there is that ambiguity, could it sometimes be within...

Me: ... the person, the lecturer in me?

Kathleen: Ya, within yourself.

Thelma: Because one is the divided self that makes these demands on your intuitive and so on...

Kathleen: And [the conflict between] this person who's got a prescribed curriculum to follow, and this person who wants to do the best for the child. These two things sometimes come in conflict.

Thelma: Well, that's why you create 'Brand Me'. That's why you have this conflict; you have to work out these ideas and you create what's important to you.

Me: Okay.

Presented to Kathleen's PhD students' group on 24 March 2017

On reflection, 'Brand Me' is about my values and principles as an educator as well as how I apply/practise these values as I interact with my student teachers and colleagues.

I remember one very cold day when there were only a very few learners at the school. A teacher who lived on the premises brought a paraffin heater and some of us sat around the heater trying to

keep warm. We put a kettle on the heater and made tea. One colleague mentioned that when the weather was bad, the Circuit Education Officers tended to visit nearby schools and we were quite near their offices. Less than 30 minutes later, they arrived and we had to scurry to get all the documentation they wanted from us. We also had to serve them some hot refreshments. This experience taught me to keep good record of whatever I teach. I have since found that good record keeping also helps to keep me organised.

I used to coach netball after school and only got back to my son after 5 pm. I had done an optional Netball coaching course in my second year at college and had received a certificate for coaching. What usually happened was that I would go to school in the morning, go through the school day, and do practical work with my Needlework and Clothing students after school. I would then practise netball with the learners before going home. I used not to eat anything between breakfast and supper, yet I breastfed my son when I was at home. I began to suffer from low blood pressure and began to understand the value of the three meals a day I had grown up with.

In that year I approached the Chief Circuit Education Officer about transferring to a high school as I had qualified to teach at secondary school level. The JSS only offered Needlework and Clothing but I had been trained to teach Home Economics (comprising Food and Nutrition, Management, and Applied Science) as well. He stated that a post would become available at a senior secondary school in Matatiele in the following year. I applied for the post later in the year.

9.3 Stars in My Eyes and a Spring in My Step: Being a High School Teacher

When I reported for duty at the Junior Secondary School in January 1979, I received a telegram of transfer to the senior secondary school in Matatiele where I eventually taught for five years till the end of 1983. The secondary school was also a boarding school and situated 31 km from Matatiele on the way to Mt Fletcher. Staff lived on the premises in old revamped and partitioned classrooms. Two staff members shared a partitioned off room with one half serving as a kitchen or living room. The principal insisted that the Home Economics teachers shared a unit. The Principal occupied the corner unit, then was the room of his deputy, and then the Home Economics teachers' unit.

During my stint at this school I gained a lot of experience in teaching the subjects I had been trained to teach. I gained confidence and incrementally introduced Home Economics as a subject to Standards 9 and 10 (Grades 11 and 12) which had only been taught at Standard 8 (Grade 10)

level. This senior secondary school was the only school that offered both Home Economics and Needlework and Clothing in the Matatiele Education district. Other schools offered Needlework and Clothing only.

A neighbouring junior secondary school was separated by a fence from the senior secondary school, which offered Home Economics and Needlework and Clothing in Standards 5-7 (Grades 7-9). They had an appointed teacher who used our laboratory for Food and Nutrition practical sessions and examinations.

Upon my arrival in 1979, the principal appointed me to teach one of five English classes in Standard 8 (Gr 10) as well as Standard 9 Home Economics and Needlework and Clothing. There was a teacher for Home Economics and Needlework and Clothing for Standard 8 (Grade 10) who also assisted the teacher in the JSS. When the Inspector for Home Economics visited the school to check on how we were getting on, she scolded the principal for making me teach a language instead of one of the science subjects. As a result, the principal always allowed us to allocate teaching responsibilities as we saw fit. He also put a lot of trust in us to the extent that he never wanted the spare keys to the laboratory. We each had a copy of the keys and therefore managed the laboratory centre collaboratively.

I remember advocating for collaboration in teaching Home Economics and Biology, as the latter subject was compulsory for all the students at the school. When we planned our scheme of work, I requested the Biology teacher to teach the digestive system before I taught it in my subject so that the students would be aware of the link between the subjects. This is currently encouraged as teaching across the curriculum. At first this approach was successful but, as teachers came and went, it became difficult to apply and the approach was abandoned. The teachers that came later were not interested, or maybe they failed to see any link between their subjects and mine.

Late in 1980, the year before I taught my first Standard 10 (Grade 12) group who would write external exams, the principal allowed us to visit another senior secondary school in the district (Mt Fletcher) to observe what the Inspector and her team required when moderating the practical components of the subjects I taught. This was done to guide us in our teaching and preparation for the following year. The teacher at Mt Fletcher was very supportive. Her and my husband's families were related so we had met at family occasions and she had recommended this visit. The Inspector was quite complimentary of this relationship and encouraged us not to lose it. As she went through

the process of moderation, the Inspector patiently made sure we understood and would be ready for the following year's moderation processes. It was a very fruitful exercise and we were indeed ready for the moderation team when it was our turn.

The principal also instructed the Home Economics teachers to prepare and serve food to teachers from other schools whenever there were sport matches at our school. This was fine, except that teachers could only go to town on Saturdays. Sometimes a match would be scheduled over a month-end weekend and most of the teachers would go to town. It was so bad sometimes that we had to request some of our students to help us, as the other female teachers had all gone to town. This enraged the principal who made a list of all the female staff members. He came into the staff room on Monday, and asked each person by name to write to him and explain why they had not been in the laboratory on the Saturday. As Home Economics teachers we could go to town during the week to buy supplies for practical lessons when the principal went to town on school business, so working on Saturdays was not a problem for us. The timetable committee, after negotiation, accommodated our need to be free on Monday afternoons so we could catch a lift with the principal to go and buy perishables for our practical classes that were on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

At first, our colleagues accused us of telling on them until they realised that the principal always came into the laboratory to check on how the preparations were coming along and he would enquire about our colleagues that he did not see in the laboratory. The male teachers had to be active out on the sports fields and generally looked after the students there. The other challenge we had was that our colleagues always expected us to allow them to take any leftovers home using crockery 'borrowed' from the laboratory stockroom. We allowed this, but made mental notes of who had taken what. When we asked them to return what they had borrowed, some had quite an attitude and we actually went into their rooms and identified the missing dishes that were marked. That did not endear us to our colleagues. We had to keep educating them about our responsibility for the stockroom and all the equipment there. Eventually our colleagues understood and brought their own dishes in which they put any leftovers.

The simmering tension between other colleagues and us as Home Economics teachers eventually came to a head during the preparations for the official opening of the school. In my second year at the school (1980), the then Minister of Education of the Republic of the Transkei decided to have the school officially opened (not for the first time, an older staff member pointed out, though it

had been under a different principal and minister). This was a major event. The principal called a meeting in the staff room and he listened to our ideas and the menu was agreed upon. He decided on the wines and other alcoholic beverages to be served and everybody was in agreement. We were going to slaughter about twelve sheep for the dinner and we would serve the livers to the invitees and guest of honour on their arrival before the opening. Tripe (innards), which is a delicacy in our culture, would be served to the teachers from other schools. People volunteered to do certain tasks and to work in teams or as individuals. On the eve of the official opening, we were cooking and making preparations beforehand such as cooking tripe and making some of the desserts. While the tripe was cooking, a Home Economics colleague found only two sheep livers. She asked aloud where the rest of the livers were. One lady said she had put them in the pot with the tripe. Oh, me! My colleague went ballistic! Fortunately, the pots had not long been on the stove and we were able to save the livers and cook them correctly, separately.

Another disaster occurred when one of the helpers mixed the instant pudding powder with boiling instead of cold water. My goodness! Did I scold her for not reading the instructions! Nerves were raw. As the only school in the district offering Home Economics we had a reputation to maintain and things were going south! But when the day of the event arrived, everything went very smoothly.

On the Monday after the event we were called to a ladies' meeting in the staff room at break time. We were stock-taking after the event just to ensure that all our stock was still there. When we arrived in the staff room, the atmosphere was thick with tension. The spokesperson accused us of treating everybody like idiots who did not know anything about cooking. They were offended as they ran their own households and prepared meals for their families all the time. My colleague at the time, who was older than I was, put two questions to them: Did they cook liver with tripe in their households? and What was the meaning of the word 'instant'? Then she walked out and went back to the laboratory. They looked to me to say something. I spoke about something very different and ignored their complaint, and that was the end of it.

The five years that I spent at this school felt as if I was in a waiting zone while I gained experience as a teacher. The fact that this was a boarding school was an advantage. Students went to their classrooms to study in the evenings, and the principal would sit in his office and monitor the sessions. These sessions were also times that we used to catch up on lessons whenever we felt we needed to. For example, whenever any of us missed school or class for whatever reason, s/he would

go and teach during the evening study time. The principal allowed this without complaint as it was teaching time well used. Because he was the Vice President of the Transkei Teachers' Association (TTA) at the time, he attended meetings in Mthatha (nearly 300 km away) quite often and thus missed his classes. He used to teach English in Standard 10 (Gr 12). On his return he would teach in the evenings and we respected his modelling behaviour of commitment and followed suit.

In those days we had what was called a 'record book' which contained the work scheme, lesson plans, and record of work done. Our line manager, the principal, was supposed check that we kept them up to date. He also had to check our students' books from time to time. However, he never did any of this. He delegated the work to us as he had his own records to keep and he expected us to do the same. If the Circuit Education Officers came, everybody was accountable for his/her own work. Because I had experienced a Circuit Education Officers' visit at the junior secondary school where I had taught, I knew what to expect when they came, therefore I kept my books and the record book in order. The trust vested in us by the principal and the fact that he led by example made all of us work industriously. As a result, the school was one of four top achieving schools in the Transkei in those days and it was a sought-after educational institution as even prominent people enrolled their children there.

During this time, I applied what I had learnt as a teacher trainee in earnest. During practical lessons, we had to group our students in fours in Standard 8 and 9 (Gr 10 and 11) and pair them in Standard 10 (Gr 12). Each of the students had clear roles to play during practical sessions to ensure successful outcomes. Each learner also had to be serious and committed. They had to be ready with answers for me whenever they were working and I came to the groups as I supervised them. Their learning thus occurred collaboratively. The classes were not large so I could teach theory separately and then apply the theory in practice during group work. The learners we had in those days were dedicated and it was a joy to teach them.

My first Needlework and Clothing colleague was older than I and wanted to be treated with the seriousness and respect that her age demanded, so our relationship was rather formal. However, she left at the end of 1980 and in 1981 a new teacher arrived. We were almost the same age (3 months apart) with similar values and ethics. This was great as we had to share accommodation. She had a two-month-old baby girl and mine (my second child, Naleli) was born in February of that year. Rose and I started a lasting friendship that included our children and families. Unfortunately, she has since passed away.

During my tenure at the senior secondary school in Matatiele the teacher qualification offered at the teacher's College changed. The Primary Teachers' Certificate (PTC) had given way to the Junior Secondary Teachers' Certificate (JSTC) and, by this time, the College offered the Senior Secondary Teachers' Certificate (SSTC). They had to send a good number of their Home Economics teacher trainees to our school for practical experience as it was the only school offering both Home Economics and Needlework and Clothing in the district. Because the school in Matatiele was 40 km from Maluti, my colleague and I arranged for accommodation for many of the Home Economics student teachers and worked closely with them in preparation for and the presentation of their lessons. This time the lecturers I worked with were different from the former one, though she was still at the college. Two or three of these students had been my former learners at the school and they told me they had opted for these majors as they had seen me as a role model they wanted to emulate. I felt humbled by these sentiments. Over time, I have met more of my former students who followed in my footsteps.

One day, Rose and I surveyed the veranda in the middle block with the Home Economics lab, the library, the administrative offices, the staff room, and the Science laboratory, and we felt that the appearance did not instil confidence in the school. Therefore, we asked the principal to buy red paint, brushes and polish so that we could ensure that the area was visually appealing and well maintained. We used learners who had committed misdemeanours to beautify this area as part of their community service. They helped to upgrade this area two or three afternoons per week. The areas around the classrooms were cleaner, the veranda was always clean and shiny, and some students even made curtains to cover the bookshelves in the principal's office. We started small rockeries that we planted with hardy plants. A few male colleagues also joined us and helped manage the students, especially the boys. In this manner teachers and learners collaboratively committed themselves to the maintenance of the school grounds.

Because we would informally and tactfully advise our female colleagues on how to dress, they suggested we start a club where women could be taught how to dress appropriately for their figures and different occasions. Rose and I started such a club and we taught those who were interested how to sew buttons and the hems and seams that tended to come undone. This focus was on basic mending skills. The suggestion was made that we should wear a uniform for ladies to school. We were located 31 km from town and the road was untarred and rough, so it was difficult to go to

town during the week. When the shops closed at 13:00 on Saturdays, the last buses left town and the next ones would only run again on Mondays, therefore we spent a lot of time at the school.

In those days, one could order clothes from a catalogue using the cash-on-delivery (CoD) purchase option. We appointed a team to take our measurements and chose a skirt and blouse that we would all be comfortable wearing. Calls were made to a catalogue company and we started wearing maroon box-pleated skirts with cream-coloured long-sleeved blouses that had a frilled neckline and front. We unveiled the uniform at morning assembly. The ladies waited in the staff room as the morning prayer proceeded. Then, as the students sang the Lord's Prayer that ended with sung grace, we silently walked out and took our places on the veranda facing the students. When they all opened their eyes, the students cheered, and the principal was puzzled (we were in line with him, so he could not immediately see us). When he saw us, it was a priceless moment as he was gobsmacked! This was another example of our successful collaboration as staff members at the senior secondary school. It was a manifestation of how much our relationship had developed as we now shared a common identity and culture as the teachers of that school.

Saturday afternoons, Sundays and mid-week public holidays were monotonous. I remember that one such day we felt bored and decided to play netball. I was breastfeeding my daughter, Naleli, and had gained quite a bit of weight. We wanted to relieve ourselves of boredom as well as engage in a healthy activity. We sent word to the netball captain in the hostel and the female staff played against the students. We gave them our defenders and goal scorers (some of whom had never played netball) and swapped theirs for our team. We enjoyed our free days after that. Some of the staff members did not even know the rules of the game and the umpire sometimes found it difficult to blow the whistle as she was in stitches because of our antics – but we all had fun.

The staff of my school bonded into a close-knit family that was geared towards ensuring that our students achieved success. We were highly motivated to maintain our position as one of the top schools in the Transkei. I also remember that when we worked on the end-of-year results, we positioned students according to their achievement per grade and not per class. We had to do the five Standard 8 (Grade 10) classes from position 1-250. We worked late into the night and nobody complained. In those days, students stayed at school until the closing date. We would plan the examination timetable so that the last paper would be written on the last day and so that all the learners wrote then as well. This was why we had to work into the night in the last two days before

the school closed for teachers as well. If we did not submit the results on the last day, we were threatened that we would not receive our December salary cheques.

One year the principal's son was in Grade 10 and he had not been doing well throughout the year. If I remember correctly, his average mark was 45%, but 48% was required for promotion to the next grade. The teachers were divided between those who felt we should condone him by raising his average and those who felt he should fail like the others with the same average percentage. The last group won and he was failed with an F symbol. The scribe recorded this decision. On the following morning, the F symbol had been erased (with a razor – no Tipp-ex in those days) and PC (Pass-Condoned) had been written in the space. We stuck to our guns: the PC was erased and F reinstated. Later that day there was a hole in the space as someone had tried to erase the F again. Eventually, the page had to be removed from the promotion sheet and a blank one that had to be completed again was put in its place. The F decision stayed. We asked a senior teacher to warn the principal that his son had failed, and he thanked us for our honesty and integrity because he would have been surprised if the boy had passed. What a relief that was.

In 1982, my husband received and accepted an offer of a post in Mthatha at a Teacher's College to teach Music. He had left the College in Matatiele at the time I had left the Junior School, and he had gone to teach at another senior secondary school in Matatiele, which was not as near to me as the college had been. By the time he left for Mthatha, we had two children. At the end of 1983, with the help of a female Inspector stationed in Mthatha, I was transferred to a teachers' in-service training centre in Mthatha. Here 24 teachers registered per year to redirect their teaching specialisations towards teaching Home Economics subjects.

Although I loved teaching at the senior secondary school in Matatiele, I came away feeling very happy with my choice of career as I thrive in any collaborative interaction with learners and teachers. In Matatiele I particularly enjoyed the collaborative nature of the practical sessions and I found that the students enjoyed this approach as well as they complemented one another by playing a special part in group work sessions. I enjoyed being part of a team together with the other Home Economics teachers who taught Needlework and Clothing as we ran our subjects together, giving each other support and advice when necessary. This kind of camaraderie is vital for us as lecturers/educators for the benefit of our student teachers.

The principal at the senior secondary school was very supportive and led by example. He modelled what it meant to be a responsible teacher. He constantly checked if all was well with our subjects and always strove to ensure all the teachers who had laboratories to run never ran short of supplies and support. From this, I learnt that it is important to nurture those who are my juniors – my students in this case. Whatever innovation they want to introduce, I should give them the chance to demonstrate their creativity and then support them if they can show its viability, or guide and advise where necessary.

After the initial strain between the other teachers and the Home Economics teachers, our relations changed and we became supportive of one another. I must admit that this happened once they understood the nature of this subject that had been newly introduced in the senior classes on my arrival. I appreciate that communication among colleagues is important, especially when they do not understand how I manage and conduct my classes and the reasons for this. I learnt how important it is to utilise opportunities for improvement, such as when we observed and imitated the principal by utilising extra time to make sure we gave the best of ourselves to our students.

9.4 Stars in My Eyes and a Spring in My Step: Becoming a Teacher Educator

9.4.1 The in-service Home Economics school

I started my teacher educator career at an in-service centre in Mthatha. Twenty-four female teachers were redirected to teach Home Economics, as Consumer Studies was then referred to. There was a new intake annually. I was 26 years old, and some of the trainees were in their late 40s and early 50s. Whilst they gave me no disciplinary problems and even showed me respect in class, they treated me as a younger sister or even a daughter outside school hours.

We were three staff members, each representing a different generation. I was the youngest, my colleague was 20 years my senior, and the principal was 20 years older than my colleague. It felt like a 3-generation staff. In the beginning, the principal would sometimes shout at me in the presence of the teacher students. One day I felt this was too much, and I went to see her in her office to ask her why she was treating me like one of the students. She told me that she had been told by the Inspector that I was a good Home Economics teacher and she should give me the subject to teach, but because she was teaching it she had given me Methodology and Care of Textiles (Laundry) instead. What was more, she did not want them to tell her how to run the school. I told

her that her behaviour made me think she felt guilty for not listening to them, but I felt she should have taken time to get to know me instead of blaming me for something I had not done. Furthermore, I told her to direct her anger at them and not at me as I had not done anything but show her respect, and asked her to treat me with the same respect that she expected from me. After that, we became good friends. I see this as an example of how senior and junior staff members can collaboratively resolve a conflict situation without outside help.

The centre relied heavily on community involvement and was especially lucky to be supported by the Transkei National Independence Party (TNIP), which was the ruling party in the Transkei. Whenever the party had its annual conferences, our students would be requested to prepare and serve the food at the gala dinner. This meant that, as staff members, we had to be there to supervise them. In return, a month or two later, we would all be invited to one of the ministers' houses to be the guests of honour. We would be wined and dined without lifting a finger. Our Inspector would also be there. The students would be made to feel that their work was highly appreciated.

There were also other occasions when our students' services were requested at functions at the Great Place of the *AbaThembu* tribe, at Sithembe Great Place. The Great Place is the equivalent of a palace and the residence of the King of the *AbaThembu* tribe of the Xhosa nation. This residence is located outside Mthatha in a rural setting. The principal, who was a white woman and taught Food and Nutrition, usually left the supervision and execution of these tasks to me and my senior class. She did not have the patience for this and, I suspect, she did not feel comfortable going to places such as the Great Place. Some of our students had experience cooking outside using huge 3-legged pots, but it was a learning experience as well as they had to apply the cookery principles they were now learning at school. I also learned quite a lot from them on such occasions.

There were also times when we had to make small cakes, scones, or muffins for functions. I would work with the students to calculate the quantities of the ingredients that would be needed and I conveyed the 'shopping list' to the principal and she would coordinate the order. The other teacher (who taught Needlework and Clothing) was always with me too and would guide me in relation to protocols, especially when we worked at the Great Place.

9.4.2 Self-development at the in-service Home Economics school

In 1985, during my sojourn at this school, I registered to study part-time for a Secondary Education Diploma (SED) specialising in Home Economics. I registered at a university that later merged with another. My study material was very late in arriving and was incomplete. Each year we went to the technical college in Pretoria in the June school holidays for classes and practical sessions. My colleague had done the diploma and she encouraged me to attend the first session so that I would interact with my lecturers and get my study material sorted out, which I did. It was the best advice at the time. It turned out that the university administration had moved premises and, as a result, quite a number of us had not received all our material. I also met other teachers who came from Mthatha, most of whom I already knew. We decided to keep in touch once we had returned and we thus established a study group.

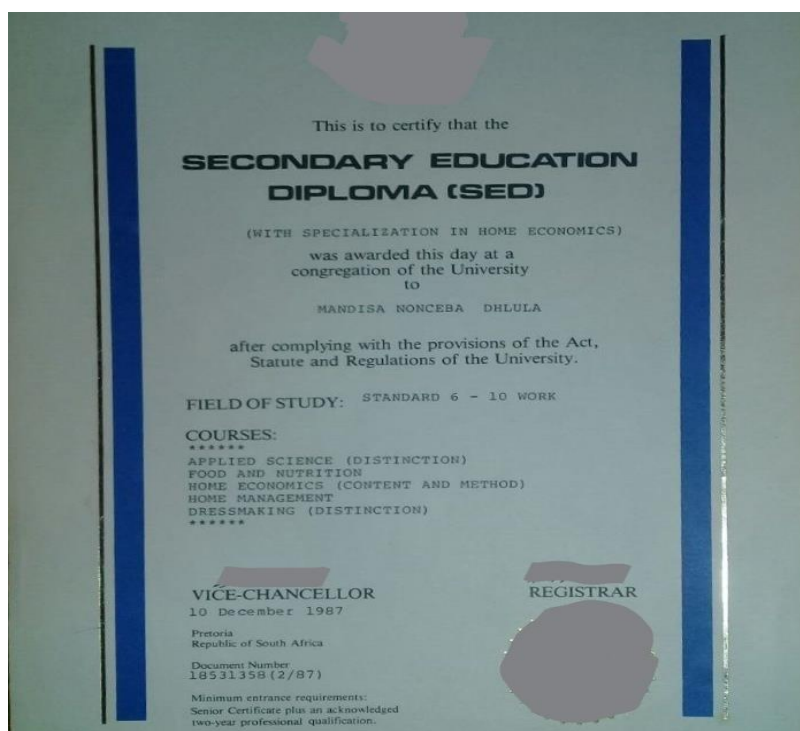


Figure 9.3: Copy of my Diploma (Photograph taken by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2018)

Obtaining this Diploma is evidence of my journey of lifelong learning as an adult. I remember that Malume Gambu drove from Johannesburg to attend my graduation ceremony in Bloemfontein. We drove from Mthatha the day before, spent the night with Malumekazi in Qhoboshane, and she travelled with us to Bloemfontein for the ceremony. My cousins who were already living in Bloemfontein also attended the ceremony with us. We were rather late and did not have a chance to engage the event photographer, so I do not have a photograph of myself at that ceremony.

Because I was an award recipient, I was one of those invited for the official university photograph for the event, but I never thought to request a copy of the photograph at the time.

It was during this time that I started to realise that I learned best in group/collaborative situations. We made time to study together and made sure we understood the work equally well. Come examination time, we were all equally prepared. I followed this approach to obtain this Diploma as well as my Honours and Master's degrees, and am still applying it during my current study. I obtained the Diploma in December 1987 with two distinctions and received the Vice Chancellor's award for the best performing student in the qualification over the three years of study.

At the in-service centre, I was one of a staff complement of three, therefore it was important that we should get on well together. I learned how to address conflict with a colleague face-to-face, and we ended up with very good relations amongst the three of us. I also learned to pick my battles with care when a student was confrontational and I could see she was spoiling for a fight. I just kept silent and walked away. Later, my colleague told me that the student had told others she was going to beat me up – she had not done well in her test, and she was not taking responsibility for her poor performance. Seemingly, my silence took all the wind out of her sails.

9.4.3 College of Education, Mthatha-Preservice Education of Teachers

At the beginning of 1988, a friend who had been my husband's colleague visited me at home and told me that there was a vacant position in the Home Economics department at a local college of education. She suggested that I should submit an application letter that she would submit to the principal on my behalf. In April, a telegram arrived confirming my appointment and I started at this college of education as a pre-service teacher educator. It was at a time when the Education Department had changed the status of college teachers to lecturers at post level 2, which was the equivalent of a Head of Department in a high school. It was a good decision and a welcome reward for my hard work. When my husband drove me to the college on the first day, I thought there had to be some meeting because of the number of cars parked there. He told me that was normal. By then he had left the college and was teaching elsewhere in the Mthatha district. I was coming from a staff of only three members where only the principal owned a car. My husband and I shared a car but here everyone seemed to own one. After reporting to the principal, he took me to the staffroom and introduced me to the staff members. There were over 60 staff members. The lecturer friend who had recruited me took pity on me and took me to the building where the Home

Economics classrooms were. Fortunately, there were three of us teaching the Home Economics subjects.

At the time, college staff was dismissed at 13.00 daily because some staff members had children to pick up from schools. Later, closing time was changed to 14.30. The staff component reflected a racial mix and included both Afrikaans and English speaking Whites as well as Indians and Blacks (both local and international). The principal was English. During the first semester at this college of education, I felt out of my depth. It felt as if I had never taught Home Economics before. I just have no idea why I felt like that, even now. Maybe working with older colleagues and students at the in-service centre had made me complacent, and working at this new and larger college with its fast-paced environment came as a shock to my system. It could simply have come from starting a new post in the middle of the year, with a class that had been taught by someone else who was still there on the staff. What I do know is that I confused my colleague, as she had known me when I was teaching at the senior secondary school in Matatiele and had come to me in all confidence. I am not sure how long this feeling lasted, but it confused me too.

Whilst I seemed to manage somehow in class, inside I did not feel like I was doing well at all. I suspect, though, that the stress in my personal life, even though I had aced my Diploma, was now spreading to my professional life too. Now I realise that I should have gone for some professional counselling at that point.

We had no access to a college vehicle to go to town to buy ingredients for the cookery practical sessions, and my husband insisted that the family car was not a college car. My colleague sometimes assisted me but she knew I had access to a car myself. The college was 8 km from town, with the gate a good 600 m from the bus stop. Carrying the groceries all that way would have been sheer torture. Since the time that I studied for my Diploma I had had to deal with such challenges as I had no spousal support for my studies. Now it seemed to be coming to a head. I had not quite gained the assertiveness that I did later, which came from the feeling that I was being pushed into a corner and not allowed to determine my own direction. Studying further was the only thing that helped me to cling to myself. I took this direction as I had done when I studied for my Diploma, and this was something that I could do and did for myself without depending on my husband's erratic assistance.



Figure 9.4: Staff and final-year students at the college of education end-of-year dinner
(Photographer unknown, 1988)

This picture was taken at the end of 1988 during an outing with the final-year students. The lecturers paid the bulk of the bill for a dinner at the Country Club in Mthatha. This was the first of its kind as a farewell dinner. The students also had to use the flatware and other items correctly as required for a formal dinner and they had to be dressed appropriately.

From 1988 to 1989 we were teaching the Secondary School Teacher's Certificate (SSTC) students who would teach in high schools. The winds of change were already on the way because a new college of education, where these students would be enrolled, was under construction. The SSTC would be phased out and be replaced with the Secondary Teacher's Diploma (Standard), while the old college of education would start afresh by offering a Primary Teacher's Diploma. This happened at the beginning of 1990. I was among those who remained at the college of education to teach the Primary Teacher's Diploma students. During those days, which lasted up to 2002, the last group was phased out and the two colleges were incorporated into a Technikon which had a campus in Mthatha. The Primary Teacher's Diploma qualification was phased out. I taught the Needlework section that was relevant for the latter qualification.

During this time, female staff members at the college of education started a cookery club referred to as 'Better Cook'. This was because some felt that they wanted to learn to cook by following recipes. We would gather and cook at different members' houses and some of the recipes were quite interesting. We were all interested in cooking and we enjoyed one another's company and the food. We met regularly although I have forgotten how often. I remember that one recipe required an alcoholic beverage, and all were excited about it. The result was far less exciting, but

we also got to know that some ladies liked to indulge a little. This initiative led to the introduction of the ‘secret pals’ idea.



Figure 9.7: Revelation day: Secret Pal club at the old college of education

(Photographer unknown)

This ‘Secret Pals’ club worked on the principle of friendship and the ability to keep a secret. At the beginning of the year, each one picked a name of a colleague from a hat without telling anyone, except the ‘custodian’, who the pal was. The custodian would not take part so we gave the information about what we would like as a gift come revelation day at the end of the year. During the months that followed one was supposed to buy and secretly give something small and special to one’s secret pal all the time without the pal discovering who the secret friend was. The amounts that should be spent were determined beforehand. By August we would inform the custodian what gift we wanted so that the pal could source it. The custodian would be part of the revelation celebration as well. The pictures above are of me presenting my gift to my secret pal in different years per photograph. This was done very creatively and each participant had to guess who the secret pal was. Interesting lessons were learnt when there was friction with a secret pal. The friction had to be resolved as one was expected to get to know one’s secret pal’s special dates such as birthdays without revealing themselves. This taught us to value friendship and the principle of Ubuntu above petty differences and thus many special bonds were cemented among the members of this club. A few men joined in too.

Students at the college went on strike from time to time. Each time this occurred, I would go buy some material and make myself something pretty to wear. On the first day back at work, I would don my new outfit and show it off to the students, thanking them for allowing me to make myself something nice. After some time, I found I was not the only one who did that. Then some ladies also wanted to learn how to use patterns to make themselves dresses. I remember one colleague was going to receive her Master's degree from a distance university. We decided that, the next time our students went on strike, we would teach her and she would make her own graduation dress. Another simply wanted to be taught how to make a garment. Sure enough, the students went on strike. We went straight to a haberdashery shop and bought everything she would need to make herself the dress. We also bought materials to make ourselves some items too. The four of us tackled the task enthusiastically, each using her sewing machine, and three of us went back to work in new outfits. Unfortunately, this exercise showed our graduate colleague that she was not gifted in needlework and sewing.

There was a special camaraderie among the staff members at the college of education. We had a social committee that took charge if any staff member was bereaved or had a happy occasion to celebrate. There was a specific procedure, and this was always confirmed at the first staff meeting of each year. A set amount was collected to support the colleague and we would then pay enough money to hire a suitable vehicle to go to the event if it was far. In the case of a bereavement, we would allocate a special day on which we went to pray with the family before the day of the funeral to show our support.

My sister-in-law, who had been married to my husband's eldest brother, died, and the funeral was in Matatiele, about 300 km away. On the day of the funeral I was having a bad morning because there were very few of us to cook the food for the mourners in the 3-legged pots outside. As I scurried around trying to organise things, I raised my head and saw my colleagues alighting from a minibus parked outside the fence. I was so touched that I broke down and cried. In my stressed situation, I had not thought of expecting them. The custom was that, when colleagues arrived, you would show them where everything was and then leave them to attend the funeral service. Back at work I thanked them again for their support and they told me they had been as touched as I had been.

I was once in my class with the Needlework students and it was payday. The class was for practical work and it would extend into the afternoon. One student commented that it was payday and that I should leave work early. I was surprised by their interest and decided not to extend the lesson. We concluded the lesson and I left at the same time as my colleagues who also lived off-campus. It may also be that the students were merely keen to have an early free afternoon!

The following morning there was a news broadcast about our students having marched the previous evening to the cottage where the Vice-Rector and some staff members stayed with their families. Apparently, the Vice-Rector and another male colleague had managed to stop the rampaging students and protect their families. Back at work, we learnt that the students wanted these two men fired. We decided as a collective that we were not going to work without our colleagues and proceeded to the Circuit Educational Office to report on this. The situation was eventually resolved, and the supportive spirit and collaboration that had occurred among the staff were inspiring.

Looking back at my sense of insecurity when I first arrived at the college of education, I realise that maybe if I had communicated better with my colleagues about my challenges they would have been more supportive of my efforts to find my feet. Ever since then, I have tried to be supportive of any new staff member in my department and to encourage collaborative efforts in helping them adapt.

That fact that we were able to make clothes for ourselves whenever there was strike action left me a legacy of utilising such times for my studies or catching up on my work. I learnt to always do something constructive regardless of the circumstances, which is a practice I always encourage my student teachers to capitalise on individually and collaboratively.

The support we gave one another in times of need, as well as the secret pal club, contributed to my learning to care about my colleagues' and students' welfare both in and out of class. It is a characteristic worth nurturing in my students.

9.4.4 Self-development at the Mthatha College of Education

In 1989 I registered for a BA degree at a distance education university. I registered for three modules. At the beginning of the second semester I was offered a night school teaching job for

Home Economics and Biology Standard 8 (Grade 10) which I accepted as I was struggling financially. However, time to study was thrown out of the window and I failed all the modules. I remember that in the Education 1 paper I could not even define the term ‘education’. I was so unprepared and embarrassed.

The following year I could register for only one module and I managed to somehow juggle all the roles I was supposed to play. I contacted the university for the names of other students registered for the same modules as I and who lived within my area. The list I received contained the names of people who I knew or who were known to those I knew. I then applied the principle of collaborative learning and soon we had a study group on Friday afternoons after school, Saturdays, and holidays. As exams approached, we would meet at the local university library building which had many passages that were wide enough to sit a group on the carpeted floor without blocking the way. Each member of the group would bring some food in the bring-and-share custom. There was so much food, it is a wonder I did not become obese. These sessions lasted from around 10 am to after 7 pm. During the day we would study one module, change to another after some time, change groups if we needed to, and so on. Whenever we felt tired, we would eat – and we ate a lot. The driving factor was that we all wanted to proceed to the next level of the module together, so we all made sure we understood the content equally.

The university students used to laugh at us as they passed by. They changed the words of a building society advertisement about an old man who regretted wasting his time and not saving for his old age to a message about regretting not having studied in our young days. They sang this whenever they walked past us. The words went like this:

<i>‘Latsh’ixhego</i>	So said an old man
<i>Lathi ndililel’ixesha lam</i>	He said he regretted my lost time
<i>Akwaba ndandifundile</i>	If only I had gotten educated
(The original: <i>Akwaba ndandibhankile</i> : If only I had banked money)	
<i>Ndililel’ixesha lam’</i>	I regret my lost time

Depending on what we would be doing, we would laugh with or at them or ignore them, but our spirits were never dampened by their teasing. We also remembered how clueless about life we had been at their age, yet thought we had all the answers to life.

One year there was an Education II module for which I had not been able to find a group because I had registered for many modules. The good thing about studying at the distance university in those days (I do not know if it is still so) was that when one registered at the beginning of the year, one already had the examination dates for the year. Therefore, we always registered courses so that we would have at least two days between exam papers. I had been perusing the books and notes for the module without really grasping as much as I was supposed to. So two days before I was due to write this module, I met one of my friends in the library corridor and expressed my anxiety about not knowing who else was going to write the module. She immediately directed me to a corner and gave me a name to call when I got there and I found a group. They had been studying for the module for some days but welcomed me with enthusiasm as they needed someone to whom they could explain the concepts to test their knowledge. By the time I found the group it was already after 14:00 and there was only one more day to prepare for the exam. We studied until it was time to catch the last taxis. We again started early the following day and studied till evening. The group members were very patient with me and accommodated my requests for clarity. We wrote the exam and I managed to qualify for a supplementary exam to be written in January. I was due to go to Bulawayo over the Christmas holidays. I carried my material for the paper with me and tried to study on the bus and early in the mornings each day I was at home, although I was not sure whether I would remember anything. I passed the supplementary examination.

I completed my BA degree at the end of 1995 with three (instead of two) majors and eleven modules/courses instead of ten. This was because, at the end of 1994, I failed one of the Psychology III papers and had to re-register for that one in 1995. An administrative error at the distance university omitted me for a special/automatic supplementary examination in the paper, since it was the only outstanding paper for me to complete my degree. So, in 1995, instead of studying for only one paper, I decided to adjust my English to level III in case I did not pass the Psychology paper again, and I passed them both.

In December 1995 I visited my parental home in Bulawayo. There was to be a tombstone unveiling ceremony for *Makhulu* at the rural mission. Two of my uncles from South Africa also attended: *Ncinci's* husband (Uncle Fubs as we called him) and *Malum'u Gambu*, *Ncinci's* twin. Uncle Fubs flew to Bulawayo from East London and *Malume* joined me on the bus from Johannesburg to Bulawayo. *Malume* was not well at all, which was why his family felt he could not travel on his own. After the ceremony, I went to Botswana with Monde, who had her last week at work before they closed for Christmas. We left her children in Bulawayo.

Midweek Monde came home early, asked me to sit down, and told me that Uncle Fubs had passed away suddenly the previous night. The following morning, we woke up early and drove back to Bulawayo. Among the arrangements made to get to East London was that I should leave for Mthatha immediately and travel to East London the day after my parents had arrived with Uncle Fubs's body. My extended family in Zimbabwe came to my home and all contributed towards the costs of transporting the body and my parents by air (only his close family could later claim Uncle Fubs's return ticket fare, my parents were told). It was just beautiful how the family stood together to ensure he was given a decent send-off that was attended by family, friends and the community. The spirit of *Ubuntu* shone brightly during this sad occasion.

In Johannesburg, I had to wait from midday to the evening for a connecting bus to Mthatha. I decided to walk to the distance university centre in town and check for my results, whose publishing date had come and gone. The year before I had received my results too late to write the automatic supplementary exam, hence my desire to get my results as soon as I could. To my delight I found that I had passed all the modules I had written and would be graduating in April/May 1996.

In East London, I told my parents of my success when only the three of us were present as a celebration would not have been appropriate at that time. During the day, Mama spent most of the day with *Ncinci* and Daddy would sit in the lounge reading a book or receiving the people who came to visit. A friend of Uncle Fubs arrived one day and we were introduced. Daddy said, "Mr..., this is my daughter, Mandisa. She is Mrs Moruri and lives in Mthatha. She is a lecturer at a college of education and she has just completed her BA degree majoring in Education, Psychology and English. She will be graduating in April next year." This was typical of Daddy – he could summarise a lot in a few humble sentences whilst boasting.

In 1996 the distance university held a graduation ceremony in Mthatha for the first time, probably as the growing number of students in this region justified it. I went to Grahamstown with friends from my study group to buy our academic gowns well over two months before graduation – we were that excited. I did not want to buy the cap because it was not compulsory to wear it, but one member of the group insisted that we should buy them. Her reason was that if we ever had to don our gowns to any occasion in a village, we should wear them as the not-so-literate only believed one was a graduate if one wore the cap: '*Umntu uthwele isleyiti*' (A person wearing a slate/cap). I generally do not like anything on my head, and I told her I would buy it only because it was not expensive, but the only graduation cap I would put on my head for was a PhD when I would wear my red gown. This is a sentiment I had forgotten when I started on my PhD journey. Incidentally,

that cap came in handy when I graduated with my Master's degree, because it was compulsory. I only had to change the tassel.

We were not allowed many people to accompany us to the ceremony, but I had many family members who wanted to come. I could only request extra tickets when I went to collect mine on the morning of my graduation day. About 13 family members wanted to come: my husband, Mama (from Zimbabwe), *Ncinci* (from East London), *Ncinci* Snaye (from Sterkspruit), an aunt-in-law (from Mt Fletcher), my two sisters (one from Zimbabwe and the other from Botswana), two brothers-in-law (from Matatiele), and a host of cousins from East London and Sterkspruit, Bloemfontein, and Mthatha. Our children could not attend the ceremony at all.

When I went to get my tickets, I requested extra ones. The person in charge looked at me askance and I told her an official had said that I should ask her. Fortunately, the venue was very large and not many people were excited about the ceremony being held in Mthatha, so she had enough extra tickets to give me. *Ncinci's* oldest daughter, Naledi, chauffeured me there and back. One of my younger local brothers-in-law, who had a minibus, ferried my family. Their mandate was clear: they had to cheer and generally show excitement from the time my name was called until the Registrar capped me – that would be my 'victory walk', as I called it. And did they play their part! They made it a 'wow!' moment indeed.



Figure 9.5: My BA graduation in 1996: (clockwise from top left) with Mama's family; with sons; with my in-laws; and with neighbours
(Photographer NR Moruri-Mafa, Mthatha, 1996)

After the graduation ceremony there was a big celebration at my house. I felt a great sense of achievement, especially because my parents expressed a lot of pride in me.

Sadly, while we were at the ceremony, the elder of the two younger brothers-in-law had a fatal accident. At the time of the celebration in the evening, a few of the men knew but decided to keep it under wraps until after the celebration and only the family remained at the house.



Figure 9.6: B.Ed. Graduation photograph
(Photograph by the event photographer, 1998)

This graduation was the most muted of all my graduations. My study mates and I went individually to the ceremony, congratulated one another afterwards, and returned to our normal lives. The feeling of achievement, though, was no less than that of the preceding graduations.

In the 1996 intake, I registered for a B.Ed. degree at the same university. By then I had found a way through the intricacies of qualifying to sit for the exams. I read the first tutorial letter from start to end and made sure I grasped the conditions that needed to be adhered to. My friends and I were a definite team by then and we were used to studying together. We worked to satisfy the minimum requirements to qualify. After all, the year mark only qualified one to get into the exam, but did not count for the final mark – only the exam mark was the decider. We wrote the exams in January.

By this time, one of my friends and study mates was the principal of the in-service centre where I had worked before. We used the staff room there to prepare for our exams over the December holidays and took time off from Christmas Eve to 2 January the following year. This time, our

food intake was more regular and we did not eat for comfort as we had done for the junior degree. Also, our meals were healthy. I think that achieving the first degree somehow affirmed us and we were more confident.

I failed the Educational Philosophy paper in the first year. This meant that, in my second sitting for the exams, I would write examinations in six of the ten modules. At one point, on the day before we wrote the Philosophy paper, I was silent as my study mates discussed the module. Delinah commented on my silence and I replied that I just did not understand what was expected of me in this particular exam as I had failed it the previous year. She simply said that there was no right or wrong answer as long as one justified whatever statement one made in the exam. That statement freed me to such an extent that I passed the module with distinction! And so, I graduated and received my B.Ed. degree at the April/May graduation ceremony of 1998.

Because I had done the B.Ed.: Educational Management course with some Educational Psychology modules, I was able to teach Educational Psychology (Ed Psych) too, so that by the time we phased out Needlework at the college, I could still teach the Ed Psych course.

9.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I continued to explore my personal history to find answers to my second research question *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional history?* I traced my experiences as a teacher before I became a university educator and I unpacked what and how I had learned collaboratively with and from my colleagues, my learners, and my students.

These interactions taught me how to cope and deal with conflict involving my colleagues. For example, when I confronted my principal at the in-service centre, I learnt not to be scared of being assertive. This was also a lesson in how to befriend and be respected by my seniors without overstepping the boundaries but by being confident and respectful. Being only three in the group, I learnt how important teamwork is.

When we had to work with outside structures such as political parties and the Chiefs, we had to show a united front and demonstrate loyalty to one another. We also needed to display teamwork as we worked together to do the work in restricted environments where there were quite a few protocols to be observed. Furthermore, we had to model to the in-service teachers how things

worked in the teaching of Home Economics/Consumer Studies which, by its nature, needs teamwork due to its practical component.

From my colleagues at the in-service centre I learned how important professional behaviour is and that it is vital to separate one's personal life from one's professional life, which is a principle I also model and instil in my student teachers as they prepare to go out into the field as teachers. In the classroom we address mainly the professional aspect of our work and outside the classroom, even in my office, we address the personal aspects of their lives as we work collaboratively to ensure their success as teachers one day. In class I am a lecturer, except when I indicate that I am speaking as a parent. In my office and on social networks, I vacillate between the personal and the professional depending on the matter at hand. The main goal that I try not to waver from is supporting my students so that they can cope better with their study programme.

My reflections confirmed that I am able to offer strong support to anyone who needs it when we sit down and have a one-on-one discussion. I suppose this also implies that I respect people's privacy, but I may ask some hard and personal questions in my quest to understand a student's problem before giving advice or the support needed as mentioned earlier.

Appropriate communication is a vital part of one's relations with students, learners and colleagues. If I had communicated with my colleagues about the challenges I had experienced as I had tried to settle into my new environment, it would have taken a shorter time for me to adjust. As it happened, by keeping quiet I short-changed my colleagues who had put a lot of trust in me by recruiting me for the post.

The dinner that we had with our students at the country club was a fun way for them to practise what they had been learning during the three years they had spent at the college. Considering the high cost of living these days as well as increased numbers of students, a more moderate version of such an activity could benefit future cohorts in our programme. It was organised collaboratively with the students so that they also learned how to plan for and execute formal functions.

My critical friends' comments during my presentations of the contents of this chapter made me realise that I had prioritised the interests of my learners right from the time that I was a novice teacher. This is a principle that I have sustained and I appeal to my student teachers to prioritise their learners no matter what. They should show them care whenever they interact with them. I

found the metaphor of myself as a ‘brand in the making’ very motivational and I feel that I need to encourage my student teachers to brand themselves too. This, I feel, should involve the demonstration of one’s values and principles as one works at being the best teacher and educator one can be. This requires, amongst others, a clear conscience and an open mind as one tries to do one’s best for one’s learners.

Having become aware of the value of lessons learnt from one’s personal history, I refer to my professional history when I provide examples to my students of some topics in the curriculum as I feel that they can always learn from my narratives. Sometimes these stories and lessons learnt lead to discussions and comparisons between the learners I taught at high school and the ones they will now have to teach. Furthermore, I sometimes ask them to share their own experiences as learners, telling them that because their experiences were more recent than mine, we need to capitalise on them as they prepare to be absorbed in the teaching profession. Such an exercise is also a way of introducing my students to self-reflection which is a form of inquiry that can influence future practices. This means that the best learning and teaching practices will grow from self-reflective engagements.

By remembering and reflecting on my experiences as a novice teacher, a teacher and a teacher educator, I was able to identify much of the knowledge that would address my second research question. Throughout these years, the one thing I never lost was my passion as a teacher. I have also enhanced my understanding that the collaborative nature of my learning, both as an individual and a professional person, has been the bedrock of my development in my chosen profession. I therefore want my student teachers to work together and hold their heads high as they look forward to practising their chosen profession with stars in their eyes and a spring in their step.

In the next chapter, I shall still be seeking for ways to respond to the second research question *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional history?* I shall look at and reflect on my time as a teacher educator in a university context.

CHAPTER TEN: NDINGUMFUNDISI-NTSAPHO KWIMFUNDO
EPHAKAMILEYO
(I AM AN EDUCATOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION)

10.1 Introduction

In the foregoing chapter, I traced my years as a teacher before I became a university educator in my quest to learn more about collaborative learning from my professional practice. I was looking at episodes of collaborative learning as a qualified and practicing teacher as well as a lifelong learner, as I also engaged in self-development academically. At this phase in my life, I had advanced from being a teacher with a Secondary Teachers' Certificate to becoming a teacher educator at a college of education holding a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree that, at the time, was the equivalent of an Honours degree.

In this chapter, I continue to explore my history to address my second research question *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional practice?* I trace my professional practice by unpacking my continued personal development through study, right up to the current doctoral endeavour. I also discuss some of the collaborative interactions that occurred both during classroom sessions and outside the classroom where my students showed initiative and creativity by applying what they had learned. I also refer to the views they expressed about my professional interactions with them. Furthermore, I share my experiences of collaborative learning through the Transformative Education/al Studies (TES) sessions I attended.

10.2: Self-Development Continues

10.2.1 Journey to achieve a Master's qualification

Towards the end of 1998, I saw an advertisement that encouraged suitably qualified graduates to apply for enrolment towards a Master's degree at a University in the Western Cape. It appealed to me and I applied to commence this course in the 1999 academic year. I started well in the first year but gave up at the end of 2000. I then registered for a Master's degree in Lifelong Learning (LLL). Somehow, my timing was still not right as there were many challenges at the time. For instance, this was the time when the decision to dissolve teacher education colleges was being implemented

and I was not sure whether I would still have a job in the higher education sector. Moreover, my marriage was in shambles.

In July 2003, when I was most stressed, I travelled to the Western Cape University, met with one of the professors, and just laid all my woes on the table as I felt that my stresses had become too much for me. He was sympathetic and generously wished me the best, commenting that he regretted that such a brilliant mind was going to waste. This comment encouraged me to make efforts to test this ‘brilliant mind’ and see how far I could take it...or it could take me.

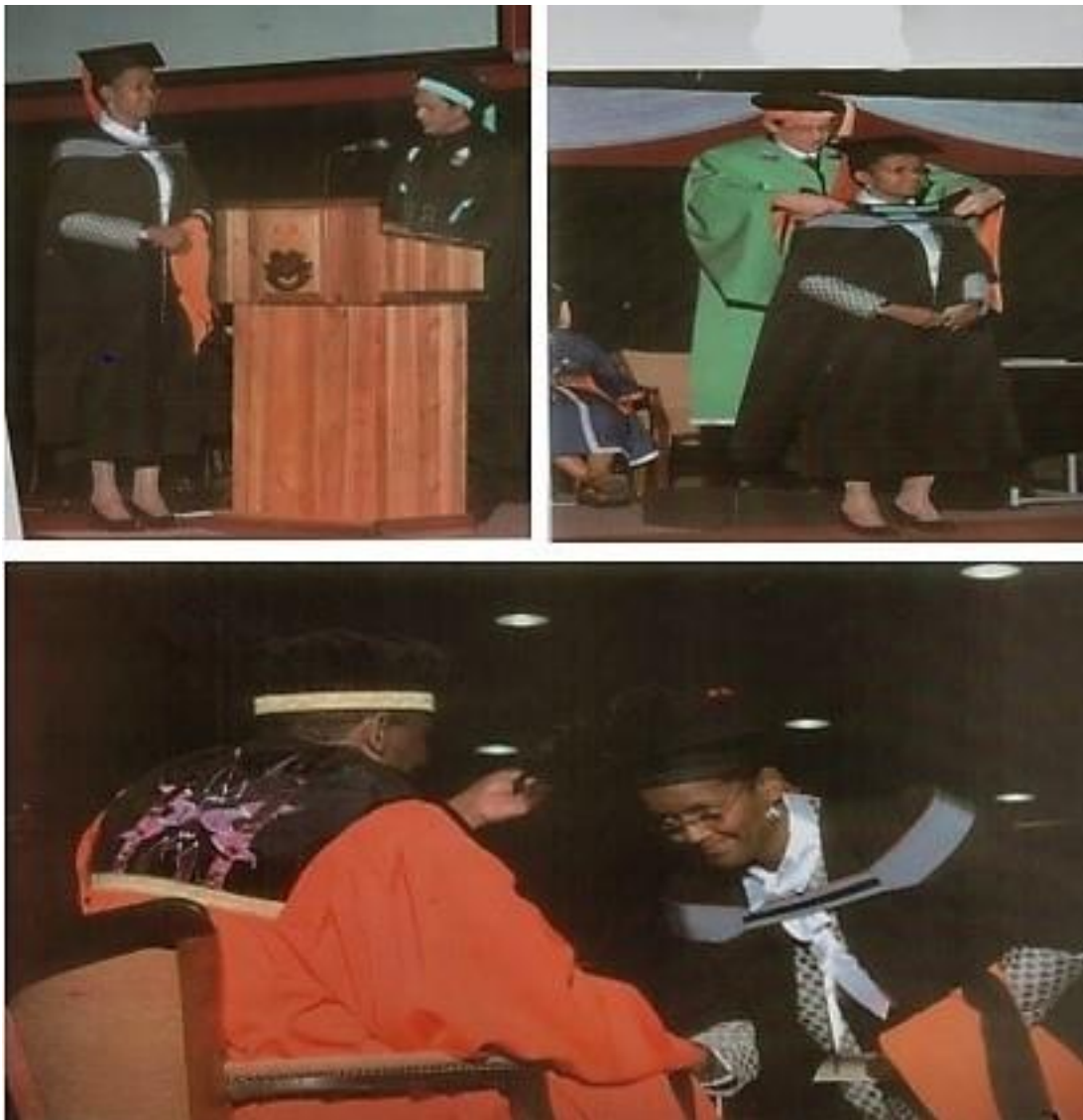


Figure 10.1: Graduating with a Master's degree in Higher Education Studies (Photographs by Gordon Harris Photographers, 2012. Bloemfontein)

These photographs were taken at the graduation ceremony when I received my Master's degree in June 2012 at the University of the Free State in South Africa. Two years later, I embarked on my doctoral journey, much to the dismay of some of my family members.

In 2005, after I had gone through a divorce, I felt I needed stimulation again. This time I surfed the Internet and found a Master's programme in Higher Education Studies at a university in the Free State province. This programme excited me. It was not much different from the one offered by the University of the Western Cape, except that it was more tightly structured and the modules were fewer. There were also more contact sessions. I think I thrive well in a venture where there is structure and my progress is visible to me. I had invited a close friend, Monica, to apply with me so that we could study and travel together to sessions in Bloemfontein, which was much nearer than the university in the Western Cape University, and she had agreed.

Monica could not drive but she made the travelling fun with music and stories from her past, and she has a captivating way with words. One of the majors in her junior degree was Geography, and she would explain some of the land formations and climate to me as we drove through the mountainous terrain of the Barkley Pass, which became our favourite route to Bloemfontein. There was the added advantage as my cousins and *Malum 'uDumisani* lived in Bloemfontein, so the board and lodging costs were minimal.

Our travels and work started in 2006. Four compulsory modules had to be done in the first year, and the following year there was one more module (of one's choice) and a comprehensive mini dissertation. I remember that we worked in groups on one of the compulsory modules and the members of our group were Monica and I, who lived in Mthatha, Tonde, who lived in Bloemfontein, and Zipho, who lived in Welkom. The assignment was to demonstrate programme planning and show the process of preparing the forms required for South African Qualifications Authority accreditation. We worked on the assignment together via emails, detailing what was expected of each of us.

On the evening before class, we met in Bloemfontein at Tonde's residence and worked into the wee hours of the following morning, organising our presentation by collating the information we had all brought to the table. We made our presentation in a class session. We had downloaded the form from the South African Qualifications Authority website and filled it in. Ours was just a plain presentation of the form with some background and explanation of the process. Other groups had

created some animations and forms that were so intricately decorated that they were quite unclear. At the end of the presentations we were very anxious that the lecturer might scold us for lack of originality. We were pleasantly surprised when he pronounced our presentation the best of all! After that, the tendency was to stick with the same group, particularly as we had done so well collectively.

Much of the language of instruction at this university was still in Afrikaans which we did not understand, but I was not concerned about that when we registered because postgraduate programmes were offered predominantly in English. However, when we attended one class the reality was much different as class was conducted by an Afrikaans speaking lecturer. She started a bit uncomfortably in English, but the message was conveyed all the same. Somewhere in the middle of the lesson a student asked a question in Afrikaans, which was then enthusiastically answered in Afrikaans to the point that the lecturer went and sat at the table where the question had come from in a face-to-face situation. We allowed this for about 5 minutes or so, then one of us raised a hand and stated that we did not understand the language, could she please translate what we had missed. We only had to do this twice, I think, as she became sensitive to our needs and never forgot to include us in the conversations after that.

I completed the compulsory modules within the first year in 2006. In 2007, my life went south again: I had to resolve the matter of ownership of my house legally, which was a process that had me standing in the dock in the High Court in Mthatha. This was so stressful that I left the apartment I was living in at the time and went to live with my cousin 40 km outside Mthatha for the last three months of that year. There I got the emotional support that I needed whilst I awaited the verdict. In mid-December the verdict was pronounced, and I was allowed to go back to live in my house again with effect from 1 January 2008.

In February 2008 I turned 50 and my children organised a small, intimate 'braai' (as grilling meat outside is referred to in South Africa) for me the evening before on a Saturday as Thabiso, my son, had to travel back to Port Elizabeth where he worked on that Sunday. He had travelled to Mthatha by obtaining a lift from a friend who was also from Mthatha. On their way back on Sunday in the early evening, they were involved in a car accident and he broke his back and tore his diaphragm. That was a bad time for the family, but Thabiso was always the positive one who kept our spirits up. Thank God, the doctors were able to put him back together again and, within three months, he was back to his normal self. I was grateful for the strength and joys of youth.

However, my studies were again negatively impacted but I did not cancel my registration. One day in May, Monica and I were leaving for Bloemfontein where we were to attend a session on the following day. I had a neck pain that had been building up for some time, which I had attributed to an uncomfortable pillow. After we had filled up the fuel tank, I suddenly felt I could not drive the distance as the pain was too severe. My daughter's fiancé drove us to Bloemfontein instead and came back on the overnight bus to Mthatha.

By then I was taking painkillers every 3 to 4 hours, day and night. We attended our session the following day. I battled to concentrate. I could have taken too many painkillers, but my neck was killing me. After I had seen a doctor I was admitted to hospital for a week. All the stressors of 2007 and 2008 had now come to a head and I was suffering physically. The straw that broke this camel's back was that my lawyer demanded his fees from me when the judgement had clearly stated that it was not I who had to pay the legal fees. He insisted, however, even when I told him his job was not done as long as he had not collected his fees from the defendant in the case. He even dared to insist that I should take a loan from the bank against my bond!

Even though I asked my cousin not to tell my sister Xoli and Mama about my hospitalisation, she told Xoli (who was in the UK at the time). My sister immediately bought an air ticket for Mama to come to me from Bulawayo in Zimbabwe. Mama did not hesitate and stayed with me for about three months, even after I had returned to work. I think she wanted to reassure herself that I would not have a relapse. My cousin, Makhi (*Malum'uDumisani's* son) drove us back to Mthatha after two weeks.

Whilst Mama was in Mthatha, she and I went to visit the lawyer with a copy of the judgement to convince him to stop pestering me. (Incidentally, the attorney who had worked on my case was a young man who had since left the firm.) We took my daughter's fiancé (at the time) with us as he had legal training. Mama was a high court assessor back home in Bulawayo, so I had two 'legal eagles' on my side. The lawyer was adamant that I had to pay him. I do not think he had read all the documents in my file, as he would have seen that I had been married out of community of property and, in any event, this was now three years after the divorce. I visited the Advocate who had been hired to represent me in court and he agreed with my understanding of the matter. I immediately went to the high court offices, failed to find the clerk of the court, and found some official in his office. By then I was so fed-up that I told my story to anyone who would listen and

did not withhold the lawyer's name. I suspect that the official I spoke to must have warned him off because I was now ready to submit an official complaint to the judge of the case, the clerk of the court, the lawyers' association – simply anyone in the legal profession. Eventually the lawyer backed off. Talk about getting collaborative care from family, near and far!

I sustained my registration and made very slow progress. I finally passed the fifth module in 2009. By then I was also working on my mini dissertation and went on a six-month study leave from July to December of that year. I could have completed my course by then, but I did not – it would be some two years later that I finally completed it. During the study leave, I stayed in Mthatha and occasionally sat at my laptop. I was also teaching Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) students on Saturdays, which was what bound me to Mthatha. I continued to teach the programme even while I was on leave. I eventually graduated in 2012 and I reportedly told one of my friends that I would never study again. She reminded me of that statement when she discovered that I was going on study leave for my PhD and, honestly, I do not remember making that declaration.

10.2.2 My PhD journey – a work in progress

At the end of 2013, a colleague and friend, Myo, made an appointment to meet me in my office. She proposed that we should work towards our PhDs. I was immediately hooked. However, we were closing schools and I was going home to Mama for the holidays. We agreed to look into it come January 2014. In the meantime, we needed to think of research areas we were interested in. I remember saying I wanted something to do with the classroom situation, but the idea was not yet definite in my mind.

When schools opened in January 2014, there were supplementary exams as usual. Myo had many scripts to mark, so I offered to surf the Internet and look at the different offerings at the various universities in the country. I discovered that the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) offered a PhD in Higher Education that sounded very inviting as they offered some cohort sessions and, as I clearly understood then that I am a person who thrives in collaborative learning situations, it seemed just what I was looking for. The deadline for applications was very near and there were forms to be filled in and other information to be provided. We called the coordinator of the programme and requested an extension of time to submit our forms, to which she agreed. Unfortunately, Myo experienced some problems and could not submit her application, but I was ready on the due date and sent in my application.

On the application form there was a section asking if the applicant had found a supervisor and, because I had not at the time, I filled in 'No'. During the first cohort brainstorming session of our ideas for study, I stated that I wanted to explore my own classroom practices but, somehow, this idea did not seem to sit well as it did not sound as if I would be using one of the usual methodologies. As we were leaving the boardroom, someone advised me to talk to Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan or Daisy Pillay.

Back in Mthatha, one of my colleagues suggested that my idea was linked to a self-study project and that I should approach Thenji Meyiwa. She also advised me to contact Kathleen and gave me her email address. I sent an email to Kathleen requesting her to be my supervisor, to which she replied quite quickly asking what I had in mind.

At the time, my institution of work was due to host an annual international research conference and Kathleen was going to be the keynote speaker! After I had replied to her question, she suggested we should meet over lunch together with Theresa, who led the Transformative Education(al) Studies (TES) group at my institution of work. She agreed to be co-supervisor of the project. By the end of lunch, we had a working title and I was set to go – or so I thought. I attended cohort sessions that caused me much stress because the academic leaders and I could not agree on self-study as a research methodology. However, I enjoyed the TES sessions tremendously. Therefore, I consulted Kathleen and she supported my idea to move from the Higher Education PhD programme into Teacher Development Studies where I would participate in group sessions with other students who were on similar quests as I was.

That was the best move on my journey to obtain my PhD. I was excited about the self-reflective and Transformative Education(al) Studies group sessions where I was praised, questioned, and challenged. I made suggestions and I listened to and contributed to my peers' presentations. All these interactions occurred from a positive, constructive platform. I was always enthused with new ideas and felt good about myself. All these interactions occurred under the umbrella of collaborative learning, which has always been my favourite way of learning and studying. In these sessions I learnt that the two words 'never' and 'impossible' do not exist in self-study...

10.3.1 My Transformative Education(al) Studies Experience

The Transformative Education(al) Studies programme was a project that linked three higher education institutions, two of which were in the KwaZulu-Natal Province and one in the Eastern Cape Province, with leadership thereof rotating amongst the three institutions. I attended sessions both at my institution of work and at my institution of learning. We used to meet weekly at my institution of work. After Kathleen's keynote presentation at the International Research Conference at my institution of work, many people became aware of the TES group, including yours truly, and joined the meetings.

Quite a few have since fallen by the wayside and a core (about eight) now remains at the time of writing. The challenge is mainly scheduling meetings on a day and at a time that suits most, if not all, members. We have since tried rescheduling the meetings to once a month or even every fortnight. Sotsha (Nkosinathi Sotshangane) was the main coordinator of the TES group at my institution of work, together with Theresa, the leader. At these meetings we learned about self-study and autoethnography principles and methodology. We also co-authored a paper and contributed to a book, *Object Medleys* (Figure 10.2 below), that was published in 2017.

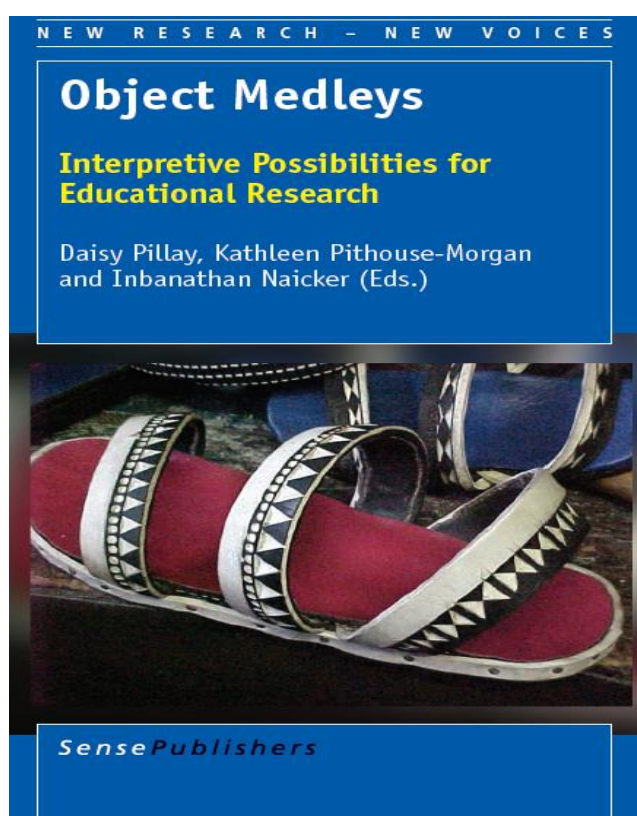


Figure 10.2: Cover of the book that resulted from the TES Object Inquiry project

This book comprises of chapters that were contributed by various authors who were participants in the TES programme. The chapter to which I contributed as a co-author is Chapter Five. I also contributed to Chapter Six as a co-author with two fellow students in my institution of learning and our Supervisor, Kathleen. I referred to this book in Chapter 4 as well.

10.3.2 Collaborative Learning Experience at TES Workshop, Dec 2014



Figure 10.3: 1. The work begins; 2. The collage, all demarcated; 3. The collage transcript; 4. Found Pantoum poem; 5. Team 'A' in action

I created this collage because of the significance of my experience when I attended my first TES workshop in December 2014 at the Assagay Hotel in KwaZulu-Natal. The theme of the workshop was 'Creative analytical practices in self-study research' and, for the group, 'How has your participation in the TES project so far been of value/not of value to you? Please give details'. The images I assembled here represent the processes and steps Team A, the group I was in, followed to address the theme.

This collage demonstrates the nature of the study that was the core of what I attempted to address, which was collaborative learning. The study required that I be engaged in self-study of my professional practice, and this collage represents how some of my collaborative learning occurred during the first stages of my study. My first research question always remained at the forefront: *'What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?'*, and this was part of my journey about learning collaboratively how critical analysis can be applied in self-study.

The principles that in part underpinned the creation of the above artefact related to self-study, as described by Samaras (2011) (see Chapter 2). Others were involved in the creation of the collage namely the leaders of the project Transformative Education(al) Studies who organised the workshop, leaders of the process (mainly Kathleen and Daisy), my peers who were part of the Transformative Education(al) Studies project from the three institutions who attended the workshop, and fellow Team 'A' members. As team members we read the instructions and ensured we understood our brief to work together to look for and cut out pictures and words we thought were relevant to our theme. We created the collage by demarcating and explaining our ideas and composing and performing the poem at the end. The final activity was to reflect on and analyse what we had created and to present out thoughts to the larger group.

The participants helped me to understand the brief and to open up my mind to new possibilities as far as collaborative learning methodologies are concerned. I have always tended towards taking learning very seriously and had not pictured myself using such a method in my classroom situation. Collage making was a term I vaguely remembered from my teacher training, but at this workshop I learned more about its potential in the classroom situation. I also had not thought of using magazines the way we did – it was as if we were transported back to childhood but in a very adult sense as we had to consistently link our decisions for the pictures we selected and the poem to our educational and academic goals.

I thought of the metaphor of a windy autumn dawn, with all the colours of the drifting leaves flying about as the day is dawning. Then I would rake and pick up these leaves and put them into a flowerbed as compost to encourage the growth of all manner of flowers to feed the eyes and minds of those hungry for visual beauty. Raking represented picking up and assembling the cut pictures and words and the collage represented feeding the flowers with compost for visual stimulus. The leaves were the cut-out pictures and words and the flowers were the different skills that I acquired and that facilitated my learning for the benefit of my student teachers (those hungry for the beauty of learning) so that they will teach their learners in such a way as to keep them interested in learning. Dawn represents the eye- and mind-opening experiences that this workshop elicited.

When I look back at this experience, I remember the excitement that gripped me. In my younger days, I used to enjoy working with paper and scissors, mainly for pattern making and cutting out these patterns on fabric for sewing, but in this instance I felt like a child who had been permitted to cut up magazines as I could pretty much do as I pleased with the pieces. I realised that, because playing went a long way to keeping me interested in the session, it could do the same for the students in my class.

10.4 Being a University Educator

10.4.1 Being a university educator an not just an object

<p>last seen today at 06:42</p> <p>21 MARCH 2017</p> <p>Messages to this chat and calls are now secured with end-to-end encryption. Tap for more info.</p> <p>Good evening mem 20:41</p> <p>It's because Am affraid to talk about this in the group 20:42</p> <p>Ok Nana. Go ahead. 20:43 ✓</p> <p>And please Mem do not laugh at me... Am scared to present my assignment as I wrote about Beads and Grass hand crafts... 20:44</p> <p>I think my object are not correct 20:45</p> <p>As long as you can link them to social learning, answer the questions from your own point of view and speak from the heart you'll be fine. No stress. Please do not worry. 20:46</p> <p>Okay Mem thank you 20:47</p>	<p>Due date: 08 March 2017</p> <p>"Object Lessons": Making meaning of and from everyday objects in social networking (Adapted from, Samaras, 2011, pp. 105-106)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Identify an object that you use for social networking ◆ Consider the <i>suggested</i> prompts for writing about your object: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain why you chose this object. • Share what the object represents or symbolises about your learning • Are there others involved with this object? What role do they play? What is their influence on your thinking/learning? Do they see things the way you do? • What metaphor would you choose to represent, symbolise, and reinforce the significance of this object to you? • Express an emotion that this object brings forth for you. Describe where that emotion generates from and might extend to in your learning and teaching. Be descriptive. <p>Please write between 500-1000 words about your object in a narrative form and insert a photograph of your object.</p>
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Figure 10.4: Not just an object: Assignment given to class (Photograph by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2017, Mthatha)

The WhatsApp conversation depicted above was between a 3rd-year student, Prudence, and me on the day before they were to make presentations based on the assignment on the right. Each had to stand up and talk about their object/s (what we refer to as artefacts). This student touched me when she communicated her fears to me. I had just started teaching them about six weeks to two months before this.

During this time, teaching and learning had already been interrupted by student action, so the actual teaching time was less than what had been planned. That she felt confident enough to communicate with me, even at that late hour (I had told them they could do so at any time), made me feel that there were students who found me approachable. This date, 21 March, is a public holiday in South Africa. Her communication thus suggested that she was a hard-working student who took her work seriously.



Figure 10.5: Not just an object: Artefact presented by Prudence
(Photograph by the student for assignment, 2017)

Prudence associated these objects with social networking in response to the assignment they were given (Figure 9.4). I found it touching that, with all the fads young people these days have, she went back to her roots and found everyday objects that were unique to her context. She mentioned

that she was Ndebele, and her openness reflected her pride in her identity. She came from a humble background and had been enrolled through a partnership between the Mpumalanga Province and my institution of work. This initiative allowed students to become teachers as they were funded to study in the Faculty of Educational Sciences. This student was proud regardless of her circumstances and she held her head high as she explained how she and her sisters were taught by their mother and the older women in the family to learn the skill of making grass mats and decorating them with brightly coloured wool and beads. Prudence's choice and combination of objects felt special to me as they echoed my feeling that one should be proud of who one is. I had occasionally seen similar mats on sale at the place where I get my 'jewellery', but I had not thought much about who the people were who made them. Her presentation brought back my attention to important objects I had ignored all along. She was not the only one who did not choose a computer, a mobile phone or any other internet-based technology as a few others had done so as well. When the class started, she volunteered to make the first presentation and started the ball rolling.

I chose to include this artefact (Figure 9.4) and the WhatsApp messages to depict the nature of the communication between my students and myself outside the classroom. In this instance, I was pleasantly surprised because it occurred quite soon after my first interaction with this particular cohort. I was not yet sure whether we were getting to the point where the students would communicate with me at any time, as I had offered at the start of our class sessions.

The time that I had with these students in their third year was very short compared to when I taught them in their first year. For six weeks of this (their third) year, they were away on Teaching Practice. This means that we had to connect quickly to be able to interact in a mutually beneficial way. I found this group very reticent at the beginning – they were just not coming on board by participating freely in discussions and presentations and I almost had to force them to participate in the beginning.

When I shared my concern with one of my colleagues, she wondered aloud if maybe they were intimidated by my position as Head of Department. I eventually decided to talk to them and explain that, in this class, I was a lecturer. If I wanted to interact with them as Head of Department, I would call them to my office or some other venue. I emphasised that, during our class periods, I came to them as a lecturer and that the Head of Department remained outside the classroom. I also emphasised that, as long as they did not open up and participate, they would have problems with the marks for their Teaching Practice. In this manner I used a strong incentive as students generally

will not put in much effort unless they know that ‘it is for marks’. This worked, and they stopped being so uptight around me. My colleague had thus assisted me by listening and making a constructive comment that set me thinking and coming up with a solution. It was therefore a collaborative learning instance for me.

I also used this WhatsApp message as an example of the culture our youths grow up in. This young person found it easier to consult me on a social networking platform than face-to-face (at first), which is how young people communicate. I often see groups of students ostensibly communicating as they are sitting in groups, but in reality they are using the cellular phone to chat to someone outside the group. It is thus obvious that the common group instinct is still there, but their network system goes beyond the group.

Being Ndebele, Prudence capitalised on her uniqueness in her choice of artefact (Figure 9.5) that resembled social networking. Additionally, the culture of her home also came into play. Modern young people usually do not want to do things together with the older generation, but she seemed to find pleasure in doing so. Finally, she demonstrated the principle of collaborative learning as it occurred in her life when she was growing up, just like I had learnt from my elders through sewing and cooking ‘lessons’.

Other people involved in this project were lecturers in the programme, although they generally preferred to communicate through class representatives or with Teaching Practice groups only. I always feel they are missing quite a lot by not being open to this kind of communication, as our students need to be encouraged to get used to using such platforms because we are preparing them to teach techno-savvy learners who may know very little else. I realise that this understanding that I gained affirmed that there are different ways of interacting with students, but this particular instance underscores how all important social networking collaborative learning strategies have become. Her family was also involved in her learning as they had instilled in her the value of being with and learning from the older generation. Indeed, all the cultural knowledge that we need to consolidate our identities collaboratively is vested in our elders.

Another insight is that this object evokes a feeling of hope. So, no matter how we love and utilise technological ways of communication, it is face-to-face communication that helps to pass cultural practices from generation to generation and this needs to continue to establish young people’s place in society. I feel that, as an adult who works with young people, I have a duty to open myself

up emotionally to my students so that they should also feel free to communicate openly with me and other adults in their lives. This was demonstrated when this class would not open up because I was Head of Department and I clarified my position as a lecturer and a potential confidant. I shall of course do so at the very first lecture with the next cohort.

I regard it as very important to promote cultural pride in my students. I have noticed a tendency among our young people to be embarrassed about their origins, but they need to realise that their identity is irrevocably linked to these origins as well as their future.

10.4.2 Being university educator: collage making

12 June 2017

GROUP ASSIGNMENT: CCS39M0

In your groups, create a collage to show how you like to learn:

- Document the collage making process by taking photos (hands only, no faces) and making audio recordings of your discussions.
- Present these collages and explain the meanings of the images/text in the collages.

NB: This was an example of applying the flipped class activity (see Chapter 1)

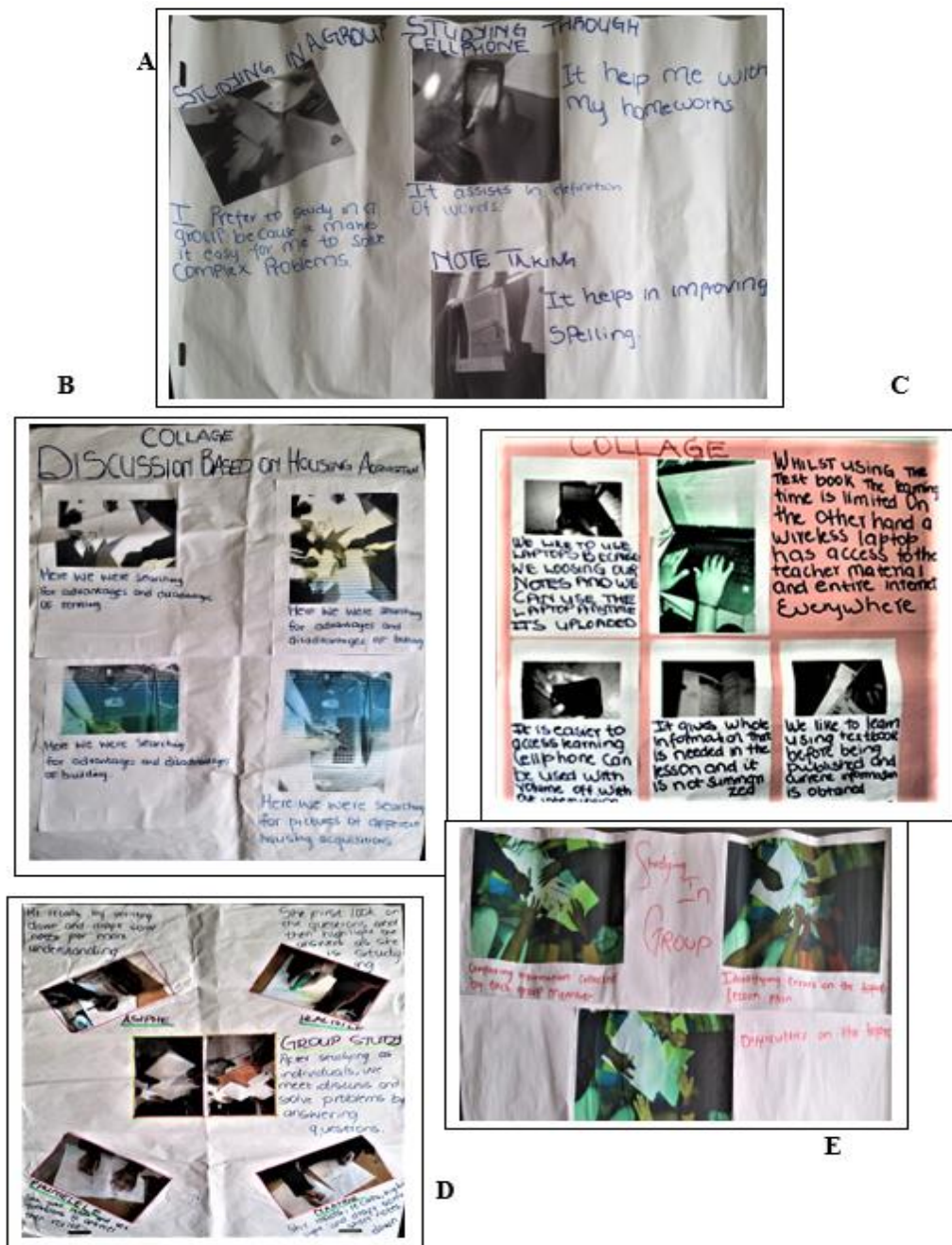


Figure 10.6: Images of student collages (Photographs taken by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2017)

These collages are artefact evidence that I collated to show what the students had made in response to the assignment above. They did recorded oral presentations in class and took pictures of the collages. I must say, the students were very excited that I wanted these pictures of their work.

When I devised this assignment, I hoped that this would give me some insight into my students' preferred ways of learning/studying so that I could capitalise on these when teaching them or assigning them homework. I wanted them to be able to articulate their preferences by getting up and presenting these to the whole class, thereby further nurturing their presentation skills as they would be doing a lot of this as teachers, both during Teaching Practice and when they have qualified.

I also wanted my students to unpack their preferred methods of learning: first, for them to reflect on the different ways they could study and to identify their most beneficial way of learning so they could plan for their study sessions knowing what would work best for them; and secondly, so that they could think of these as they prepared lessons that they would teach when they went to schools for Teaching Practice for five weeks at the beginning of the second semester.

I chose these collages as one object because it showed me how far my students had come insofar as getting up to present something they had prepared in front of their classmates. At first, it was not easy to make them say something in front of the entire class, but then I made them work in groups where they learnt collaboratively. For the first collaborative learning assignment, I let them choose their group members just to encourage them to feel free to talk to their friends within the group. Then I alternated between allocating them to groups and letting them group themselves. On this occasion, I had let them group themselves according to who they felt comfortable studying with, and they were very happy with this. I suspect this was because of the dynamics of associating with peers, patterns and groups that they felt worked for them.

The students preferred to learn in many ways, for example reading and making notes; accessing information on the Internet via Google; as well as accessing the material I had uploaded onto the e-learning platform WiSeUp and saving on the cloud or memory stick. There was mention of using old question papers to revise and gain an understanding of the examination style. Amongst all the replies, only one group did not mention group work or collaborative learning. Those groups that preferred group learning mentioned such advantages as sharing information and posing questions to one another to gain a better understanding and reinforce knowledge.

Based on the insights I had gained from the collages the students had made, I felt that I needed to work with the lecturer who taught the module Educational Technology while also ensuring the refinement of visual presentations in my class, so that the artistic/creative pieces that they produced

would appear more organised and attractive to look at and read. Because my students were going to be teachers, they needed to practise making learning and teaching aids for use in the classroom. My focus was not only on *what*, but also on *how* they produced their work in an aesthetically pleasing manner.

From the presentations, I gained insight into the students' preferred ways of learning, which means that I now need to vary my teaching methods to cater for these needs. I will thus need to engage the students in this kind of exercise right at the beginning of the year to prepare for my teaching to have maximum benefit. As I was teaching these students in their third year, I assumed that they had already selected their study partners and that their teams were in place. This meant that I also learnt from them to make such an exercise more meaningful. This exercise also helped me to assess how far they had come in gaining confidence, as they had to make their presentations to their classmates. This was definitely a long way from where they had started at the beginning of the year. I was also pleased to witness their encouragement of one another as each group was warmly applauded after the presentation.

My collage of the collages (or artefact/object) demonstrated to me that, with patience on my part and a bit of hard work and being adventurous on their part, the students could get to a point where they felt that they could share something about themselves with others. It also showed that, in the last week before we closed for the first semester (they would go out for Teaching Practice in July), they were comfortable learning from and with one another collaboratively. Whilst some stated that they learnt better individually, the most common trend was that they preferred to study collaboratively. The main trend was to study first as individuals, and then to come together as a group to reinforce that they understood the content in the same way and to close any gaps in learning content that they might have.

This object reflects the contemporary era in education when students and learners feel free to express themselves. The culture that is reflected is thoroughly modern, and the collage underscores collaborative learning which is a process where each member has to contribute to his/her learning as well as that of the other members in the group. It is also about popular youth culture as they were very excited when I took pictures of their collages. They insisted that I take pictures of their collages as they posed in front of them, which affirmed their ownership of the entire process. This 'ownership' is probably why young people are constantly taking pictures of themselves ('selfies')

and posting them on social platforms as it affirms their presence in various contexts and for various reasons.

In this exercise, the only people involved were my students and I. During each group presentation the others listened and applauded at the end of each presentation, showing support and encouragement for their peers. I also felt this was justified, as this is partly what collaborative learning is about: that we avoid any negative feedback as one is supposed to learn something constructive from such an engagement.

I was reminded of a metaphor that is encapsulated in the following song that we sing in the YWCA, particularly the first two stanzas that are presented here. With love, anything is possible and, whilst loving your subject is necessary to achieve success, one has to at least like or tolerate one's classmates for any learning to be effective. I always welcome any new class of students with affection as I regard them as my children. I believe that it is only when I care that I can keep their welfare at heart, but I reprimand and guide them as and when necessary.

Vive L'Amour

1. *Let every good fellow, now join in our song,*

Vive la Compagnie!

Success to each other, and pass it along,

Vive la Compagnie!

Chorus:

Vive la, vive la,

Vive l'amour.

Vive la, vive la,

Vive l'amour.

Vive l'amour, vive l'amour,

Vive la Compagnie!!

2. *A friend on your left, and a friend on your right,*

Vive la Compagnie!

In love and good fellowship, let us unite,

Vive la Compagnie!

Repeat chorus ...etc.

<https://www.lyrics.com/lyric/14517803/Roland+Kaiser>

Maybe I should teach my class this song right at the beginning of the year so that we all understand what I deem to be one of the fundamentals of collaborative learning: that is, without some affection at some level, working with others can be torture. It would also help them to loosen up and be more open to more creative learning and teaching methodologies.

The collage also encouraged me look back and reflect on the classes I had taught and I remembered them with fondness. The students came to my class being aware that they were now starting the second and most worrisome half of their learning to become teachers. They were registered for Teaching Practice and they realised that they would be expected to teach in actual classrooms. I usually felt their fear and worry and had to work on that for them to end up feeling that they were ready for the classroom in the real world. I had noticed that, in their third year, the students seemed to drink in all that I said, particularly when I shared my experiences with them.

10.4.3 Being university educator: those who dare to be



Figure 10.7: Student's Facebook post after graduating cum laude with some comments, including mine...

Translation: So yesterday after the Grad ceremony, my lecturers and their Head called me and I was given this white envelope. When I asked what it was for their response was, 'Abo, we cannot keep quiet, you have made us proud as the Consumer Science Department and the Faculty of Educational Sciences'. I could not hold back my tears when I opened it. I have never been given something so big, and may I not state it,

please. I have no words to thank these mothers. May God bless you in all your needs; I just have no words. Stay sweet as you are there at (name of my institution of work).

#Almighty_I feel_your blessings_on me.

(Then he expresses his gratitude again, referring to himself using his clan name.)

I chose the post partly because of who it was that wrote the post as, for the first time, I had students who were openly gay in my class, and partly because he was the best achiever ever in my class and in the programme that I teach. Finally, I chose this post because I felt that this illustrated the peak of my achievement as a teacher educator, and this was not just about the subject content interaction. He posted this message on Facebook (and I have captured some of the reaction to it, including mine) the day after he had graduated as a Bachelor of Education in Consumer Science student. For the first time, we had a student graduating cum laude. It was a very proud moment. I captured the post and the positive comments, with the first two being from his peers in his cohort.

Abo is a natural academic achiever but, over and above that, his family accepts and loves him unconditionally. I have learned that the way your family treats you goes a long way towards making or breaking you. His family's support gave Abo all the self-confidence he needed to self-actualise – to be the best he could be at university. Soon after qualifying as a teacher, even before graduation, he was among the first in his cohort to get employed and buy himself a car!

I have had students of various language and ethnic groups but, as far as I know, this was the first time I had students of gay sexual orientation. But nobody in the class discriminated against them in any way. I suppose that was because they were all pleasant, had a sense of humour, were always neat, and worked hard. The other students' results were not far behind Abo's. I had interacted with some gay men socially, but I had never interacted with one on a personal level.

I teach young men and women. Whenever a male and female student sit together and their chatting makes enough noise to draw my attention as I teach, I generally tease them and tell them this is not the time for them to be proposing love to each other, they can do that after class. On this particular day, I did the same with these two students who were very good friends. The female student laughingly replied that they 'were the same' ("Siyafana nje, Mem"), and the whole class, including these two, burst into laughter. As I laughed with them, I realised that I had to get to know this male student better. I thought, "Ok, maybe I need to sit with this student and seek some clarity on his 'gay status'."

Fortunately, he was a class representative and my request for him to come to see me in my office at the end of the session during break time was nothing out of the ordinary. In brief, I explained to him that the comment the friend had made and his reaction had made me believe he was openly gay, and he said he was. We had a long chat. He described some memories of his childhood and his realisation that he had always been 'different' from other boys. He also spoke about the challenges of being stigmatised, which made him hide his orientation to the detriment of his studies. But once he had fully embraced the person he was, his academic performance skyrocketed. He made me understand so much more than I had before about people who dare to be who they are and the challenges they experience in life. Later, he would sometimes share his excitement about his social life with me.

At a Tourism and Consumer Studies exhibition organised by Department of Basic Education officials, he addressed school children to motivate them to take certain subjects. Abo did a sterling job and some school principals approached us to get his details so that they could call him if they had a vacant position in their schools.

There were four openly gay students in the class and they were comfortable in their skins, therefore the rest did not care about their sexual orientation and treated them the same as any other friend. After their 6-week Teaching Practice session, I requested the students to share their challenges at the schools with the class. Abo mentioned that the learners at his school had addressed him as "Miss" or "Ma'am". I asked him how he had introduced himself, and he said he had told them he was "Mister". This was not a problem for him and he laughed with the whole class. He was undoubtedly the best student we have ever had on the programme.

Reflecting on 'otherness' and particularly on the issue of gay students and teachers, I understood that the gay students made a space for themselves amongst their classmates without me having to do anything about how the others perceived and treated them. All the staff members in the programme accepted and liked them. Whenever we engaged in collaborative learning activities, they were in demand in the different groups. I suspect this was because of their very good academic performances which is one factor that students consider when I ask them to group themselves.

In my first lecture, and during preparation for Teaching Practice, I usually refer to the Constitution of the Republic of South African (Act 108 of 1996). The Constitution and the Bill of Rights

emphatically proclaim that all are equal in the eyes of the law, and the right of each citizen to human dignity is protected. I thus try to make them aware that we are all different in our own ways, but we need to recognise diversity and the rights of all people to be who they are.

The posts that I presented above symbolise the pride I have in my decision to study and persevere at my age. Many of my friends, colleagues and acquaintances still question my sanity for engaging in this study as am no longer a young person. I realise that it is because of students such as this young man that I am motivated to keep improving my practice and to contribute to the knowledge base of teaching and learning that teachers – both pre- and in-service – can build on. Sometimes I cannot pinpoint what it is that I learnt, but I am always filled with a rich and satisfying sense of achievement after encounters with my students.

The artefact above reflects the time period as the twenty-first century. It is an age of technological advancement in which communications occur among people who are not necessarily in the same space. The culture that is reminiscent of this object is Youth culture. Through technological platforms our youth have been freed to raise their voices and share their moments with anyone and everyone on these social platforms. The proliferation of ‘selfie’ posts by everyone, but particularly by youths, is probably indicative of their affirmation of their presence and their need to be acknowledged on a much wider platform than was the case in my youth. Talking about the positives in our lives was labelled as boasting and it just was not done. You were supposed to let others talk about you and you stayed ‘humble’. The young people these days do not seem to adhere to this philosophy. Furthermore, one of my life tenets is to live and let live, therefore I do not discriminate against those who are not like me. This probably comes from having been brought up in a home where *Bhut’ Sonwabo*, who was deaf and mute, was always treated as a ‘normal’ person, for lack of a better word. I only became aware that he was different from other boys and us when I started interacting with the outside world more than with my family at boarding school. My parents never treated him any differently from us.

Other people involved with this artefact were my colleagues in the Consumer Science Education programme. When we realised that the university had no policy in place to reward students who graduated with a distinction like Abo, we all collected an amount of money amongst ourselves to give it to him as a present that would motivate him to go even further. Abo and his friends performed well in all their subjects. In the post that I presented above, Abo had tagged a colleague

and me, and those on Facebook commented on the post. We continue to engage with our former students, both on Facebook and WhatsApp, for continued growth for them as well as us.

10.4.4 Being a university educator: getting out of the classroom



Figure 10.8: Student organised end-of-course party (Photographs by students, 2016, Mthatha)

These photographs appeared on Facebook and were posted by a student as a member of a team who had organised a 'White/Black only' dressed theme party to end their third year. In their fourth year, we do not see much of them as some are appointed in school Governing Body posts before their six-month Teaching Practice stint in the second semester. They therefore had this function at the end of their third year.

This artefact is from 2015 which was five years before the time of completion of this thesis – but it feels as if it was just the other day! The dress code was originally ‘White’, but as some students indicated that a white dress code would be too challenging (much to my joy), the dress code was changed to ‘White/Black’. The invitation specified that the staff would be the guests. All we needed to do was look pretty and say something now and then when requested. The students took care of all the arrangements themselves.

I was somewhat put out by this invitation as it came rather late and was scheduled for a weekday evening, which meant we would have to drive home at night. On the other hand, I felt compelled to attend because this was the first time our students had taken such an initiative. I was a lecturer in the programme and I had personally interacted with the students and, as Head of Department, this was a positive step that I wanted to affirm and encourage. When we arrived at the venue, everything was in place at the set time, and the students were so happy to see us that I enjoyed myself and forgot my irritation. When I now look at the post, I echo the student’s sentiment that both the staff and students cared for and respected one another. Even now, most of this cohort of students are still on a WhatsApp group that was established in their third year. I wish we had more cohorts like this one.

What I particularly remember about them is that they applied what they had learnt collaboratively from their Curriculum Studies classes and the organisational processes instilled in them by the Consumer and Hospitality Studies content classes as they prepared for and ensured that the party was a success. They planned the theme, organised and decorated the venue, prepared and served snacks, planned and executed the programme, and also organised transport for those who lived in university residences in town. They left the venue clean and ready for the following day’s activities too.

I chose this artefact because it indicated to me that our efforts to make our students feel like teachers and be confident within themselves were coming to fruition. As students start their third year, they seem to have grown up overnight, perhaps because they sense that they have passed the halfway mark to becoming qualified teachers. They show more commitment to their studies, less absenteeism, and under-preparedness becomes less, particularly after their five-week stint of Teaching Practice at the beginning of the second semester.

The analogy of a watch describes their progress through the course quite well, and I often use it. In their first year, they start at ‘five-past’ Matric and end the year at a ‘quarter-past’. In the second

year, they are at 'half-past' as they go towards the middle of their journey and they end their third year at a 'quarter-to'. They are now clearer about, and nearer to, where they are going. They start their fourth year at a 'quarter-to', the second semester at 'ten-to', and submission of Teaching Practice files at 'five-to'. Once they get the 'Pass/Graduate' endorsement on their results, they have arrived at 'o'clock' and I welcome them as new colleagues in the teaching profession.

The occasion indicated in the photographs above seemed to be the start of a culture of celebrating ourselves in the programme. Our senior students leave us for their final year when some of us will see them only at schools for Teaching Practice or when they come to submit their Teaching Practice portfolios. However, at the time of writing, two years had passed without a repeat of such a function. I believe it is an occasion worth celebrating again with different cohorts. One needs to find a way to motivate the students to organise and run a function themselves as this cohort did. Beyond the smart clothes and the snacks that were provided, the spirit of 'oneness' among the students and between them and the programme staff is part of the culture that the programme of Consumer Science Education endorses.

Our students have been envied and teased about the close relationship we have with them. We are literally *in loco parentis* as they identify whom they feel free to share their joys and frustrations with. There is also an element of the youth culture, taking into consideration the theme of the party and that the students were totally in charge of all that happened that evening. I have found that young people nowadays do like to organise their events and be in full control of the proceedings, which is great!

The other people who were depicted in this artefact were my colleagues who were participants in the programme. Most of them, as well as two colleagues from other programmes, can also be seen in the photographs. The students had invited them especially. One colleague from another department was the Director of the School of Initial Professional Education of Teachers up to 2014, who was special to this cohort. The photographer's peers also responded and concurred with his comment in the post. Their independence and initiative filled me with a sense of achievement as I felt it had been a job well done. However, I know one should never be complacent and I am thus always looking for ways of improving my practice. This cohort made me feel that, with more effort, I could have a similarly exciting cohort of students in the future.

I am also reminded of the metaphor of an engine that drives a car, just like my efforts drive progression. As mentioned before, I always learn something from each cohort of students that I teach. From this artefact, I learned that if you continually affirm students for any positive input they make and guide them to turn the negatives into learning opportunities, they flourish and go all the way. Therefore, just like you switch on a car's engine to drive it forward to your destination, you may find that your relationship with them can 'drive' both parties to progress and even beyond the 'call of duty'.

I look at this post and the pictures in it evoke only positive feelings. I feel very proud that this cohort of students demonstrated their learning to us before they left the university. I often see my students in actual classrooms only when they are in Practice Teaching, but I never get to see them apply their learning in practice. I felt humbled that they openly expressed their feelings of appreciation for the part we had played in their lives. I also feel gratitude towards them for affirming my colleagues and me, both with what was expressed at the party and in this Facebook post. However, I also feel troubled that no cohort has since repeated this effort and I often ask myself what we did right with this particular cohort that we have not done again?

I suppose this means I need to rethink my collaborative learning strategies and approach to my class. I need to challenge my students to demonstrate their learning practically more often, as they need to understand that what they do over and above continuous assessment tasks is actually a better doorway to the big world out there than merely accumulating marks to pass.

10.4.5 Being university educator: the sound of silence

What follows is a presentation I made to my Critical Friends' Support Group on 28 August 2016:

*“...And in the naked light I saw
Ten thousand people, maybe more
People talking without speaking
People hearing without listening...”*

(Lyrics: *Sound of Silence* by Paul Simon & Simon Garfunkel)

These are the words of a song that was popular in the mid-60s. The title reminds me of how there is silence in relationships, because there are people who talk without speaking and people who hear without listening. You can actually hear the silence.

What brought this understanding was a WhatsApp conversation. This is a screenshot from my tablet. It was on the second day of Teaching Practice, and one student sent me the following message:

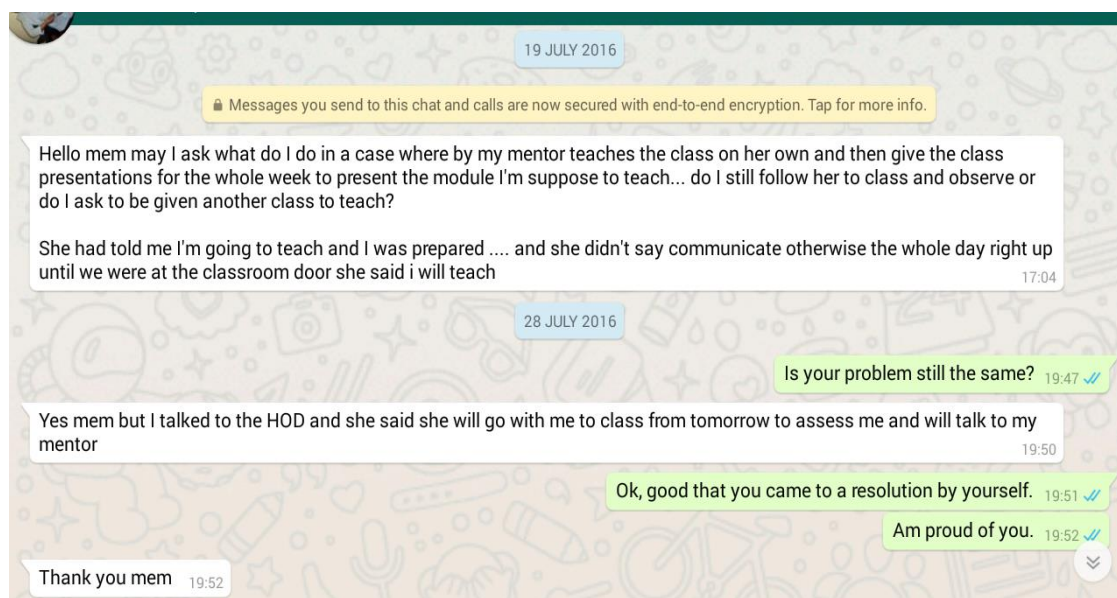


Figure 10.9: Conversation between a 4th year student on Teaching Practice and I
(Photograph/Screengrab by MN Dhlula-Moruri, 2016)

*The above is a WhatsApp conversation I had with one of my fourth-year students, *Sindi. She and her classmates were on a six-month Teaching Practice stint. She sent the first message on the second day of her Teaching Practice in the second term.*

*not her real name

She wrote this on the 19th of July and I only replied to her on the 28th of July (see the above for the conversation as it ensued). Reflecting on this conversation reminded me that, when such a message came, I normally responded quickly and would say, “Who is your mentor? Give me her name, give me her phone number and I’m going to call her.” And I would talk to the mentor and tell her, “Those students are supposed to teach!” This time something held me back. I said to myself, “This student is in her 4th year, and now they are doing their last six months’ stint, and there will be no going back to class again. If she can’t manage her problem now, how is she going to learn when she gets to the field where she might have problems? So let me just be quiet for a bit...”. In this manner she resolved the problem herself.

Sindi was a student who had done well in the programme and had never repeated a module or a level since she had first registered in the programme in 2013. The year before, she had come to my office one day and confided her challenges at home with me. She had been able to carry on with her studies despite the situation, which was not new at this point, but this time, it was near exam time and she was feeling the pressure more. Therefore, I had just asked her some questions of clarity, then went on to remind her that her life and future were in her own hands, and affirmed her as a good student who would always do her best. This conversation yielded positive results because she went on to pass all her modules, as usual.

Later on, I remembered a time when the ability to keep silent was discussed in our support group meeting earlier that year. We had talked about letting the students be as they would devise a way of solving problems or coming up with answers and information. Then Siza, one of my critical friends, said:

“I end up keeping quiet not knowing what to say because of the things that some are saying.”

Presentation by Siza on 25 February 2016

The following conversation then ensued:

Lungi: “That’s the thing about teaching. Sometimes we feel like filling the gap, sometimes they don’t need you to say anything, they just need you to allow them to say something. It’s just about them to say something rather than you giving them [feedback] because we always feel like making a quick response like you want to console them, especially with AIDS, we want to give them some wise words. Maybe that is what you do, and in moments that you feel you are not giving them an answer, then they come up with something to say and end up learning something...from each other.

Bridget: So the relationship here is very important.

Refilwe: Maybe you could have somewhere ... somewhere, where maybe moments that kept you silent, those moments where you just couldn’t do something...

Mandisa: The effect of the gap!

Refilwe: ...and the words from the students

Kathleen: That would be interesting if you could kind of reflect and recall when you felt you couldn’t say anything...

Lungi: ... and it still worked. It means something was happening even when you were not saying anything.

Kathleen: So maybe silence, the kind of listening attentive silence, can be a responsive innovative pedagogy.

Bridget: Wait time.

Kathleen's last comment above roused my curiosity and I explored the concept of silence in learning and teaching. This silence is referred to as "wait time" (Rowe, 1972, p. 3; Stahl, 1994, p. 2), as Bridget mentioned in the quoted above. It is also referred to as "think-time" (Stahl, 1994, p. 2)). As elucidated by Stahl (1994), the main difference between the two, in the academic context, is that 'wait time' distinctly encourages students and the teacher to use moments of silence for thinking before they speak and, as a result, come up with better thought-out quality responses, while 'think time' is about allowing students and teachers time to finish working on tasks or letting them process the way they feel without any interruption.

Stahl (1994) further presents the advantages of wait time as the following: The responses of students will improve in length and quality; the number of volunteered appropriate responses increases; the paucity of responses lessens; and students do and achieve much more when they are afforded wait time. The tendency is that when you ask a question, you immediately expect a hand to come up. But maybe if you wait and give them a second or two as the literature says you should, just give them that space, you might find that they don't feel too much pressure and when they relax, then you find that you get more responses and more input from your class.

Another point that came to mind based on Siza's statement was the aspect of culture and silence (Olin, 2008). Siza did not say she kept quiet because the students were saying something, she said she kept quiet because she didn't know what to say. She said, "I end up keeping quiet not knowing what to say because of the things that some are saying". According to Black Southern African culture, there are topics that one just does not discuss with children; for example, anything to do with sexual activities and, by extension, HIV/AIDS.

So sometimes it may be better to let the students talk and discuss a topic among themselves and thus teach one another if you are not feeling too comfortable with the topic but it is in your job description. The *Ubuntu* principle of 'I am because you are' also comes into play and this goes back to the saying that a child is raised by a whole village. There are things that you may not say, but someone else in the child's village (the family or peer group) will.

You must know what your silence is saying because silence can say many things. It can be a positive or peaceful silence, or it can be negative and/or 'noisy'. For instance, if you feel very uncomfortable, silence can feel very loud. In the learning and teaching situation it is important to apply silence or 'wait time'/'think time' as one needs to make the students feel that what they say matters because this also talks to their sense of confidence and self-worth.

Part of the art of being a good teacher is the ability to interpret the sound of a student's (or students') silence correctly. This reminds me that I had a colleague who was very close to me as we did our Master's degree together. When you are very close, at times even when you are not together you think about the same thing and you react in the same manner to certain stimuli. I was in my class on this particular day and I asked the students a question, and they did not say anything. This usually happens at the beginning of the year when they are not yet used to you. But this was not at the beginning of the year and I thought that this silence was not comfortable. I told them I did not like students who are unresponsive and so I dismissed them. She had the same problem with her class and she also dismissed them. We only found out that that afternoon that they would start a strike. Therefore, for once, we interpreted that silence correctly because they did not want to be in class, they wanted to be out there.

I was glad that I was able not to interfere and let Sindi solve her challenge herself. I realise that this was an important moment as I should learn to say less to my students and let them express their own ideas. This conversation confirmed that I should allow spaces of silence in my lessons and my students will find enough confidence to deal with any challenging pedagogical situation.

From the above, I think I now want to utilise silence as a method of facilitating learning in problem-solving and learning and teaching situations. At the end of the day, Sindi devised a way of dealing with her mentor so that she did indeed gain experience and teaching practice to become a qualified teacher by the end of that year.

I always encourage students to share their challenges on the WhatsApp group page so that they can support one another, but Sindi communicated with me only on the challenge in the picture above. I did not ask her why she did not share her concerns on the group, but I learnt that the mentor she mentioned here was an ex-student of ours who was a year ahead of Sindi and had graduated that year. She probably felt that some of her peers would know who this mentor was and it could backfire on her. I made a follow-up check after my colleagues had assessed her at her

school as well as over the last few days of Teaching Practice and she said all had normalised between herself and her mentor.

When I eventually spoke to the teacher who took over mentoring Sindi, she admitted that the new teacher whose class Sindi had been teaching was not supposed to assess her as she was still so new in the profession. She spoke very well of Sindi as a student who asked for guidance and was prepared to learn. She was also impressed with her classroom skills. I also requested her to send me a WhatsApp message describing her relationship with the three student teachers as a way of following up on our recently qualified teachers. Her reply was very general, just indicating that Sindi and one of the other two students were doing very well. The third student was giving problems. She did not seem to have perceived that Sindi had had a problem.

From the foregoing, I can conclude that silence does not necessarily mean lack of knowledge, as it could most probably mean one is still thinking and planning how to answer to the best of one's ability. Therefore, it is a strategy I should consider incorporating into my classroom practice. Furthermore, silence can be both peaceful (positive) or noisy (negative), and I believe it is a teacher's responsibility to interpret it correctly.

After I presented the foregoing to the Critical Friends' Support Group, quite a bit of discussion followed. In summary, there were those in Dramatic Arts who were familiar with silence as they often physically removed themselves from the room so the students could discuss matters freely without the lecturer being there in person, thereby being silent. Another comment was that sometimes it would be about the lecturer ceding her power of authority to the students, which is what learner-centred learning is about. The learners then take the lead in educating their peers, which means both participants (the lecturer and the students) have to get to a point of acknowledging that the students we teach do not come to our classes empty-headed, but with some knowledge that the lecturer can capitalise on in her teaching.

On the other hand, it was acknowledged that the lecturer might feel uncomfortable to give her authority to the students. There was a general feeling, though, that as lecturers we need to create these pockets of silence so our students can also grow and gain confidence in what they know and want to share. Back to our school days, learners needed to be silent to the point of being punished if they raised their voices. We were silenced with punishment, yet we have to be the silent ones now as we need to encourage student participation in their learning.

A further point that came to the fore was the relevance of silence in collaborative learning, and further exploration of this concept was encouraged. The need to look into whose silence we would be talking about in collaborative learning was also raised: if it would be that of the teacher, then it should force students to engage collaboratively in solving problems. This presentation also provided learning for me as I resolved to embrace the idea of exploring silence in the learning and teaching situation based on the presentation of one of my peers.

10.5 Conclusion

In this study of my self-development I came away with lessons that I learned collaboratively from my critical friends, my students, my colleagues, and from the leaders of the project I was involved in as a doctoral student. One of the main lessons was that one does not have to look for expensive items to make a lesson interesting. Those everyday objects such as magazines and newspapers could provide very rich and interesting resources to use. This was demonstrated at the TES workshop that I attended in 2014, as well as in the assignment that I gave my students to do. Another lesson I learned was that one is never too old to play. This was enforced at the TES workshop when we got busy cutting out pictures and words, ended with a live performance in our various groups, and analysed our experience. All this was done collaboratively, and I should consider this kind of collaborative learning for my classes.

I learned that there are more ways of engaging my learners in collaborative learning than the ones I had originally listed. Silence should also be recognised as a collaborative learning strategy. This can be used most effectively when the lecturer goes quiet and allows the students to educate one another, either in pairs or in groups. Similar to other collaborative learning strategies, the lecturer has to prepare her lesson and her students for such a methodology to succeed.

In this study I put all the emphasis on my personal history as it has influenced me to become the teacher that I am today. I always need to be conscious of my students' history and be sensitive to how it has shaped them. I feel I should make them aware of the importance of looking back for self-reflective purposes so that they will understand themselves better, which is an exercise we can engage in collaboratively.

It emanated from this chapter that, as an educator, my mandate does not end in the classroom. For my students to become successful teachers, I have to model how they need to support their learners inside and outside the classroom environment. They need to treat their learners as whole beings and I need to give them moral support whenever there is a need. This is also another collaborative learning situation as, while I support them, the expectation is that we both work towards removing barriers to their learning and this should lead to more successful learning.

I also learnt that students have preferred learning styles and that I should consider these in my lessons and assignments. I learned to practise what I preach and that everyone has the right to human dignity. I was aware of the fact that students whose sexual orientation were different from mine had become a (very welcome!) reality in my class. The concerned students and their classmates collaboratively taught me that any student, regardless of diversity, is worthy of everybody's respect and care. Going forward, I need to continue working on improving my learning to ensure the success of my pre-service teachers so that they will enter the teaching profession wanting to be the best teachers for the nation's children.

In the next chapter, I will tie together my extended curated photo album as I conclude my thesis. I shall share my reflections and explain what learning I have gained about collaborative learning and self-study.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: UHLALUTYO NESIQUKUMBELO

(ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION)

11.1 Introduction

I embarked on this study so that I could engage in an in-depth reflection on my personal and professional history and practice in relation to times when I learned collaboratively throughout my life. The overarching aim of this endeavour was to improve my professional practice. I sought to generate knowledge to address two research questions *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* and *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional practice?*

In Chapter Ten, I traced my professional practice as a university educator to illuminate times when I learned collaboratively with and from my study partners, my students, my critical friends, and some More Knowledgeable Others, particularly my supervisor. In this final chapter, I tie together all the foregoing chapters by beginning with a summary of each. This is followed by an exposition of what I learnt about myself at both personal and professional levels. I explain how I came to understand my learning using the methodology of self-study. Additionally, I trace my learning as it was embedded in the concepts and theories that I identified at the outset as the most relevant framework for my study. Based on the findings of the study about my learning up to this point, I also declare how I see myself moving forward using my learning to continuously improve my professional practice in order to enhance the learning of my students. In short, this chapter concludes my narratives and understandings of the evidence of what I have learnt based on the extended curated photo album.

11.2 Review of the thesis

In Chapter One, I introduced my study by stating its purpose and focus. This was followed by some background information on my experiences as a teacher and teacher educator. I then presented the rationale which explained why I found this topic worth researching and I elucidated what I perceived its significance would be for myself, my students, my colleagues, and my institution of work. I then presented the two research questions *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* and *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional practice?* and explained the reasons for their formulation. Based on the literature review, I explored the sociocultural theoretical perspective on which my study was

based as well as the sociocultural theory of learning that I applied. The key concepts related to the topic of the study were also defined. I introduced the self-study methodological approach that I followed as I engaged in the study. To conclude, I presented an overview of the chapters that would be included in this thesis. In this introductory chapter, my main learning was that I was able to provide an overview of the study by identifying important aspects that would underpin it, such as the socio-cultural theory on education, among others. Because I had to do a logical mapping of the study, these initial stages were very helpful as they established the foundation and set the tone for all the chapters that would follow.

In Chapter Two, I further explained the methodology that I employed. After consultation and review, I decided on doing a self-study project and I explained its qualities and reflected on what attracted me to it. Against the backdrop of the nature and qualities of the self-study methodology, I discussed the importance of the study settings and the roles my participants – my late mother, a sibling, extended family, my critical friends and my More Knowledgeable Others – would play in eliciting and illuminating the photographic and narrative data I would use for this study. I referred to the ethical considerations I had to adhere to as well as the issues of trustworthiness that needed to be considered in the execution of this project.

In working on this chapter, I explored the intricacies of the self-study methodology and learnt that, although self-study is collaborative in nature, I had to focus on my personal learning. I also learnt that no detail of my journey in developing my extended curated photo album would be unimportant, and that transparency would lead to trustworthiness.

Chapter Three was an exposé on the data collection methods that I applied in my attempt to find answers to the two research questions. The body of the narrative data was extensive and I thus augmented the narratives with arts-based and photographic evidence. This is an area in which I felt the least confident, but with the support and guidance of the participants I was able to narrow the vast sources of visual data down to those that were most significant. In this manner I honed my focus and gained confidence in my creativity. I also discussed the challenges I experienced during my study and how I overcame them. In the process of engaging in self-study research in order to generate responses to the research questions, I adopted the personal history narrative method. Thus, by using photographs and illustrations in an extended photo album format, I was able to connect my life experiences of collaborative learning with scholarly aspects of research.

As the advantage of self-study is collaborative learning, I yielded rich data as I collaborated not only with my critical friends and students, but also with family members.

In Chapter Four, I started looking for answers to the first research question: *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* My parents, as the designers of the pattern of my life, laid the foundation of who I am. They grew my siblings and me as a team who put into practice what they had taught us. They modelled respect for each other which made us respect each other and others too. The principles of democracy were already honed in my family life as Daddy treated us all equally and forgave us instead of punishing us when the majority ‘voted’ for forgiveness. My parents promoted family unity by simple acts such as insisting that we ate most of the meals together as a family and celebrating milestones such as our 10th and 21st birthdays. Holidays were spent at home as a family as part of our family culture. Mama and Daddy established family traditions and instilled positive values such as having evening prayers before bedtime. Our identities were established early as they ensured that we knew who we were, regardless of the environment outside our home. We were thus given Xhosa names as this was our home language and the language in which we prayed. They raised us together and ensured that we learnt collaboratively as a team. Reflecting on the narratives in this chapter, I realised that there was a lot of collaborative learning and teaching from Mama and Daddy.

To understand the learning that occurred in my parents’ care (Chapter Four), I referred to social constructivism (Chapter One) which is a theory that underscores the value of the collaborative learning that occurs in the family home, and as I experienced it. The socio-cultural theory also enhanced my understanding of the learning I gained through factors such as the isiXhosa language and the culture I had been exposed to, my historical background, the family unit and unity, and the cultural practices that were part of my collaborative learning processes.

Writing and reflecting on the data that I discussed in **Chapter Five** confirmed my understanding that no man is an island. My parents had their circle of family, friends, and social organisations and they entrusted our welfare to these people and structures. Their circle of friends was quite extensive, but all recognised that they shared the same values, norms, and principles of raising children ‘as a village’. Our parents ensured that the children in their sphere of influence grew up to love, like, respect, and trust one another. They thus modelled and fostered these characteristics in us in a collaborative manner. This further brought to the fore the philosophy of *Ubuntu* (Chapter One) as these other mothers, fathers, aunts and uncles treated us no differently from their children

and thus played their part as members of the village who ‘grew me’. Another lesson I have embraced is that each young person that I interact with is also my child who needs the same commitment to his/her development as the dedication I show my own family. I am one of the role-players and a member of the village that needs to grow my students.

I continued to search for the answer to the first research question *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* in **Chapter Six** as I looked back to the times when we travelled to visit our grandparents. Mama and Daddy ensured that we established relations with them and this enhanced our cultural heritage. The two sets of grandparents lived in different countries: Daddy’s in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe and Mama’s in South Africa. On these journeys and during our stay at various locations, we were exposed to many instances of collaborative learning which occurred either before, during and at the destinations along this journey. Our grandparents doted on us and always made us feel special, whilst unconsciously providing us with learning opportunities as they went about their daily business of interacting with their grandchildren. The learning I took from these interactions was that, as Mama and Daddy collaboratively modelled their care and love for their parents and ensured that we learnt how older people should be treated, I also do the same for the children in my family. I also need to ensure that my students learn and embrace this behaviour in the learning and teaching environment, as there are many other adults in the university environment across all sections, including those who do jobs that are regarded as menial.

When writing this chapter, I realised that, as long as one is open to learning, every interaction is an opportunity to learn regardless of who one interacts with. The music and games that I learned and utilised as learning opportunities during these travels were discussed in Chapter Five. Having discovered the value of these activities I now acknowledge that I can infuse my classroom with fun, which I believe my students can emulate one day so that their learners can be motivated to get up in the morning and feel eager to come to class. My grandparents all modelled pride in who they were, which fostered the same pride in us. I want my students to grow into Consumer Studies teachers who are proud of their identity. This is a lesson that I also learned from a lecturer at college, as discussed in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Seven presented data that, in part, addressed the first research question *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my personal history?* This chapter focused particularly on the children in Mama and Daddy’s families. I explored the different ways in which I related to my

siblings. The chapter contained an additional curated photo album within the extended photo album, loosely following guidelines as proposed by Mitchell and Allnutt (2008), Mitchell and Pithouse-Morgan (2014), as well as Mitchell, Weber and Pithouse (2009). I explored the way in which we interacted collaboratively mainly as sisters and as cousins, the latter being from both the maternal and paternal sides of my family. The memories that I shared in this chapter demonstrated the results of the learnings that we had gained from our parents through enacting events such as a wedding, finding a tree hideaway, the get-togethers that we organised as an extended family, and even the similar manner in which my siblings and cousins and I raised our children. The message is that growing up and leaving the coop does not mean the end of relationships. I shall therefore encourage my students to maintain communication with me and among themselves.

This chapter was essentially a reflective chapter as I mainly recalled my transitioning from childhood into young adulthood (Chapter Eight). What stood out as I wrote this chapter were two things: (1) The principles of *Ubuntu* as our role-models compelled us to recognise the humanity of the people we interacted with. Mama's domestic worker had as much authority over us as our parents did. (2) Based on our learnings, my siblings, cousins and I maintained harmony amongst ourselves. This was evidenced by the examples of the activities that we engaged in whenever we were together that I provided. Singing created one of the strongest bonds that tied us together in our generation. The values that we imbibed equipped us with qualities worth cultivating in my students so that they not only treat one another with respect, but also embrace as valued lessons for their future when they work collaboratively with their colleagues when they start teaching.

In **Chapter Eight**, I started seeking a response the second research question *What can I learn about collaborative learning from my professional practice?* This chapter marked the start of my professional journey as I looked back to the people who influenced my choice to become a Home Economics/Consumer Studies teacher. The people I referred to as 'my influencers' taught me that even though learning is meant to be taken seriously, I do not have to be rigid in the methods I employ in my classroom. I learnt that play is also important and that I have to take responsibility for my learning. I also looked back at the beginning of the road where my transition from being a high school student to becoming a teacher started. All the processes I value were collaborative incidences that I experienced with my school mates. I also traced my journey as a preservice teacher, which lasted three years and spanned two colleges of teacher education. During the course of my studies at both colleges, I learned to discern between good and bad habits in teaching and I emerged as a proud Home Economics/Consumer Studies teacher. I also learned that, in a learning

situation where students work together, success is guaranteed for all, as the twenty students, of which I was one, completed their Home Economics teacher training course at the same time.

During this period of transitioning I gained the self-confidence to go to a college to become a Home Economics/Consumer Studies teacher, which was a goal I achieved despite challenges and mistakes along the way. I credited this success to my influencers, my peers and lecturers. These people modelled positive behaviour and instructed me in such a manner that I decided to become the kind of teacher they were, and many were also part of my supportive network (Chapter One) because the behaviour they modelled was based on their experiences. However, my lecturers were examples of both positive and negative role-models. My Needlework and Dressmaking teacher especially made us work cooperatively together (Chapter One) as she ensured that we learned and promoted one another's learning as each student in her class was equally accountable for learning, tidiness, and maintenance.

Chapter Nine traced my journey from my time as a teacher at a junior secondary school to when I joined a high school. I also looked at my transition into a teacher educator, first in a teacher in-service school where I taught mature students, to a college of education where I taught young adults. My job description and title also changed from teacher to lecturer. I also looked at how I became a lifelong learner as I took the conscious decision to develop myself academically. In all these contexts there were episodes of collaborative learning that I embraced. One of the main messages I take from this chapter is that an educator needs to continually improve her qualifications and teaching skills, mainly to stay relevant and to always be a step or two ahead of the students. If I had been satisfied with my original teacher's certificate, I would not have been where I am now. My students see me as a role-model as they are always impressed each time I mention that I am still a student. This means that I am modelling self-development and lifelong learning. I also learnt something about myself, and that is my passion for a positive future of the children of our nation. This sentiment emerged strongly when I made a presentation in my first year as a teacher (section 9.2). In the ensuing Critical Friends' Support Group discussion, a comment was made about this passion that I displayed right from that time in my career.

This chapter contained a brief discussion about 'Brand Me' that stemmed from a poem I had written and presented to the Critical Friends' Support Group. Although I did not refer to this concept again in the ensuing chapters, 'Brand Me' is always at the back of my mind because I do not believe that I will ever get to a point where I shall be able to say the brand is complete because,

as a lifelong learner, I see myself as a student right to the end of my life. Looking back at what transpired between my colleagues and the Home Economics teachers at the high school where I taught, I came to the realisation that achieving constructive collaboration takes some work, and that communication is at the heart of it. I am proud that we achieved this, as was demonstrated by our collaborative decision to wear a smart ‘uniform’ to work. That experience prepared me for the journey of lifelong learning that I engaged in later, as well as being part of a large staff complement at the college of education where I became one of a work and study team. The collaborative spirit that was evoked even encouraged us to organise social activities that were not only linked to our professional connection, but to our collegial spirit as well. This also indicated that even as college lecturers, we were whole beings and our lives were not limited to the staff room and the classroom only.

In **Chapter Ten**, I looked at my continued academic self-development after I had become a university educator in pre-service teacher education. I looked at the collaborative learning that I was exposed to between 2014 and 2017 as I focused on my study. Some of the sessions were organised through the Transformative Education/al Studies (TES) project leaders and others were organised by myself (in class) with my students. The main focus in this chapter was on my learning about collaborative learning in the context of my professional practice which, as it transpired from some critical friends’ sessions, should not end in the classroom or lecture venue, but should be extended to the pre-service teacher as a whole being.

I was a student in the true sense of the word as I learned from my students and my critical friends. The concept and principles of collaborative learning came to life. I collaborated with my colleague, Monica, and our team mates in my Master’s studies, with students in exploring collaborative learning, and with all the critical friends that I interacted with on this doctoral journey. I even collaborated with my students as my co-constructors of learning on how to enact collaborative learning.

11.3 Personal-professional learning

I embarked on this self-study project with the intention of learning about my professional practice as I explored collaborative learning, which is a method of learning that I have come to embrace. In this process I needed to look back at my personal history to explore incidences when I learned collaboratively throughout my life. I also needed to identify different settings and the people I had

interacted with to come to know and better understand the teacher that I had become, with a view to improving my professional practice (Huxtable & Whitehead 2016; Tidwell & Fitzgerald, 2004). Whitehead also discusses ‘living contradiction’ (Whitehead, (1989, p. 44), which occurs when one realises through a systematic self-study of one’s practice that what she knows about her professional practice is not necessarily what she practises in the classroom context. I had felt that I might no longer be as relevant as I could be for my students, who seemed to be getting younger by the year, and this insight partly prompted my decision to undertake this study.

Using the metaphor of a basic dress pattern (Chapter Two), I discussed how it is necessary to modify the pattern of a dress for a perfect fit (Figure 11.1). In the same manner, my personal and professional histories (Chapters Three to Ten) reflected the modifications of the pattern of my life so that I could take what I had learnt about collaborative learning with the aid of the curated extended photo album to shape my future practice – i.e., improving the pattern of a dress is like using my history to shape the rest of my life as a teacher educator because of what I have learnt.

My parents were the designers of the basic pattern of my life; they effected change (through socialisation) in how I functioned whenever they felt I might be getting lost. This means that the ‘pattern’ was adapted for the ‘desired outfit’. They also put in pattern markings – the guides they gave me that I am now able to extract from my personal history and apply to my professional practice so as to be the best preservice teacher educator that I can be.

Samaras and Freese (2006) claim that, for a self-study to be trustworthy, one should know which methods are the best to use when analysing one’s data so as to come up with the best answers to the research question/s. Braun and Clarke (2006), Samaras (2011), and Samaras and Freese (2006) further highlight that one needs to go back to the data time and again until one has identified common themes. These themes, that are presented in my extended curated photo album, are diverse as they emerged from my personal history narrative, photographs, collages, and illustrations. In this process I employed inductive analysis as supported by Braun and Clarke (2006), who argue that inductive analysis happens when one reflects on the data collected, and then identifies themes that are related to one’s research interest which, in my case, was collaborative learning. The themes that emerge do not necessarily have to be related to any pre-existing themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) further explain thematic analysis (pattern markings as guides in my case) as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data” (p. 79). These markings guided *how* and

what I learned and the process was facilitated by narrating my personal history and gaining insights from working on a curated extended photo album.

To introduce the guides that shaped my learning, I went back to the dress pattern metaphor that I referred to in Chapter Two, and I realised that the pattern was not ready for use yet. So here I present the pattern pieces that are ready for use, with pattern markings that guide the dressmaker in placing the pattern pieces on the fabric/material, cutting them out, and putting the pieces together to make a dress. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, these two pattern pieces are a representation of all the pattern pieces that would be required to make a dress.

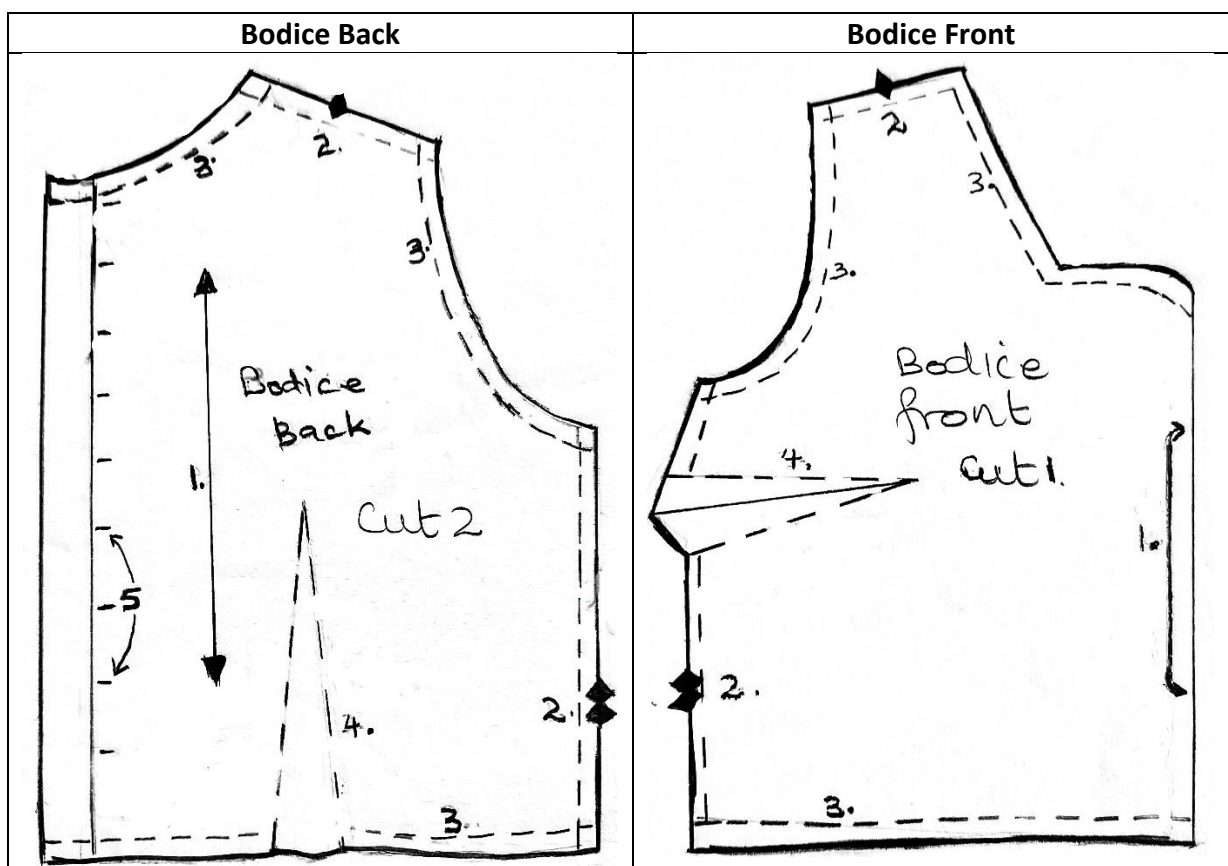


Figure 11.1: Bodice pattern showing pattern markings/sewing guides to making the garment

(Drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri)

The figure above is a drawing of two pattern pieces with examples of pattern markings/sewing guides that appear them. These are numbered for ease of clarity.

Key:

1. Place on the straight grain of fabric for the Bodice back and place on the fold for the Bodice front

2. *Notches*
3. *Stitching/Seam line*
4. *Darts*
5. *Buttons/buttonholes*

Below are individual illustrations of the pattern markings indicating their functions and their metaphorical meanings relevant for this study

I will now explain each pattern marking and then link it to the guides that I have devised as I learnt about collaborative learning.

Guide 1: My students and I will emphasise *ukubaluleka kolwazi lwemveli ngokwenkcubeko yam neyabafundi* (the importance of my own and my students' indigenous socio-cultural knowledge) in collaborative learning situations.

Marking/Guide 1: Placing guides

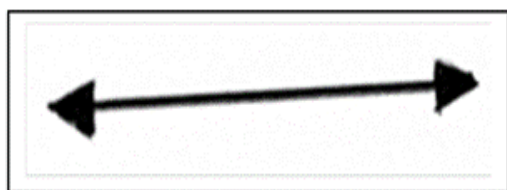


Figure 11.2: a) Place on straight grain of fabric

(Drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri)

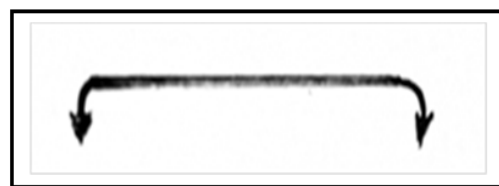


Figure 11.3: (b) Place on fold *(Drawing by MN Dhlula Moruri)*

The guides that are illustrated here tell the dressmaker how to place the pattern pieces in relation to the grain of the fabric. Once the instruction that comes with these two markings is not followed accurately, the resulting garment will not be a good fit. As can be seen in Figure 2.1, (a) appears on the bodice back pattern piece with the instruction to *Cut 2 pieces*; (b) appears on the bodice front pattern piece with the instruction to *Cut 1 piece*, and there is no seam line (See Guide 3 below) where (b) is, which means that the edge is placed on a fold of fabric and not cut.

These pattern markings/guides, like the Guide discussed hereafter, serve as a metaphor for the foundation of any human interaction. We all come into collaborative learning situations with *ukubaluleka kolwazi lwemveli ngokwenkcubeko yam neyabafundi* (our – me and my students' – indigenous socio-cultural knowledge) as the reference guide for our learning. This guide reflects the socio-cultural nature of my life – my being situated within my family and with all the other

people who have impacted my life. I was socialised according to my culture and tradition (indigenous aspect); I was exposed to the historical aspects of my family when I learned skills in ways that had been handed down from generation to generation; and I also learned from my grandparents, parents and my peers through inter-generational interaction. All these contributed to the formulation and consolidation of my identity (Chapter One), as borne out by Chisanga and Meyiwa (2019) and Gerdes (1998). My students were also exposed to such contexts before they came to the university and my class. I thus need them to also recognise the learning they bring to the classroom so that they can use it as the foundation of their learning.

The personal history chapters (Chapters Three to Eight) demonstrate many instances where *Ubuntu* was modelled as I grew up and matured. *Makhulu* and *Tat'omkhulu* from Mayitshe Farm took in and looked after destitute people (Chapter Six); Mama made clothes for other people for free (Chapter Four); children from our extended family were raised with us (Chapter Five); and the members of my extended families played their part when they made sure we were socialised in ways that were acceptable to the family and the broader society (Chapter Five). These examples show the modelling of *Ubuntu* that has influenced (and continues to influence) the person and educator that I am.

Through the extended curated photo album, I recognise that my family and the broader community that I interacted with all contributed to shaping me and my educational practice. This is borne out by Samaras (2011) when she explains: “Individual learning and the social context are not separate” (p. 75). This is further supported by the African saying that ‘it takes a village to raise a child’. I was grown by a whole village that stretched mainly across three countries, namely Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Botswana. I learnt how to do chores, speak, pray, sing, and play in our language, isiXhosa, in a land where Daddy was of the first generation born here. I acquired this learning through my interactions with my parents, their parents, siblings, friends, as well as my cousins and siblings (Chapters Four to Seven). Examples of skills that I learnt were stamping mealies and polishing the floor with cow dung that were part of our culture (Chapter Six). The skills that will be needed by my preservice teachers will of course not be the same as these, but they have to learn skills that are related to teaching Consumer Studies.

We ate our food from common bowls, using our hands. We were grouped according to age and not gender per bowl. We all had to make sure our hands were clean before eating. This fostered unity and created our identities as we identified with one another. A family can sit together at the table and this is good for forging unity in the family, but eating from the same dish is a step further.

We learned to be considerate of one another as we were always encouraged to eat in such a way that those sharing a dish had enough to eat. Nowadays, people are almost obsessive about hygiene and the spreading of childhood and other diseases, but I do not remember this ever being an issue then.

My whole family, which included my core family, my grandparents, and my extended families (inclusive of family friends and their families) all played their part in growing me. In terms of my students, this means they have to realise that the lecturers who teach them are all working towards ensuring that they leave teacher education as the best new teachers in the profession, because all the modules knit together to make one whole syllabus that is the foundation of and makes the teacher. Furthermore, there are support structures at university that are staffed by people of different generations, such as the Registrar, the Examinations section, cleaners, and maintenance staff whose mandate is to facilitate the success of all the students in one way or another.

Collectively, the foregoing examples mean that, in a learning and teaching situation, all students, like me, possess indigenous socio-cultural knowledge that has an influence on the people that they are. As an educator, I need to be always aware that we all come from different families and backgrounds with a lot of indigenous knowledge that we need to recognise and incorporate into our learning and teaching interactions. I believe it will be a good idea to have my students trace how they learned as they grew up so that our interactions are more open and flexible. This could contribute greatly to the kind of teacher that they become, and I believe such an exercise will contribute to my students' identities as teachers. Sharing their learning histories will also make them understand one another better as they work together in collaborative learning sessions.

Guide 2: I recognise how *iimfundiso ezisisiseko* (my values) devolved and shaped me. I need to enable my students to recognise the importance of their *iimfundiso ezisisiseko* (values) when engaged in collaborative learning.

Marking/Guide 2: **Notches.**

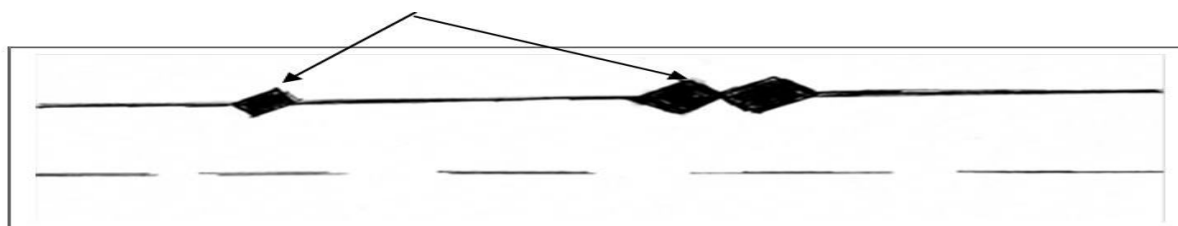


Figure 11.4: Notches: there may be one, two, or more 'diamond' shapes

(Drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri)

Notches are diamond-shaped markings on a pattern that protrude over the edge of the pattern pieces. They are positioned at different places on pattern pieces. Matching notches show where two pieces of a pattern should be put together at a particular point so that the garment is shaped when cut out and stitched for a perfect fit. For this reason, one must cut outside the pattern lines along the outside of these notches so that they are visible even after the fabric has been cut. In this manner their guiding function is optimised.

In my metaphor, these notches represent *iimfundiso ezisisiseko* (values) that guide me and my students' behaviour in collaborative learning interactions. These values stand out and influence how my students and I behave as they stem from our socialisation which started in our homes. When a family raises children, they socialise them by ensuring that they grow up by behaving in ways that are socially acceptable to other people in society (Felder & Brent, 2007; Ryzin & Roseth, 2018). My parents were not an exception and their expectations were high. They instilled in us our cultural and social values, which also fall within the framework of the social constructivist perspective and the socio-cultural learning theory (Chapter One). My parents modelled these values through their beliefs, attitude and behaviour and corrected us when we did not conform to their standards. I also remember, as mentioned almost throughout my personal history chapters (Chapters Four to Eight), that all the adults that contributed to growing us (both in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe and South Africa) seemed to have similar values. This is because they praised or reprimanded us for the same misdemeanours as Mama and Daddy did.

First, Mama and Daddy demonstrated the value of love as they interacted with each other and with their children and those of their extended families. Although they never really told us they loved us, we felt loved from the way they interacted with us, even when they had to reprimand or punish us. For example, I mentioned that Mama always made a new dress for her daughter when it was her birthday party – but the other two got a new dress as well (Chapter Four). From this feeling of being loved, it was easy for us to also show that we loved one another, and this kept us together even as we lived (and as some still live) in different countries. In the collaborative learning context, I believe that if you do not like your team mates, you cannot maximise your learning.

We were always expected to respect those older than us, including our siblings, but I felt I was especially required to show respect to my younger sister too, which made me realise that everyone deserves respect (Chapter Seven). We would never enter a room ahead of one who was older, or

offer an opinion on a topic under discussion unless invited or when the older person had nothing to say (Chapter Seven). Nowadays, though, I find I have to remind my students of these courtesies that we took for granted in our days. All the people I interacted with as I grew up modelled this respect for others: my parents respected their parents and siblings and vice versa (Chapters Four to Eight). In the same way, each member in the collaborative learning situation deserves respect for his/her person, ideas and opinions.

Trust was modelled and practised as we grew up. My first memory of this in action was of the game we used to play with *Tat'omkhulu's* truck tyres (Chapter Five). I only realised just how dangerous this game could be when I watched the movie *e'Lollipop* whose setting is the mountainous terrain of Lesotho. Two boys played this game on a steep decline and one boy, Tshepo, pushed Jannie in the tyre which rolled away out of control down the mountainside. Jannie was so badly injured that he had to be flown to an American hospital for treatment. There has to be a lot of trust between you and the person pushing the tyre. I do not remember any of us ever landing among thorns or in the dam – trust breeds loyalty.

My parents expected their parents, siblings, our cousins, and friends to interact with us, hence we went on extended family trips to visit them (Chapters Four to Six). One example of this interaction was how Mama and *Ncinci* collaboratively grew us (Chapter Five). They also expected us, as their children, to get on well with one another as we played and worked together. In this way, they demonstrated that they valued family unity, which begets the values of loyalty and love of collaboration (the latter will be discussed under Guide 4 below). The value of loyalty kept Xoli and me together at boarding school where the one would never allow any of our friends to get away with gossiping to one about the other (Chapter Seven). The value of family unity that tied us together also identified us as *Abantwana bakoDhlula* (The Dhlula Children – Chapter Seven) when we were growing up.

We all learned to promote family unity, but Monde demonstrated it best. A good number of photographs in this document came from her photo albums. She discovered another branch of the Dhlula family in Botswana (where she lived after marrying a *Motsoana* man) and she made sure that contact was established and maintained. That family is now part of the Dhlula social network, and some of our children's generation have even met. For collaborative learning to succeed, platforms such as social learning and communication platforms are very good for keeping up with one another for purposes of learning and connection.

On the other hand, Monde was the one who questioned established norms. She was like a critical friend or ‘reader’ – the one who made you think. For example, she refused to address our father as Daddy and stuck to the Xhosa *Tata*. It was as if she questioned our use of a non-Xhosa form of address when we are Xhosa. She demanded that Daddy wake her up in the mornings and bathe her as though to tell us that Daddy was also our parent and there was nothing wrong with her demand. From Monde, I learnt never to accept things at face value. I will question students who are not behaving the way we agreed on as a class. I also welcome the same from them when they have not understood an assignment, or I had to cancel a class without notifying them in advance. I have found that this sometimes results in me giving moral and emotional support to the students outside the classroom to make them work better in class. Furthermore, I think in any collaborative learning interaction, people who question the *status quo* are important so that the group can reflect on the way they execute their tasks and never take anything for granted.

Educational advancement was another value that was modelled by Daddy, as he studied for his degree through a distance university in South Africa (Chapter Eight), by Mama and the Y, as they promoted adult literacy (Chapter Five), and the encouragement we always received from them whenever we would be going to school or had done really well. My family came to celebrate my achievement of both my first and my Master's degrees, which further cemented the value they put on education (Chapters Nine and Ten). By the same token, whenever I welcome a new cohort of students, the first thing I do is congratulate them on getting to the third year of their programme with the intention of establishing a positive environment. For me, this says that our students come into our school and classrooms with positive values that have been instilled in them as they grew up. Their personal histories are very important in this respect too. Additionally, I always encourage the students in my class to treat one another as siblings which requires loyalty, protection, and respect as members of a ‘family unit’ that is my class. I believe if they feel like members of the same family, then collaborative learning will come easily.

Guide 3: *Umntu ngamnye udalwe ngokwahlukileyo* (We are all created to be unique).
In collaborative learning situations with my students, I need to ensure we all recognise and embrace *ukwahluka kwabantu* (people's uniqueness).

Marking/Guide 3: Seam/Sewing line

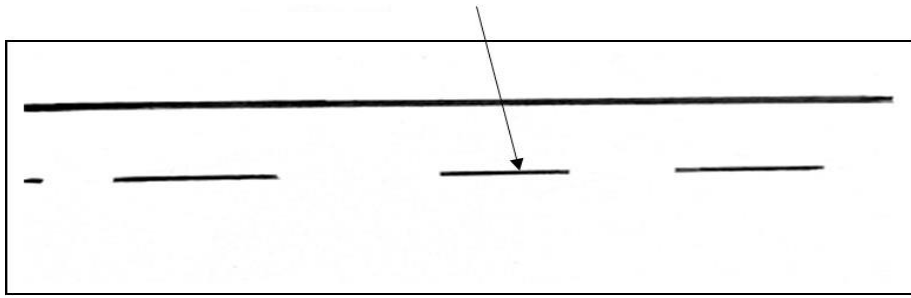


Figure 11.5: Seam/Sewing line (Drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri)

The seam/sewing line is a broken line, usually about 15 millimetres from the edge of the pattern piece, which shows the allowance for the seam over and above the size of the pattern. Seams are used to join the cut pieces together to make the garment. On a single garment, there may be different seams such as the open seam and the French seam. The main point is that whatever seams there may be, they are stitched differently, just like *umntu ngamnye udalwe ngokwahlukileyo* (uniqueness). In the same manner, uniqueness is brought into collaborative learning interactions, and in such situations we need to embrace *ukwahluka kwabantu* (the uniqueness of people) who are part of the collaborative learning class.

We are all different from one another in one way or another. This uniqueness is one of the contributory factors to the success of collaborative learning (Jacobs, Vakalisa & Gawe, 2004) in that members of the group all bring different views and perspectives to the learning process. In the same way the Critical Friends' sessions (Hiralaal et al. 2018; Samaras, 2011) emphasised different viewpoints that helped me learn more intensively as I might otherwise have done from my curated extended photo album (Chapter Three). For me, the foregoing says that we need to embrace those who are different from us, as we can always learn from and with them.

Bhut'Sonwabo was born deaf, but we only realised he was different when we were teenagers and had started interacting with the outside world more (Chapter Seven). Mama and Daddy did not treat him any differently from us, and they took the time to explain things to him just like we did and as they did with us. They modelled how to raise a differently-abled child in a manner that enabled him to live a full life that was not impeded by him feeling deprived. This was my first experience of my parents' modelling of inclusivity. Another example is that any domestic worker was always treated as a member of the family. We even had family photographs taken with them and addressed them as Auntie or *Sisi* (Sister – prefix to an older female person's name) depending on their age. We were expected to give them the same respect that we gave our parents (see Chapter

Seven where I discuss ‘tree time’). As long as there was an adult, we had to cede our seats to them, unlike the time I did not do so over Christmas (Chapter Six). I was teased, but I got the message that my behaviour had been unacceptable.

All the foregoing examples, amongst the many others that I mentioned, have influenced my attitude to those who are different from the majority in my class. In Chapter Ten, I discuss my experience of having openly gay students in my class for the first time. My upbringing had taught me not to treat them in any discriminatory way. What is more, one of these students was the top academic student and the best we had ever had in the programme. In the same chapter, I also discuss the incident of a student who presented traditional objects when the assignment they were working on required them to choose an object or objects that represented their preferred method of learning. She did not receive negative feedback from her peers either.

The foregoing examples also speak to collaborative learning in that, as a teacher educator, I need to emphasise to my student teachers the aspect of inclusivity, which is one of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Assessment CAPS principles and clearly formulated in the school curriculum. If I, as a teacher educator, cannot model acceptance of those with differing abilities, my student teachers are unlikely to learn about inclusivity from me.

Guide 4: I will nurture *Intsebenziswano* (teamwork) among my learners in collaborative learning sessions

Marking/Guide 4: Dart

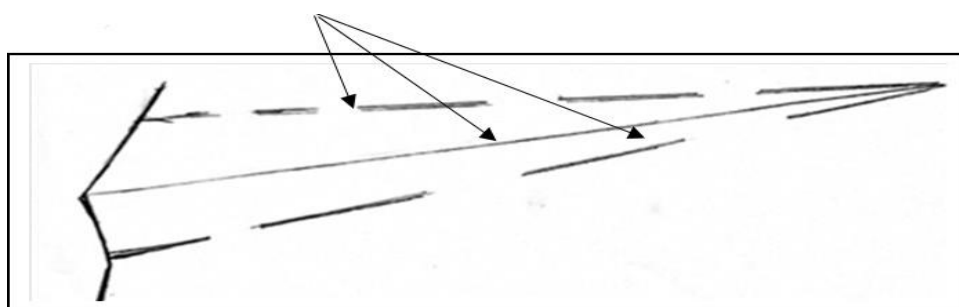


Figure 11.6: A dart (Drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri)

Making a dart is a way to ‘dispose of fullness’, which means a dart is one method of getting rid of excess fabric which then makes the dress fit better, for example around a lady’s bust. Another example of disposing of fullness is the use of pleats. The dart works together with the other processes to making a garment that fits the wearer in a flattering way. This compares with

teamwork, as the parts of the pattern have to work ‘as a team’ to make a dress that fits well. In the same way, each group member in collaborative learning interactions contributes to the teamwork that makes collaborative learning a good way to learn.

From the socio-cultural perspective, students learn better when they jointly make meaning, and thus when they do so collaboratively (Beetham & Sharpe, 2013; Dooly, 2008). From my experience, learning in groups has always worked very well for me. Self-study, by its very nature, is collaborative (Hiralaal et al., 2018; Samaras, 2011), which helped me maintain self-reflectivity which, in turn, greatly contributed to the trustworthiness of my study (Ritter & Hayler, 2019). This guide also links to the concept of *Ubuntu*, where all in the collaborative group contribute to one another’s learning (Dhlula-Moruri et al., 2017). This is also discussed in Chapters One and Two. In Chapter One, I also discuss the different collaborative learning strategies that I applied as I curated the extended photo album to augment my personal history narrative.

Intsebenziswano (teamwork) is when people work together and there is negotiation, discussion, give-and-take, communication, and constructive critique among people with the same goal/s. An example is the sessions that my critical friends and I had. It was explicit that we should listen to one another and make constructive comments or ask constructive questions. Whilst I learnt quite a lot from their probing questions and suggestions, my critical friends might have learned from me too. I also learnt from sitting in on others’ presentations. This is discussed in Chapter Two. In the collaborative learning context involving my students, I always try to ensure that whatever input is made in terms of their presentations or discussions, it must always be positive and constructive in order to create and maintain an environment that enables learning. I also encourage working in groups and making these groups work regardless of the different personalities and places of abode. Some students stay in campus residences that are inside the borders of the institution while others stay outside the institution in university-run residences. Some make use of private accommodation facilities.

There are also times when people will participate unconsciously or inadvertently as they go about their business. One example is that, when we were growing up, we were expected to regard all the adults in our lives as parents too. This principle is encapsulated in most of the personal history chapters (Chapters Four to Ten). During those days, the adults we interacted with seemed to share the same values: unity amongst us, and respect and loyalty which they instilled within us. The ‘village’ collaborated with our parents ‘to grow’ us. In the facilitation of learning and teaching, there are various adults in my students’ lives at the university. Some are lecturers and others are

support staff. We are all concerned and want to ensure that our students progress to the point of becoming qualified teachers. We also generally expect our students to treat us and each other with respect.

When we grew up, we collaborated amongst ourselves to do the house chores (Chapter Four). Mama expected us to clean the house so we negotiated amongst ourselves and devised a roster that we were all comfortable with. Making and maintaining friends at boarding school (Chapter Six) was implicit because we never discussed the process of making friends, but our in-bred sense of loyalty came into play. When an educator allocates groups for collaborative learning, one may group the students into existing friendship groups, or allow the students to group themselves as they wish. For instance, my sister and I valued loyalty to each other over any other characteristics any friend could have. This friendship, or loyalty factor, also applies to the collaborative learning environment. I group my students to learn collaboratively, but most of them do not know the others when they come to university the first time. However, they have to learn to work together for the same goals: liking, trusting and respecting one another. They need to become sub-families within a class full of students.

Sometimes, by working together, we address one another's weaknesses. I made dresses for Monde (Chapter Seven) when she wished for home-made dresses because she could not make them herself. By the same token, when we play-acted the wedding (Chapter Seven), we had a leader in Xoli who took charge and we all worked together utilising our strengths and so enjoyed the wedding. In collaborative learning, the members do not have identical abilities and this element of complementing one another is vital.

Intsebenziswano also emerged strongly whenever we visited our grandparents' homes. At Mayitshe Farm, for example, we knew which of the three Mamas to go to whenever we wanted anything such as food, snacks, or just a chat (Chapter Six). Additionally, there were about 16 children, but *Makhulu* and her daughters-in-law had a way of making sure we were fed, clean, and generally well-behaved. Their teamwork enabled us to learn skills such as stamping mealies and polishing mud floors with cow dung mixed with water, among others. There must have been a lot of collaboration and coordination of the activities that we engaged in as we never complained and were always happy whenever we visited our grandparents (Chapter Six). The lesson that I take from this is that I need to create an environment for my students that will motivate them to look forward to coming to class.

Guide 5: Because I grew and gained *ukuzithemba* (self-confidence) when I received constructive critique and encouragement, I need to nurture my students' *ukuzithemba no ukuzixabisa* (self-confidence and self-esteem).

Marking/Guide 5: Fastening/s

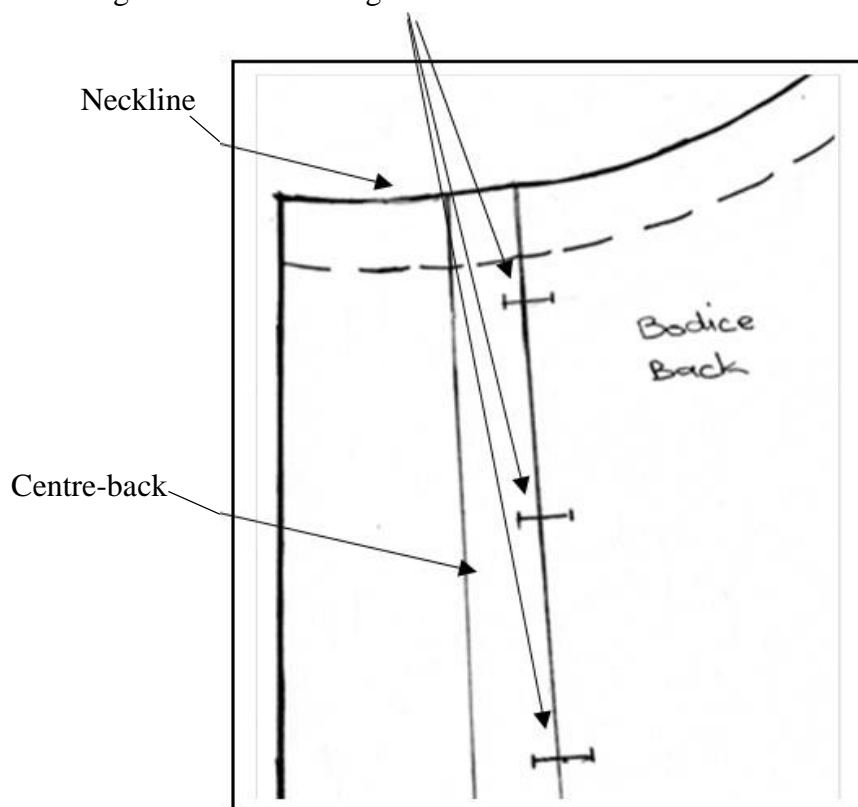


Figure 11.7: Fastener markings

(Drawing by MN Dhlula-Moruri)

One of the final processes to complete a dress is working on the fasteners. To close the back part of the bodice (Figure 11.1), buttonholes will have to be made and buttons attached. This is usually the last process before the hem is stitched. Examples of other fasteners are the zip and press studs. Once the fasteners have been attached, the dressmaker is confident that she will look good in the dress. By the same token, my students need to gain *ukuzithemba no ukuzixabisa* (self-confidence and self-esteem) from the processes of critique and constructive criticism that come with collaborative learning.

As was mentioned earlier, students bring their indigenous and background knowledge to the classroom, and the educator needs to acknowledge and build on this knowledge. Gerdes (1998) reasons that once the educator has recognised and capitalised on students' cultural background in the learning and teaching situation, the students' self-confidence and, I add, self-esteem, is

boosted. Language plays a very important part in this context. The spoken affirmation one receives from one's significant others (family, classmates/peers/colleagues, and educators) also contributes to one's self-confidence and self-esteem (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996). The positive affirmation by one of the other goes a long way to motivate one to do her best and flourish (Chapters One, Four, and Ten). It was their cultural background that gave Theresa and Thenjiwe (Chisanga & Meyiwa, 2019) the confidence and self-esteem to introduce self-study in an institution where they were confronted with a lot of resistance. Theresa was 'everyone's child' (p. 11) where the whole village socialised and ensured she and all the other children in the village went to school. Thenjiwe grew up in an environment where family, both nucleus and extended, collaboratively grew and inspired her to be where she is in life, and this contributed to the person she became.

Mama and Daddy always gave constructive feedback whenever we prepared food well or whenever I made some items on the Singer sewing machine (Chapter Four). When I made something that deserved a compliment, their comments were always offered with pride, such as the time I made the bread and butter pudding and Mama told her friends I had made it. Mama and Daddy always made a positive input whenever I had made myself something pretty to wear (Chapter Four). Daddy boasted about my attainment of my Bachelor's degree (Chapter Five) and *Makhulu* and *Tat'omkhulu* from Mayitshe Farm always complimented us on the cakes we had made for their tea on Sundays after church (Chapter 5).

In the same manner, I need to ensure that my students are motivated enough to participate in classroom activities. They need to know that no one will knock down their ideas but will, instead, give constructive feedback so that they can achieve *ukuzithemba* and *ukuzixabisa* as they prepare themselves to become fully-fledged teachers. I always have to remember Kathleen's question (Chapter Six) about what it was that made us try to see the dancing sun, and build on such motivation.

Therefore:

To conclude this section, I offer the following reflection: The perspectives of social constructivism and socio-cultural theory on learning assisted me in recognising and acknowledging the power of the collective, not only in raising children, but in the classroom and university/school context as well. I also learned the importance of my culture, my upbringing, and my family history as drivers of my learning experiences. This has resulted in my realisation of the helpfulness of these perspectives and my understanding that I should embrace these theories as the foundation of my

educational endeavours in my classroom. What I have learnt has thus enabled me to produce a response my research questions.

11.4 Methodological learning

I feel I need to explain that I only recognised my personal history as a source of learning that could be analysed from a formal scholarly perspective when I engaged in this self-study project and, more particularly, when I curated and reflected on the images in my extended photo album. Therefore, the processes I engaged in to explore my personal history for episodes of collaborative learning and my reflections on the effect of this learning on my teaching practice were new learning experiences for me. However, I see the potential of these processes for my class and I envisage sharing their personal histories in future to see how they learned so that I can use this knowledge to help them to consciously develop their learning styles to become effective teachers.

I learned about self-study as a research methodology when I embarked on this project. Krall (1988) describes ‘good’ research as the kind of research that “should bring deeper meaning into our daily lives without controlling the lives of others” (p. 474). I understand this statement to mean that self-study is *personal*, which is a view that Samaras (2011) also confirms, as it is about the researcher and her own story. In the same way, curating the extended photo album was a process that helped me to reflect on my personal journey. Krall (1988) describes six characteristics that qualify a “biological exposition” (p. 474) as “good research”:

- First, it is “value-based”, meaning that it might be full of biases and a way of speaking that comes from one’s value base, and is then interrogated through discussion and is finally made ready for the public space through “reflection and application” (p. 474). I feel I was able to convey my values without any significant bias. These were discussed in Guide 2 above.
- Secondly, because our stories are exposed to other views that are honest and constructive, personal history “makes us humble” and “saves us from self-absorption” (Krall, 1998, p. 475). My curation of the extended photo album humbled me because I received very constructive feedback from such people as my critical friends and my supervisor as my More Knowledgeable Other, which resulted in this thesis. This aspect was discussed in Chapter Two. I appreciated that my varied friends were all invested in my study and I

valued their inputs as they asked questions and made suggestions, and even consented to me acknowledging their support in this thesis.

- Thirdly, my personal history was explored with my personal contexts – social, historical, economic, political, and gender – in mind. These contexts cannot be ignored as they have all had a bearing on who I have become. My ‘embeddedness’ in these contexts links to the socio-constructivist perspective as well as the socio-cultural theory of learning as discussed in Chapter One. This ‘embeddedness’ is an aspect of self-study that emerged quite extensively in my study, as it is discussed in Chapter One and demonstrated from Chapters Four to Ten. It is again reflected on and summarised in the current chapter under Guide 1 above. I used the personal history self-study method, coined by Samaras, Hicks, and Berger (2004), as I recalled and discussed the times when I learned collaboratively as I was growing up.
- Fourthly, Krall (1998) speaks about our research starting – with interaction with other views and critiques in between – and ending up back where we started with our own experience, but now with a reflective and more objective eye, which is what I did throughout this project as I aligned what other researchers had pronounced with my own research story. This extended photo album followed these steps as there is a definite connecting thread that links all the Chapters One to Eleven.
- Furthermore (point five), Krall (1998) mentions that the way we should write our stories should be poetic and not put the reader to sleep. Such as story should “sing to the world” (p. 476). This is also echoed by Nash (2004) in his advice on how to write in a way that prevents boredom for the reader. By using diverse tools to curate this extended photo album, I was trying to avoid any boredom that the reader might feel.
- In the sixth instance, Krall (1998) argues that our research must “address an abiding and authentic concern”, meaning that it should be unique, fresh, and expressed in a way that makes it stand out. Because our stories are unique to us and “come straight from the heart” (P. 476), they matter. I like to think that my stories are unique because I used my truth when narrating my personal history. Later on in this chapter, I also argue that the extended curated photo album is a first. I also learned how to use arts-based methods to help me better explain some concepts that I expressed. These methods/tools were explained in Chapter Three.

11.6 Original contribution

I curated and hence present my study in the form of an extended photo album. There is some literature on the curated photo album process (Mitchell & Allnut, 2008), Mitchell, MacEntee, Cullinan & Allison, 2019) as well as the use of a photo album (Richards, 2011), but I could not find any on the extended curated photo album. My extended curated photo album does not have the traditional photo album feature of photographs that are stuck onto the album pages. The photobook, like the ones you find in places of interest, has the photographs as part of the text, much like mine are. My extended photo album is, in a way, a cross between the traditional photo album and a photobook, but it is longer, is more complex, and covers a wider scope of content. Furthermore, within the extended curated photo album is a smaller one that was curated collaboratively with my sister. In this process I took my cue from Mitchell and Allnut (2008), Mitchell et al. (2009), and Mitchell and Pithouse-Morgan (2014). Mitchell et al. (2009) further emphasise the importance of context in relation to the photographs one selects, which I took into consideration when I wrote the statements attached to each photograph in both albums. The presentation of an album within a bigger album has the potential of enhancing collaborative learning in my classroom in that the students can go through this exercise to enhance their learning.

My personal history is unique as it relates the way in which Mama and Daddy grew us whilst we lived in a country where Daddy was a first-generation citizen. My extended family represents a conglomerate of nationalities, locations, cultures and languages and I feel that I am thus a true representative of the principles of *Ubuntu* in Southern Africa, much like Chisanga in Chisanga and Meyiwa (2019) was. I am also unique in that I have been able to develop and maintain very good relations with my extended families (Chapters Four to Eight), as I was grown across the international border between Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and South Africa. The cultures and languages I have been exposed to are IsiNdebele and Shona (Zimbabwe), and IsiXhosa and Sesotho (South Africa). I was also extensively exposed to English which, as I indicated in Chapter One, has been the most constant language in my life. Peripherally, I was also exposed to Afrikaans although I never learnt to read or speak it.

I see the uniqueness of my experiences as an advantage in the learning and teaching environment where, in collaborative learning, I can always encourage my students to be aware of and learn from one another's cultural and language experiences. Cultural and language contextual aspects can be applied in class sessions as I should encourage my students to use this platform to broaden their

knowledge of one another which will, in turn, be useful when they go out into the field as teachers where they will have to interact with new colleagues and their learners in the school.

As my values were shaped by my unique personal history, I feel that the application of these values to my professional practice is a contribution that I shall bring to the collaborative learning situation, particularly as I embrace the principles of *Ubuntu* and regard my students as whole beings (Korthagen, 2017) with whom I also need to communicate regarding personal matters when required. I have and will always welcome their requests for a listening ear, advice, and encouragement.

Self-study is collaborative in nature, but in the processes of collecting the photographs and curating the extended photo album, the collaboration that I engaged in with my family and friends was extensive and very profound. As explained in Chapter Two (2.2.2.6), I located almost all the people that I mention in the photo album and requested their consent to use the photographs where they appear and to mention them by name. I used emails, phone calls, WhatsApp messages and, of course, the ethics letters to obtain their consent. Only a couple of people preferred to remain anonymous. These efforts led to the re-establishment of contacts and friendships that had been dormant for years. I thus realise now that I should ensure to keep in touch with my former students for continued collaborative learning, both for their sakes and for mine, and this contact should extend to current and future cohorts of students as I could request them to mentor new teachers.

Having reached the end of this project, I feel I can advise anyone wanting to engage in self-study research. One important piece of advice will be that he/she should have a mind that is wide open to new experiences. The process of curating such an extensive photo album took its own route, and I became the follower as the process unfolded. I initially never anticipated using the methods that I finally engaged in, as I never thought of myself as creative enough to engage in arts-based methods. I shall also advise future students on the importance of the journaling process.

11.7 Conclusion

This chapter, which concludes the study thesis, was essentially a reflection on and sharing of my learning. It concludes my elucidation of what I learnt based on the extended curated photo album and my self-study thesis. I started by highlighting the main points that emerged in each chapter and expounded on my learning about collaborative learning. These reflections are concluded with

five metaphoric guidelines that were devised by re-reading and reflecting on the data that emerged in the foregoing chapters of my personal and professional learning. Following this, I shared aspects of my methodological, conceptual and theoretical learning that was relevant as the framework for and drivers of this study. I then highlighted what I felt was the original knowledge that I brought to self-study methodology with reference to my practice and the application of collaborative learning. Finally, I suggested guidelines that future students could consider should they choose to conduct self-study projects.

What I learnt is that self-study drives one to generate knowledge and share one's research with the aim of contributing to knowledge that already exists (Pithouse et al., 2009; Samaras, 2011). This implies that conducting research of any nature is useless unless it is shared with other people, such as I did by involving my critical friends, my family, my colleagues, other researchers, and my students. In the natural sciences, for instance, the publication of peer reviewed academic articles is highly recommended for acknowledgement. Furthermore, knowledge that is generated or gained could be varied. It could be for "investigating and developing new knowledge about teaching", or it could be about "improving programs and schools" or institutions (Samaras, 2011, p. 82). In my case, I aimed to improve my professional practice so that the teachers whose education I impact should enter the teaching profession as the best that they can be.

What I take away from the process of curating this extended photo album (my unique thesis) is my understanding that I opened myself to new experiences so that I could learn about collaborative learning through self-study. This process elicited my learning of how to articulate my ideas in a nurturing environment and to embrace the importance of communication and the co-construction of knowledge. I engaged enthusiastically in an arts-based research method but had never considered myself to be artistic in any way. I met with a community of researchers whose mission was that we all needed to embrace one another so that we would all succeed – this was the epitome of the collaborative nature of the self-study research methodology. I also had fun sharing my memories with my peers and family, and this helped to rekindle relationships that had become neglected. Therefore, to do justice to a self-study project, one should not focus on the calendar, but on the processes of learning. Patiently exploring the processes of self-study and reflective analysis needs to be executed with due diligence as only then will one obtain the best answers to one's research questions, as I believe I did. This study has given added direction to my life and I shall make sure that my students emerge from my classroom with a sense of pride, direction, belonging and, above all, excitement for the future.

To conclude my reasons for choosing a self-study project, I present an excerpt of what I said at a session involving Kathleen's PhD students:

Mandisa: *I ... think that if I had not found self-study I don't know if I would be doing a PhD. I would have given up long ago – that feeling of isolation – that feeling of wanting to know about everybody else. When are you going to know about yourself? I think that, at some point in your life, you do need to get into yourself so that you can bring out what is within you. Everybody's life has got something that other people can learn from. Something that you can also learn about yourself. So that you can look back and say, "OK, I took a pause and did a self-study and because of that I realised certain things about myself, and therefore realised that the direction I was going in life was not quite what I wanted."*

(From a discussion with Kathleen's PhD students on 29 September 2017)

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APPENDIX ONE: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



22 April 2015

Mrs Mandisa Nonceba Dhlula-Moruri 217583273
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Dhlula-Moruri

Protocol reference number: HSS/0282/015D

Project title: Exploring collaborative learning: A university educator's self-study

Expedited Approval

In response to your application dated 07 April 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted FULL APPROVAL.

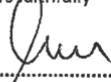
Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

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

Yours faithfully


.....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Dr Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan and Professor Theresa Chisaga

cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Morojele

cc School Administrator: Ms B Bhengu, Ms T Khumalo & Mr S Mthembu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

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Founding Campus

Edgewood

Howard College

Medical School

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APPENDIX TWO: TURNITIN REPORT

Turnitin Originality Report

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Exploring collaborative learning: A university
educator's self-study. By Mandisa N Dhlula-Moruri

CHAPTER ONE: INTSHAYELELO (INTRODUCTION) 1.1 Introduction This thesis presents the self-study project that I conducted to explore my personal and professional history of collaborative learning and my understanding of how I could apply my new knowledge in a tertiary teacher education context. I start by looking back into my personal history to explore the times and events when I learned collaboratively. The focus was on my personal life while growing up as well as on my professional career. When growing up, I spent time with members of different branches of my family in different settings. I embraced the challenges of lifelong learning and heeded my calling to be a teacher and a teacher educator at a college of education and a university. Referring to both the latter settings, I utilised opportunities to reflect on my experiences of collaborative learning and the lessons I had learned about this type of learning and about myself during the various stages of my development in the context of teaching and learning. At present, I am a university educator involved in preservice teacher education. I couched my study thesis in a visual arts-based format using an extended curated photo album. Weber and Mitchell (2004) aver that illustrations, performances and photographs are some examples of visual arts-based ways of presenting information. This form of research is receiving increasing attention as it is used in reflective studies such as memory-work in self-study endeavours. I used photographs to assist me on my journey back to my history, but they also helped me to paint mental pictures as I engaged in memory recall and reflective work during the study. Mitchell and Weber (1999) aptly explain this journey when they state: "...photographs can play a very important role in framing our sense of the past and shaping the course of our future" (p. 74), which is what the photographs also meant to me. Richards (2011) mentions the use of a photo book which, in this digital era, I understand to be an electronic presentation with brief information about each photograph, much in the style that tourism agencies compile their flyers to highlight places of interest. I compiled an extended curated photo album electronically and therefore it comes across as a mix of photographic images and discourse (or explanation). For lack of a more appropriate word, I use the term photo album because 'photo' refers literally to the photographs being used while 'album' denotes the extended nature of the project. Moreover, this curated photo album is not only extensive, but it is quite complex due to the nature of the information about the photographs which would not have been possible to present in an ordinary curated photo album.

https://www.turnitin.com/newreport_classic.asp?lang=en_us&oid=1346748278&ft=1&bypass_cv=1

APPENDIX THREE: EDITOR'S DECLARATION

lindac@skytec.co.za | 083 344 0706



SARS Income Tax No. 9249355208; CC Founding Statement No. CK94/16841/23 SARS; Tax Clearance Certificate No. 1994/016841/23
SACE REGISTRATION NUMBER: N.D. COERTZE – 1082433 (2003)

DECLARATION OF PROOF-READING

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, Nicolina D. Coertze, declare that I meticulously perused the manuscript referred to below for language editing purposes. I identified and corrected linguistic and stylistic inaccuracies to the best of my knowledge and ability. Using the *Word Tracking* system, I kept track of any changes that I made for consideration and review by the author if so required. I also offered annotations as recommendations to the author and supervisor for review of areas that I considered might need additional attention in terms of the logical flow of language. I declare that I adhered to the general principles that guide the work of a language editor and that I remained within my brief as had been agreed with the author of the manuscript.

Details

TITLE	Exploring collaborative learning: A university educator's self-study
SURNAME	DHLULA-MORIRI
FULL NAMES	<u>Mandisa-Nonceba</u>
PROPOSED QUALIFICATION	PhD
DEPARTMENT	Department of Education – Teacher Development Studies
TERTIARY INSTITUTION	UKZN
NAME OF SUPERVISOR	<u>Prof. Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan</u>
REFERENCING STYLE	APA

Respectfully submitted on: 19 JUNE 2020

(MRS) N.D. COERTZE
LANGUAGE EDITOR

APPENDIX FOUR: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER TO STUDENTS

P. O. Box 1212
Mthatha
5099

Dear Year 3 students

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR MY STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

My name is Mandisa N Dhlula-Moruri and I am a PhD student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa. I am conducting a self-study about exploring collaborative learning through self-study of a university educator's practice. The research objectives are:

1. To investigate what I can learn about collaborative learning from my personal history.
2. To find out what I can learn about collaborative learning from my professional practice

To gather information for my study, I am requesting that you fully participate in the collaborative learning sessions that I shall be implementing in some of our class sessions for data generation purposes, some of which shall be audio-recorded. For some of the sessions, I shall also invite my critical friend, a colleague who I shall be working with throughout my study. He will assist me in analysing the data I shall have generated from these sessions. As you can see from my second objective above, I intend learning about collaborative learning from my classroom practice and, without you as my students, there can be no classroom practice. I shall also request your honest and critical assessment of these sessions for evaluation and analysis. Because I have identified 4 forms of collaborative learning, I shall record a minimum of 4 lessons, one per collaborative learning strategy, and will ask for critique and analysis from the same.

I am hoping that we shall all feel free to express any feelings of discomfort, and to work through them, throughout the process.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your input will not be attributed to you in person.
- Your name will not be revealed in the PhD thesis or any research publications or presentations.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalised for taking such an action.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- I will share the findings of the study with you by meeting with you and sharing the findings that will emanate from this study for your final input.

I can be contacted at: Office B211; Email: mandisadhula.moruri@yahoo.co.uk; Tel: 0475011410/0725809678

My supervisor is Dr Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan who is located in Education Studies on Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Email: Pithousemorgan@ukzn.ac.za; Tel: 031 260 3460.

The contact person in the Research Office is Ms Phumelele Ximba who is located on the Westville campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Email: XIMBAP@ukzn.ac.za ; Tel: 031 260 3587.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

(Ms) Mandisa N Dhlula-Moruri

DECLARATION

I (Full name of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project: *Exploring collaborative learning: A university educator's self-study*

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-recorded class sessions

YES / NO

Use of my class work

YES / NO

NAME OF PARTICIPANT	SIGNATURE

DATE:

APPENDIX FIVE

P. O. Box 1212
Mthatha
5099

Dear Critical Friend

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR CRITICAL FRIEND (COLLEAGUE)

My name is Mandisa N Dhlula-Moruri and I am a PhD student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa. I am conducting a self-study about exploring collaborative learning through a self-study of a university educator's perspective. The research objectives are:

1. To investigate what I can learn about collaborative learning from my personal history.
2. To find out what I can learn about collaborative learning from my classroom practice

To gather information for my study, I am requesting as follows:

- a) That you be my critical friend in this study.
- b) We shall work both individually and together throughout my study if you agree to my request. As my critical friend, I shall expect you to meet with me occasionally for me to share whatever step I shall take in the study, and for you to listen with a critical ear, and help me organize thoughts, analyse data with a view to affirming views and/or adding value in the form of bringing in your own views about the data. I am hoping we will work together to compile the Developmental self-study portfolio of evidence. This will be where all the data gathered, transcripts of our discussions and notes made by you and me, among others, will be assembled. I shall also ask for your presence in some of my lessons for spot-on assessment of the classroom activities. I expect that our meetings should not take much longer than 30 minutes at the most, and that the data generation stage should not last longer than 3 months. We shall work out the frequency of our meetings, the duration and format of these sessions. Then after that the final interpretation and analysis, the write-up of the thesis, sharing with the other participants and finalising everything should be the next logical steps.

I am hoping that both of us will feel free to state any feelings of discomfort, and to work through them, throughout the process

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your input will not be attributed to you in person unless your consent is sought and granted by you
- Your name will not be revealed in the PhD thesis or any research publications or presentations without your consent.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of ~~this~~ research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalised for taking such an action.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- I will share the findings of the study with you by meeting with you and sharing the findings that will emanate from this study.

I can be contacted at: Email: mandisadhlula.moruri@yahoo.co.uk Tel: 0475011410/0725809678

My supervisor is Dr Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan who is located in Education Studies on Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Email: Pithousemorgan@ukzn.ac.za; Tel: 031 260 3460.

The contact person in the Research Office is Ms Phumelele Ximba who is located on the Westville campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Email: XIMBAP@ukzn.ac.za ; Tel: 031 260 3587.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

(Ms) Mandisa N Dhlula-Moruri

DECLARATION

I..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project: *Exploring collaborative learning: A university educator's self-study*

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record critical friend discussions YES / NO

NAME OF PARTICIPANT	SIGNATURE

DATE:

APPENDIX SIX: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER TO CRITICAL FRIENDS

P. O. Box 1212
Mthatha
5099

Dear Critical Friends

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER FOR CRITICAL FRIEND (COHORT)

My name is Mandisa N Dhlula-Moruri and I am a PhD student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa. I am conducting a self-study about exploring collaborative learning through a self-study of a university educator's perspective. The research objectives are:

1. To investigate what I can learn about collaborative learning from my personal history.
2. To find out what I can learn about the collaborative learning from my classroom practice

To gather information for my study, I am requesting as follows:

- c) That you, my cohort, be my critical friends in this study. As you know self-study is collaborative in nature (Pithouse, 2004; Samaras, 2011), therefore your voice will be vital for my study.
- d) We shall work together throughout my study if you agree to my request. As my critical friends group, I shall expect that, at different stages of my study, when we meet for our cohort meetings you will listen to my presentation on my study and give constructive critique of my work. I am also hoping that you will ask questions that will lead to a trustworthy, valid and credible study at the end (Feldman, 2003), I shall record our sessions, with your permission, so that I can ensure as accurate a record as possible. I am hoping that I shall make presentations at different stages so that the analysis of the study can be ongoing throughout.

I am hoping that we shall all feel free to state any feelings of discomfort, and to work through them, throughout the process.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your input will not be attributed to you in person unless your consent is sought and granted by you.
- Your name will not be revealed in the PhD thesis or any research publications or presentations without your consent.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalised for taking such an action.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- I will share the findings of the study with you by meeting with you and sharing the findings that will emanate from this study.

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Thank you for your contribution to this research.

(Ms) Mandisa N Dhlula-Moruri

DECLARATION

I..... (Full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project: *Exploring collaborative learning: A university educator's self-study*

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record critical friend discussions YES / NO

NAME OF PARTICIPANT	SIGNATURE

DATE: