

BAYAKHULUMA KANINGI¹:
THE INFLUENCE OF OWN TEACHERS ON THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF
BEGINNER TEACHERS

By
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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

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¹ “They often say”/ “many voices talking repeatedly”/ “voices often mentioning” (isiZulu)

DEDICATION(S)

First layer: The Genetic Inscription

I dedicate this thesis to the Voice:

I am not known for always choosing the safest path. I have made mistakes, jumped to soon and did not contemplate the consequences. The voices in my mind were all sounding the same and the mental cacophony drowned out the symphony. I assumed every voice I heard was my own - that was not true. The way teachers talk to their children becomes part of their inner voice. But I've learned something important along the way: I've learned there is a God part in me and in you. The Consciousness. The pure Self. I learnt to listen the voice of that Power.

At the core of your heart, your voice is perfect and pure. No one and nothing can alter that. You alone could make my song take flight. You helped me make the music of the night. I did not make it anyway. I made it this far because I could never un-hear your Voice.

(Adapted from other voices)

*

Second layer: The Underwriting

I dedicate this thesis to my parents. Dad, who gave me the gift of a dream, and Mam who told me to go for gold. I am because of you.

I dedicate this thesis to Johan Woest, who taught me that a problem only remains a problem until you broke it down into its smallest molecules.

WORD OF THANKS

To Professor Saloshna Vandeyar, this thesis would not have existed without you. You believed in me when it felt like few others did. You believed in me when I did not. You were the perfect mentor for someone like myself. You taught me commitment, resilience and professionalism. In my mind, you are one of the giants whose shoulders young researchers can stand on. And count on. Thank you for never letting me go.

My brothers and housemates, Nelius and Marko, you were and are the wind beneath my wings. You are the two most special human beings God had created with whom to complete this journey and enrich my life. I learn from you every single day. Thank you for always protecting me fiercely, at times even against myself. Thank you for being my safety nets.

I am highly grateful to all my friends and colleagues. I would like to write a whole chapter specifically thanking each of you by name. Thank you for numerous late night coffees to entertain moments of perceived brilliance or panic attacks. You may not realise how much spending time with you and your children, being invited to events no matter how many times I declined, your messages no matter how long I took to reply or treating me “normally” in a time when I had felt like an alien, meant to me.

To all participants in my story, thank you for taking the time to share your stories with me. Thank you for your honesty and the sharing of powerful emotions and vivid memories. I treasured and protected you throughout our story. Your stories are now part of the written history of the world.

I will act out of character if I do not acknowledge my six animals whose behaviour have closely been linked to my every mood throughout this process. I thank God for my furry children who have been my only company through so many late nights and lonely days.

Thank you Almighty God.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

Full names of student Yolandi Woest

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Declaration

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3. I have not used work previously produced by another student or any other person to hand in as my own.
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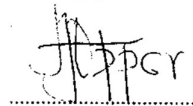
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*BAYAKHULUMA KANINGI: THE INFLUENCE OF OWN TEACHERS ON THE
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF BEGINNER TEACHERS*

by

Ms Yolandi Woest

Sincerely yours



FJ OPPER

15 March 2016

ABSTRACT

Utilising a qualitative methodology approach and a case study research design this study set out to explore the influence of ‘own teachers’ on beginner teacher professional identities. The research design borrowed from the idea of a palimpsest, (Diamond & Mullen, 1999). Data comprised a mix of semi-structured interviews, field notes and a researcher journal. Ten participants, representative of four different racial groups in South Africa were included. Data was analysed by means of the thematic content analysis method. This study contributed to the body of knowledge on beginner teachers’ professional identity on two levels. The first level pertains to the methodological contribution of this study in terms of the interrelatedness with which particular methodological constructs were applied. The second level of contribution involves four novel theoretical findings that came to the fore in this study. First, findings showed how participants (beginner teachers) connected with fictional characters from various types of media and substitute those characters as role models in the place of ‘real’ own teachers or teacher-like figures. Second, participants drew on positive experiences with own teachers that guided them through the navigation of several socio-political challenges stemming from the Apartheids era. Third, positive own teachers served as beacons of hope, strength and resilience. Examples of past teachers unfolded as the driving force behind attitudes displayed by participants, of embracing diversity and sensitivity towards differences between themselves, their learners and colleagues. Fourth, positive own teachers served as beacons of hope, strength and resilience. The fifth, and most complex finding, illustrated the ways in which participants constructed their emerging professional identities around what they perceived as the qualities of the ‘ideal’ teacher. ‘Levels of cautiousness’ surfaced as key to the professional identity of beginner teachers in terms of the influence of their own teachers. It was found that beginner teachers approached their professional identity on a continuum of ‘caution’ with regard to certain aspects including reflection, classroom discipline, the influence of own teachers as well as the awareness of the role of own teachers. This study showed a close link between participants’ self-knowledge, perceptions of their personalities, their inherent communicative traits and their progress on this ‘continuum of caution’.

KEY CONCEPTS

Beginner teachers

Own teachers

Influence

Professional identity

Palimpsest

South Africa

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication.....	ii
Word of thanks.....	iii
Declaration of originality	iv
Declaration of the language editor	v
Abstract	vi
Key concepts.....	vii
Ethical clearance certificate.....	viii
Table of contents	ix
Tables.....	xiv
Figures	xv
Foreword	xvi
Chapter 1: Orientation to the study	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background context.....	3
1.3 Rationale for the study.....	6
1.4 Research questions	10
1.4.1 Primary research question:	10
1.4.2 Secondary research questions:.....	10
1.5 Locating myself within the study	10
1.6 Conceptual framework.....	11
1.7 Overview of research methodology.....	12
1.8 Research assumptions.....	15
1.9 Quality measures	15
1.10 Ethical considerations.....	17
1.11 Limitations of the study	17
1.12 Clarification of concepts	18
1.13 Outline of chapters.....	20
1.14 Chapter summary.....	21
Chapter 2: Literature review.....	23
2.1 Introduction.....	23
2.2 The concept of teacher professional identity	23
2.2.1 Personal and professional identities.....	24

2.2.2	Multiple identities	26
2.2.3	Tenses of the self: past, present and future selves	27
2.2.4	Contextualised selves	28
2.2.5	Teacher identity	29
2.3	The dual nature of the literature review	31
2.4	Professional identity construction as a function of personal identity construction	32
2.4.1	A timeframe for identity construction.....	33
2.4.2	Context: Family and socio-political issues.....	34
2.4.3	Relationships and emotions.....	36
2.4.4	Agency	37
2.4.5	Reflection	39
2.4.6	Teacher modelling/role modelling.....	40
2.5	The role of own teachers in the professional identity of beginner teachers.....	41
2.5.1	International landscape: The role of own teachers	42
2.5.2	South African scenario: The role of own teachers.....	44
2.6	Summary of findings	46
2.6.1	Professional identity.....	47
2.6.2	Beginner teachers.....	48
2.6.3	Own teachers and bonding	48
2.6.4	Contextual factors	49
2.6.5	Literature review: Conclusion	49
2.7	Conceptual framework: Palimpsest of a paradigm, theory and model.....	50
2.7.1	The Communi-biological paradigm: The first layer	51
2.7.2	The Possible Selves theory: The second layer.....	53
2.7.3	McCroskey's Instructional Communication model: The final layer	55
2.7.4	Pulling the conceptual threads together: The final palimpsest.....	57
2.8	Conclusion	59
Chapter 3: Research strategy		60
3.1	Introduction	60
3.2	Role of the researcher	61
3.2.1	My role as 'reader/writer-researcher'	61
3.2.2	My role as 'woman-researcher'	62
3.2.3	My role as 'researcher-in-society'	63
3.2.4	My role as 'mindful observer' – researcher	64

3.2.5	My role as post-modernist researcher	66
3.3	Paradigmatic perspectives.....	71
3.3.1	Meta-theoretical paradigm	72
3.3.2	Methodological paradigm: A qualitative approach	77
3.4	Research design and methodology	81
3.4.1	An integrated research design.....	81
3.4.2	Selection of participants	86
3.4.3	Data collection	90
3.4.4	Data documentation	96
3.4.5	Data analysis and interpretation.....	100
3.5	Ethical considerations.....	102
3.5.1	Informed consent and voluntary participation.....	102
3.5.2	Beneficence: Confidentiality, anonymity and protection of participants...	103
3.5.3	Relationship of trust between researcher and participant	103
3.6	Quality criteria.....	105
3.6.1	Trustworthiness.....	106
3.6.2	Credibility.....	108
3.6.3	Transferability.....	110
3.6.4	Dependability.....	111
3.6.5	Confirmability.....	112
3.6.6	Authenticity	112
3.7	Conclusion	113
Chapter 4: Findings of the study		114
4.1	Introduction	114
4.2	Selection realisation: My impressions of the characters.....	115
4.2.1	An intertextual discourse with Salvador Dali's Paranoiac Critical method.....	115
4.2.2	The characters (participants) in this study.....	116
4.3	Explanation of the order of themes and categories	128
4.4	Internal influences exerted on beginner teachers	131
4.4.1	Overview of the role of family	131
4.4.2	Exchanging places I: The substitutive nature of family and own teachers.....	134
4.4.3	Exchanging places II: Intertextual influences substituting own teachers ..	135
4.5	Contemporary external influences exerted on the beginner teacher	137

4.5.1	The navigation of socio-political issues	137
4.5.2	Own teachers guiding beginner teachers in the South African school context	141
4.6	Developing a professional identity in the current teaching context	146
4.6.1	The teaching environment as a contextual influence	146
4.6.2	Classroom discipline defining the emerging professional self.....	149
4.6.3	Reflection as tool of disentanglement.....	151
4.7	Negotiating a professional identity through Possible Selves: The Present Self....	154
4.7.1	Self-knowledge and perceptions of personality.....	155
4.7.2	The cautiously emerging self.....	157
4.7.3	The core self in survival mode	160
4.8	The past self: Towards forming a professional identity by remembering the past.....	162
4.8.1	Memories of the early years	162
4.8.2	Remembering resilience during times of hardship	163
4.9	Towards a future self through emulating the ‘ideal’ teacher	167
4.9.1	Ideal teacher: A moral and balanced person.....	167
4.9.2	Optimistic beginner teachers: Towards the horizon	169
4.10	Own teachers as primary influence on the professional identity of beginner teachers	171
4.10.1	Negative experiences involving own teachers.....	171
4.10.2	Positive experiences involving own teachers	175
4.11	Realisation of own teachers	178
4.11.1	Communicative behaviour of own teachers	178
4.11.2	Awareness and significance own teachers	181
4.12	Conclusion	185
Chapter 5: Discussion and analysis of findings.....		187
5.1	Introduction	187
5.2	A description of the complexity of this chapter	187
5.3	Findings echoing the literature.....	189
5.3.1	Beginner teachers in contextual spaces.....	189
5.3.2	Navigation of possible professional selves	196
5.3.3	Own teachers as primary influence on beginner teachers’ professional identity.....	200
5.4	Differences	204
5.5	Areas of silence in this study	207

5.5.1	Challenges faced by beginner teachers	207
5.6	Generation of new knowledge.....	208
5.6.1	“Izingqimba entsha”: A new palimpsest of methods.....	209
5.6.2	“Eqanjiwe”: Own teachers substituted by fictional ‘teachers’	211
5.6.3	“Othisha bangisekela”: Own teachers as beacons of hope and resilience.....	211
5.6.4	“Othisha siqu eziqondisayo”: Own teachers guiding levels of cautiousness of an emerging professional identity	215
5.7	Conclusion	218
Chapter 6: Conclusion, recommendations and limitations		220
6.1	Introduction.....	220
6.2	Summary of emerging themes and findings	220
6.2.1	Beginner teachers in contextual spaces.....	220
6.2.2	Navigating professional identities according to possible selves	223
6.2.3	Own teachers as primary influence on beginner teachers’ professional identity.....	224
6.2.4	A palimpsest of novel findings.....	225
6.3	Limitations of the study	226
6.4	Significance of the study.....	226
6.5	Revisiting research assumptions	228
6.6	Recommendations	230
6.6.1	Recommendations for future research	230
6.6.2	Recommendations for practice and future training and development	232
6.7	Conclusion	233
References.....		236
Appendix A: Interview protocol.....		259
Appendix B: Informed consent letters.....		260
Appendix C: List of interview transcripts.....		264
Appendix D: Extract from researcher’s diary		265
Appendix E: LIST of Appendices stored on CD-ROM as audit trail		267

TABLES

Table 3.1: Hallmarks of a case study as implemented in this study (Adapted from Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995:316)	85
Table 3.2: Participants in the study.....	88
Table 3.3: Data collection methods, instruments and recording of data.....	92
Table 3.4: Ethical guidelines included during the research process (APA, 2010; Creswell, 2012 & 2013; Lincoln, 2009; Mertens & Ginsberg, 2009).....	105
Table 3.5: Lincoln and Guba's (2000) suggestion of quality constructs as opposed to those employed in quantitative research.....	107
Table 4.1: Emerging themes and categories.....	130

FIGURES

Figure 3.1: Own palimpsest I (2013)	69
Figure 3.2: Own palimpsest II (2015)	70
Figure 3.3: Core characteristics of feminist research employed in this study (Adapted from Neuman, 1997)	77
Figure 3.4: Core characteristics of a qualitative methodological paradigm (Adapted from Cresswell, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Mostyn, 1985)	78
Figure 4.1: Enigmatic Elements in a Landscape (1934)	117
Figure 4.2: Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee around a Pomegranate a Second before Awakening (1944)	118
Figure 4.3: The Three Sphinxes of Bikini (1947)	119
Figure 4.4: Galatea of the Spheres (1952)	120
Figure 4.5: The Persistence of Memory (1931)	122
Figure 4.6: The Metamorphosis of Narcissus (1937)	123
Figure 4.7: Geopolitical Child Watching the Birth of the New Man (1943)	124
Figure 4.8: The Anthropomorphic Cabinet (1936)	125
Figure 4.9: The Great Paranoiac (1936)	126
Figure 4.10: Visions of Eternity (1936/37)	127
Figure 4.11: Palimpsest of clustered themes	129
Figure 4.12: Own palimpsest III (2015)	185
Figure 5.1: Own palimpsest IV (2016)	218

FOREWORD

Dear reader

As I am writing this, I wonder who you are. You can be anyone. We all are anyone and everyone. I have been talking to you in my mind throughout this whole enchanted journey; you were always there, just beyond the reach of my perception. You were with me all the time – I wrote this for you. I wrote you a story. Like yours, my story contains characters, and events that evolve around them. When you read my story, you read a text and you become the text. I wrote the story; therefore, I too am part of it. This story had to be written for a purpose, but also in such a way that you could be part of it. That is why I will be talking to you throughout the text. Some people share the intimate details of their lives with anyone who is prepared to listen, or pretends to listen. I am not one of them. I decide whether someone deserves to hear my story and share different details with different people at different times. You are worthy of this story, in which many intimate details of the lives of others and my own will be disclosed. I shared with you as many of the details as possible, and as accurately as I could, because I wanted this story to make the difference it was supposed to make from the onset and answers the significant questions posed in this text. I now introduce myself to you as well as two other central characters who were part of my story by presenting three thought moments. You will encounter more thought moments throughout the text; these are the personal thoughts which I recorded in my researcher's diary and share with you. You will meet all the other characters later.

Thought moment I

About the researcher:

I am.

“Similarities with my reality has been fictionalised and dramatized. Those who project themselves or others in this story, do not understand the rules of fiction”.

“Writers are dangerous when they tell the truth. Writers are also dangerous when they tell lies.” Is this an autobiographical study? No, not at all, and yes, of course.

About the Others:

You must know about the Others. The Others are all the others who taught me, influenced me, shaped and guided me. Through their written words. I am them too. C is one of them; her dissertation guided me. She once said to me: “Welcome out of the academic closet.” I liked that.

Research diary, 2012

Thought moment II

About S:

She is important because she was there all along. I chose her and she chose me. She is significant because I could really talk only to her about the unfolding of the story during the writing process. She was vital because she was different from me on all possible levels and didn't mind sharing it with me. She never judged me and believed in me when the Voice did not. I liked that.

Research diary, 2013

Thought moment III

The Voice was my own teacher, my Socrates. I can tell you she is female. That is important to me. This story started long before the Voice through other voices, but I only realised this after the Voice had ignited the writing of it. The Voice made me write it. And then, strangely, it wrote itself.

Research diary, 2012

CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Evidence of the complexity of student-teacher or ‘beginner teacher’- ‘older teacher’ relationships can be seen throughout history, from as early as the fourth century. One of the oldest and best known is the relationship between the great philosopher Socrates (399-470) and his student Plato (427-347). The philosophical ideas of this great teacher and his student were so closely linked that it is difficult to distinguish between them in their famous work *Dialogs* (Boeree, 2009). When Socrates was sentenced to death and ordered to drink a poisonous mixture, he did this in the presence of his students. Plato describes this event in his *Apology* (Boeree, 2009). Imagine the devastating effect this experience must have had on his young, impressionable students. More importantly: Why did Socrates choose to allow his students to witness this sad event? We do not know the answer to this question, but it might be assumed that his choice was influenced by the nature of his relationship with his students.

It seems safe to say that Socrates’ influence on Plato had been so strong that his death led to a radical change in the course of this student’s life: After Socrates’ death, Plato distractedly wandered around Greece and the Mediterranean and had to be rescued by his friends from the hands of pirates (Boeree, 2009). This clearly indicates that the nature of their relationship was so intense that it shook Plato’s being to the core; he had become a different person while being taught by Socrates, and his teacher’s death again changed him as a person. Plato was described as Socrates’ “prized student”, (Boeree, 2009:25) and it is evident that they shared an exceptional bond. Plato continued this kind of relationship with his own student Aristoteles; although they held different opinions on many subjects, Aristotle was referred to as Plato’s “prized student” (Boeree: 2009:25). It seems as if Plato had an intrinsic inclination towards relationships of this kind. It was as if being part of a student-teacher relationship was his driving force.

The matter of teachers having a profound influence on their learners is still relevant in today’s society. Anecdotes, stories, cartoons, sketches, jokes and a variety of other forms of media pertaining to the influence of good, inspirational and motivational as well as ‘bad’ teachers on learners are readily available on numerous websites and blogs and evident throughout the entire global communication village. Though the influence of past teachers is consistently discussed

in various scientific disciplines and non-scientific circles, the beginner teacher is of specific importance in the educational arena. Researchers are interested in the reasons for individuals choosing the profession, teacher retention and attrition and the lived experiences of student teachers entering the teaching profession for the first time, (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Le Maistre & Pare, 2010). In this study, two educational role players are central: past/own teachers and beginner teachers. The core of this study is the exploration of the dynamic connection and interaction between these two parties and how the effects thereof influence the professional identity of beginner teachers. Many studies have been conducted on the difficulties faced by teachers during their early years of practice (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Le Maistre & Pare, 2010). Beginner teachers are overwhelmed by a multitude of new challenges during their early years of practice. Kelchtermans and Ballet (2002:110) write about “praxis shock”, which refers to the contrast between teachers’ expectations and classroom realities. The reality shock and contradictory emotions experienced by beginner teachers as they take on their roles as school teachers are highlighted by several researchers in the field, (Billet & Somerville, 2004; Day, 2008). In the majority of cases emotional discomfort arises because of the dissonance between personal idealistic expectations, perceptions and beliefs and classroom realities, (Keys, 2007; Parkison, 2008). Furthermore, despite their lack of experience, beginner teachers are expected to assume the same duties as more experienced teachers (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013). They also have to adapt to a new social environment and fit into a teaching community.

In addition, beginner teachers experience emotions of isolation and in many cases, experience not only the lack of institutional support but they also have perceptions of hostility from management and more experienced colleagues, (Flores & Day 2006, Whitelaw 2007). These negative experiences could generate negative emotions in the transition process from student teacher to beginner teacher. Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013:120) adds another challenge by pointing out that the first years of teaching “generally severely challenge teachers’ former beliefs about teaching and themselves”. Research agrees that these dilemmas may be fixed by attempting to reinterpret beginner teachers’ own values and experiences “in light of the powerful socializing forces of the school culture”, (Day, 1999:59) and outside the school environment, (Hellsten & Prytula, 2010). Above all, beginner teachers are expected to be able to control their classes, teach subject matter that is often far removed from what they have been taught during their teacher training, ensure that their learners obtain good results and are expected to take on numerous extra-curricular duties. Additionally, and in contrast with experienced colleagues, beginner teachers are challenged by setting appropriate expectations for students (Reynolds,

1992) and adapting curricular materials suitable for groups of diverse learners, (Schram, Feiman-Nemser, & Ball, 1989). The reality is that once newly qualified teachers start teaching, they experience teaching ‘from the other side’ for the first time. They were probably exposed to ‘real-life’ teaching only during teaching practice or in-service programmes, which take place in artificial environments and only prepare student teachers to a limited extent for the real world of teaching. Beginner teachers are also often "operating from very simple conceptions of teaching and ... 'unelaborated schemas about children'" (Westerman, 1991:302). It is only when student teachers have been appointed as beginner educators and become part of a school system, that they really experience teaching as a *profession* and themselves as *professionals*. Experiencing the teaching world from the ‘other side’ or ‘inside’ as a *professional* creates uncertainty about everything beginner teachers have always believed about teaching. This uncertain state implies the blossoming professional identities of beginner teachers to be in a state of “professional vulnerability”, (Danielewicz, 2001:85). The demands placed on beginner teachers contribute to the fact that in most cases they only ‘try to survive’ during their first years of practice.

Amidst all these challenges, research has shown that beginner teachers utilize a variety of coping strategies to handle difficulties in various ways. Furthermore, their professional identities and the construction thereof are influenced by a myriad of factors, many of which have been described by existing literature. This study focuses on one such influence, namely the role of own teachers and memories of the influence of own teachers. This particular influence has not yet been extensively described by existing research in the field of beginner teachers’ professional identity. Accordingly, this study asks the question: how do own teachers influence the professional identity of beginner teachers? In the section that follows, I describe the specific South African context in which this study was conducted.

1.2 Background context

This study is important in terms of the unique South African context in which it was conducted. Ben-Peretz (2011:9) points out that the majority of studies concerning teacher knowledge involve people from Western cultures and calls for more studies that include participants from other cultures so as to provide a “different view of teacher knowledge”. The need for cross-cultural studies of teacher cognition is also emphasised by Breen *et al.* (2001) and Borg (2003). According to Borg (2003:499), cross-cultural studies are essential in order to “better understand

factors shaping teaching practice”. The South African context in which this study is situated is rich in diversity and I purposefully chose participants from four different racial groups in South Africa who were taught by a diverse group of teachers. I also included fragments from other languages (than my mother tongue) to indicate that the diversity spans beyond colour or race and ties in with identity.

The educational backgrounds of participants’ own teachers differed vastly, since they were educated during the Apartheids-regime, thus in a segregated society. Some of these completed their schooling and/or teacher training in previously disadvantaged schools/teacher training colleges. After conducting a review of existing literature, I concluded that the role of own teachers has not yet been comprehensively researched in a South African context across diverse socio-cultural backgrounds as a key influence on the professional identity of beginner teachers. I chose to focus on race as the main distinguishing factor between participants, since it is still a controversial issue in South Africa and the schooling of own teachers were based on racial differences. However, I do take into account the numerous other variables that distinguish individuals from each other. The employment of the life history method was particularly suitable to allow this.

Jung and Lee (2004:146) state that “identity is regarded as a cultural and historical product of constant negotiation processes influenced by specific social and cultural contexts”. The focus of this study is on professional identity which cannot be considered in isolation. It is therefore important to highlight certain relevant aspects regarding the socio-political climate during the time of the study as well as historical socio-political influences. The ages of participants in the study, categorize them as part of the so-called born-free generation. According to the 2015 report of the South African Institute of Race Relations (IRR), the ‘born frees’ are “children and youths born in the post-Apartheid era, that is, after the handover of power by the National Party (NP) to the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994”. However, this study has broadened this definition to include everyone born in or after 1990. This inclusion is significant to the study in the sense that it accounts for aspects of the political environments in which participants had grown up which came to the fore during interviews. Although most of the participants were too young to remember much about the Apartheid² system, the rippling effect of Apartheid was

² Apartheid, a system of racial segregation, was imposed by the National Party from 1948 to 1994 and left the majority of Black, Coloured, Indian and biracial South Africans legally and economically powerless, (Posel, 2001; Laster, 2007).

revealed in their narratives and all were strongly influenced by the Apartheid system on their parents or had experienced the effects thereof in the South African school system. The born-frees have been described as “mainly a political category” (IRR Report, 2015) and as “post-racial” (Sithole, 2014). Although born-frees are largely free of the constraints of the Apartheid regime and do have political rights, they still face difficulties such as poor education and a high unemployment rate. Participants as born-frees also experienced a number of changes in the South African school curriculum. After the fall of the Apartheid regime, several policy changes were implemented one after the other, all of which had affected the participants, who had been of school age at the time. The study deals with the participants’ memories of own teachers during their schooling years and tertiary education up to when they became beginner teachers.

The South African schooling system has seen several changes since 1994. First, changes in the redistribution of decision-making power implied that nineteen racially, ethnically and regionally divided departments of education were changed to a single national department, administratively managed by nine provincial subsystems and elected school governing bodies, (Booyse & Le Roux, 2010:51). These changes implied non-discriminatory school environments and equal access to education as opposed to the former stance of segregated access where racial integration was not allowed and basic education became a constitutional right to all South African citizens (Booyse & Le Roux, 2010:51). No more admission tests were allowed and admission may not be refused if parents were unable to pay school fees. Financial changes were also implemented, changing from a system of unequal distribution to financial policies allowing for assistance to the neediest sections of the school system, school nutrition schemes and transport subsidies (Booyse & Le Roux, 2010:52). The changes which probably had the largest effect on own teachers and the born frees pertain to the introduction and implementation of several curricula in a relatively short period of time. To improve the general quality of education, Curriculum 2005 was introduced in 1997 and was associated with social justice, human rights, equity and development, learner centeredness, and learning facilitation (Booyse & Le Roux, 2010, p. 52). This amendment implied that there were no more different curricula for different races as with the earlier Bantu Education Act, (Booyse & Le Roux, 2010:52). In 2004, the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) was introduced which had as aim strong conceptual knowledge and critical awareness of the social, moral, economic and ethical issues in SA. The implementation of the RNCS attempted to address skills shortages in South Africa and the subjects Life Orientation, Mathematics and two languages became compulsory (Booyse & Le Roux, 2010:52). Finally, in 2012, a comprehensive Curriculum and

Assessment Policy (CAPS) was introduced and implemented, an improved implementation of the RNCS. This document replaced subject statements, learning programme guidelines and subject assessment guidelines in Grades R-12, (Booyse & Le Roux, 2010, p. 52).

These curriculum changes took place in less than approximately fifteen years, a fact that made the working conditions of teachers employed during this time, extremely difficult. The curriculum changes that took place were implemented in such a way that there may have been as much as three different curricula simultaneously implemented in one school. Thus, several teachers had to adhere to the guidelines of, in some cases, up to three different curricula when teaching different grades. This was also the time when the participants of this study attended school. In this study, the teachers teaching during this period (own teachers) as well as the beginner teachers (Born frees) are under the loop and curriculum changes influenced both parties to a large extent. In the next section I validate my reasons for embarking on this specific study (rationale).

1.3 Rationale for the study

This study is of personal and professional importance to me. My professional duties at an institution of higher education include the preparation of student teachers for professional teaching contexts and a career in teaching. In my earlier position as a teacher, I also acted as a mentor teacher for several Education students. I often meet former students who have begun teaching and all of them confess that they are overwhelmed by the challenges of their new environments. The identity of the beginner teacher has always been of special interest to me – probably because I had struggled immensely as a beginner teacher.

I included *thought moments* throughout the study, which appear in text boxes, in which I ‘talk’ to the reader and shared my most personal thoughts and impressions throughout this journey. The following thought moments serve not only as an introduction to the concept of thought moments, but also as an introduction to significant ‘characters’ in the study; some of my own teachers who were the driving force behind this study. I reflected on this in my researcher’s diary at the time when plans for this study were beginning to take form in my mind, illustrated in the following thought moment.

Thought moment 1.1

2001:

I thought the very first few months of my teaching career had been going well, mainly because I was not aware of the fact that I was completely behind with an enormous marking load. Soon I was feeling the pressure and I had trouble maintaining class discipline. I recall one day that I was truly tired and bravely trying to explain grammatical structures to a rowdy class of Grade 8s. Suddenly I heard (or thought I heard), as clear as day, the voice of Ms Elven: “Never stand with your back to a class, my baby; they are only children, babes, remember how you were at that age,” and “Don’t be scared to change horses in midstream, just do it and hang in there”. I did change horses in midstream: I took the class outside and read from their prescribed book, while they were lying on their backs searching for the shapes of the different characters in the clouds. Ms Elven had been my lecturer for the module Methodology of English the previous year and had inspired in me a passion for teaching. That day I realised that I have, in fact, been listening to her voice for a while; that her voice was the part of my teaching self to which I reverted when I faced difficulties. She was my favourite teacher.

Research diary, 2012

My own teachers had such an enormous influence on my development as a teacher that my teacher identity would have been very different if I had never encountered any of them. Listening to my own teachers’ voices and watching their behaviour not only shaped my teacher identity, but also significantly affected all aspects of my teaching career: involvement with parents, classroom practice, literally my inclusive teaching self. I tried to remember my first ‘teaching influence’ and through these memories discovered ‘teacher-like figures’. I specifically remember one such influence:

Thought moment 1.2

1983:

During that summer, I turned 5 years old and Sarah was my role model: I wanted to do everything she did. Sarah was the woman who helped my mother with housework. My brother was born during that summer, more or less at the same time Sarah's first child was born, so we both had 'babies'. Sarah used to carry her baby on her back in a blanket folded and tied into a very intricate knot across her stomach. Since I was not allowed to carry my baby brother on my back, Sarah would tie my favourite teddy bear into a blanket on my back with the same knot across my stomach each morning. Then we would start doing the 'housework'. Sarah taught me all sorts of things: she taught me colours and numbers when we did the dishes, shapes when we did the washing, and how to write my name in the dust (using my fingers) before she swept the porch. That year (1984) my aunt decided that for Christmas she would make each cousin a cushion cover with their favourite TV characters embroidered on the front. I chose an image of Sarah. I could not understand why I had to choose someone else, and why we were only allowed to choose White characters. Sarah was my favourite teacher.

Research diary, 2013

However, not all own teachers have a distinctly positive influence on their learners. Some beginner teachers had experienced extremely destructive behaviour by their own teachers. There are educators who teach a subject they like, but who totally deny the influences of their own teachers because of painful or negative experiences. I have encountered many learners and teacher who had been negatively influenced by own teachers, even to the extent that it had led them to change the course of their careers. I wrote about one such teacher in my researcher's diary:

Thought moment 1.3

Mr Tatum loved to tell his pupils stories. He could read a story in such a way that she (his pupil) could see the events and characters and always wanted to hear more. He allowed them to sit on their desks and listen while he was reading. He would read about worlds and people they did not know existed. The stories he read opened up amazing possibilities. He always told his pupils that they could become any of the exquisite characters in his stories. He believed in his pupils and presented his characters truthfully. Sometimes he would ask them to read individually next to his desk and award marks for reading. She always received the highest mark. She so enjoyed his classes that the first time Mr Tatum's hand crept up her school uniform she did not think it could in any way be wrong. Mr Tatum would never do anything wrong. She was eleven years old at the time. He was her favourite teacher.

Research diary, 2013

People like Ms Elven, Sarah and Mr Tatum could have been role-players in the life of any teacher, teaching any subject at any given time. The common characteristic of all these characters are that they were remembered, in a negative or positive way. Would the girl in Mr. Tatum's class ever consider a career in teaching? Beginner teachers remember their own teachers and, more specifically, their *significant* own teachers. All beginner teachers were once young learners and were taught by different teachers. This implies that all beginner teachers had more or less twelve years of exposure to their own teachers' different teaching styles, behaviour and actions. Individuals who had chosen teaching as a profession experienced an additional four to five years of exposure to teachers at the tertiary level.

I can remember several outstanding individuals who taught me during my school and tertiary education, and some of them will never be forgotten. What puzzles me though, is why I will never forget them. What was it about them that made them forever reside in the back of my mind? Why do I remember specific characteristics of certain teachers and not of others? Every single person I have ever met and questioned about their own teachers had a 'teacher story', regardless of whether or not they had chosen to follow a teaching profession. However, what is more important than figuring out why we remember certain things about teachers, is to determine how memories of their own teachers influence the professional identities of beginner teachers. Subsequently, broadening our knowledge on beginner teachers' professional identity, may inform educational policy and practitioners. A deeper understanding of one of the influences on beginner teacher professional identity, may aid teacher educators in designing all-embracing and suitable teacher educator programmes to prepare beginner teachers for the profession.

In the previous sections, I described the purpose of this study in the form of an introduction. I highlighted the unique background against which this study was placed and described my rationale for choosing not only this specific field of study, but also for the focus on specific research questions in this field. The research questions are illustrated in the next section.

1.4 Research questions

The primary and secondary research questions were formulated as:

1.4.1 Primary research question:

How do own teachers influence the professional identity of beginner teachers?

1.4.2 Secondary research questions:

1. What are the influences on the emerging professional identities of beginner teachers throughout their educational careers?
2. How do beginner teachers navigate their own emerging professional selves during the early years of teaching?
3. How do the communicative behaviour of own teachers alter the professional identities of beginner teachers?

1.5 Locating myself within the study

My interest in this topic not only stemmed from a personal interest, but also manifested as a professional interest influenced by my own professional environment where my core duty is to prepare student teachers for the reality of the teaching profession. Working in this field, sensitized me to the needs of beginner teachers and in particular those criteria that cause some to leave the profession and others who seem determined by an ‘unseen’ force to not leave the profession. This is in line with the view of Butler-Kisber, (2010) who posed that qualitative research is mainly borne from personal experiences.

My own transition from an educator at a secondary school to a lecturer at a tertiary institution further fuelled this interest. While I was teaching, I experienced the constant changes to the curriculum and could observe first-hand the effects of these changes on educators. When I started my career at a tertiary institution and came into contact with other tertiary institutions, I became acutely aware of the discrepancy between ‘real-life’ teaching and teacher training programmes offered at universities. My own interest in the topic, my experiences as beginner

teacher and professional experiences in schools and a tertiary institution cannot be isolated from the research process. It was thus challenging to separate my own biases and beliefs when conducting this study. However, the fact that I was intensely aware of the ‘close’ nature of the study to my personal experiences, resulted in a deeper consciousness and mindfulness during this study. I was extremely sensitive towards my own possible biases and pre-conceived ideas about teaching. My research diary aided this process and I was able to enrich this study with verbatim extracts from the researcher’s diary presented in the thought moments. The role of my research diary is comprehensively described in Chapter 3, (3.4.4.1) I suspect I may have been less sensitive towards biases and prejudice had the study not been of such a personal nature. I clarify my role as researcher comprehensively in Chapter 3 as a palimpsest of different personas: as ‘reader/writer-researcher’, ‘woman-researcher’, ‘researcher-in-society’, ‘mindful-observer-researcher’ and finally as post-modernist researcher, (cf. Chapter 3, 3.2).

1.6 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this study was constructed by following a multidisciplinary approach (Jabareen, 2009) and extending the metaphor of the palimpsest. I presented the conceptual framework as a nested palimpsest including a paradigm, theory and model, namely the Communi-biological paradigm of James McCroskey (2001), the Possible Selves theory of Marcus and Nurius (1986) and McCroskey’s model of instructional communication (2004). The conceptual framework presents a “post-modern, hybridized and split” construct (Diamond & Mullen, 1999:101), in other words, a nested conceptual framework (cf. Chapter 2, 2.7). Despite the fact that the conceptual framework is an uneven construct that changes its form in varying contexts (Jabareen, 2009), all the concepts fit together, stem from the primary research question and account for the findings of the study.

The first layer of the palimpsest conceptual framework entails the Communi-biological paradigm of James McCroskey (2001). I purposefully chose this paradigm as first layer to signify the ‘deepest’ or ‘unchangeable’ inscription. This paradigm describes how the particular behavioural communicative characteristics of individuals are genetic and cannot be ‘learned’ or ‘unlearned’, (McCroskey, 2001). The second layer of the conceptual framework consists of the Possible Selves theory, introduced by Marcus and Nurius, (1986). Participants were able to express their professional development in terms of past, present and future selves, involving the influence of own teachers and memories of own teachers. This theory enabled me to align

findings pertaining to the ‘tenses’ of the possible professional selves displayed by beginner teachers during their early years of practice. The final layer of the conceptual framework comprises of the McCroskey’s model of instructional communication, (2004). This model consists of six components of which four were relevant to the conceptual framework including the instructional environment, teachers, teachers’ verbal and non-verbal (communicative) behaviour and learners’ perceptions of the teacher. The experiences of beginner teachers with own teachers could be aligned against this model, since the biggest influences exerted on beginner teachers took place in the instructional environment, in this case, the classroom. The palimpsest conceptual framework is comprehensively explained in Chapter 2 (2.7) in terms of the background and application to this study.

1.7 Overview of research methodology

The research methodology was constructed in line with the metaphorical thread of the palimpsest, which is extended throughout this study. Several aspects of the research methodology were presented on different levels in accordance with the palimpsest metaphor. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the research methodology, which is discussed in great detail. The section below contains a brief description of the research methodology.

A post-modern writing style

I locate myself as post-modernist researcher in terms of the writing style of this study (cf. Chapter 3, 3.2.5) and employed the concept of intertexts throughout the text. I further presented this study as a “post-modern hybridized or split text” (Diamond & Mullen, 1999:24) taking on the form of a palimpsest which runs through the whole study as extended metaphor. I discuss the post-modern writing style and the palimpsest metaphor comprehensively in Chapter 3, 3.2.5.

Meta-theoretical paradigm

In Chapter 3, I discussed the paradigmatic choices on which this study was built and which included the ontological (nature and reality of being and what can be known about it) and epistemological stances (nature of the relationship between the researcher and what can be learned) (Terreblanche & Durrheim, 1999). The meta-theoretical paradigm consists of a palimpsest of interrelated layers. The first layer categorises the meta-theoretical paradigm of this study, first as a tenet of interpretive social science, and second as a blend of constructivist

and interpretivist approaches, including interpretive social science. Several characteristics of these paradigms were suitable for this study. First, interpretive and constructivist paradigms allowed for true meaning to be discovered through a comprehensive analysis of text (Neuman, 1997); second, individuals and their meaning-making of their worlds (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) are at the centre of these paradigms; third, research was conducted in particular surroundings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967); fourth, emerging data reflects the meanings and resolutions of participants; and fifth, the paradigms endorsed not only the unique reality of individuals, but also how it is compared to other or more realities. This was essential for this study, since participants' narratives were embedded in *different* realities, as determined by their different races. Tenets of postmodernism and feminism meta-theoretical paradigms represent the second layer of the palimpsest. A post-modernist stance allowed me the freedom to write the text in an intertextual style to explore the construction and deconstruction of the participants' realities. A feminist meta-theoretical paradigm was suitable in the sense that it included mindfulness (Olsen, 1994), multiple research techniques, memory-work (Haug, 1997), and aspects of trust, interconnectedness and mutual obligation (Neuman, 1997).

Methodological paradigm

I employed a qualitative methodological approach (Creswell, 2007), mainly because of the story-like and narrative nature of the study (Uitto, 2011). The idiographic and emic nature (Shenton, 2004) of a methodological paradigm was particularly well suited to this study in which data emerged from an individualised focus on a small sample of individuals (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, qualitative research centres on an attempt to understand individuals and their experiences, thoughts, perceptions and emotions, which was the focal point of this study (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Berg, 2007; Creswell, 2007).

Research design

The research design comprised of three different designs presented as three layers of a palimpsest, namely *narrative inquiry*, *life history* and *case study* research designs. First, narrative inquiry proved valuable since it was the stories of participants that were explored. Narrative inquiry (Andrews, Squire & Tambokou, 2008; Trahar, 2009) was beneficial as it resonated with the post-modern approach and allowed me to infuse the study with stories of my own and other literary texts. Second, tenets of the life history research design were purposefully employed and enabled me to collect valuable data regarding the influences on

participants' professional identity from an early age and during different developmental stages. Third, the research design displayed some characteristics of a *case study* design because of its strong link to the personality of the researcher, which is a characteristic of case study design that is particularly well suited to the approach of this study. Case study research allowed the researcher's engagement in each case, which contributed to its validity as part of the threefold research design.

Participant selection

I employed purposive sampling, which is regarded as a core characteristic of qualitative research (Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Cohen, *et al.*, 2011) which allowed me to select participants who fitted the particular selection criteria (Gray, Williamson, Karp & Dalphin, 2007). I further used maximum variation sampling (Terreblanche, Durheim & Painter, 2006) to find participants who could provide a comprehensive variety of data from different racial backgrounds (Terreblanche, Durheim & Painter, 2006). As a result of challenges encountered in identifying suitable participants (cf. Chapter 3, 3.4.2.3.), I also employed snowball sampling (Babbie, 2008; Baltar & Brunet, 2012; Cohen *et al.*, 2011). Five male and five female participants who represented four different racial groups (Black, Coloured, Indian and White) and had a maximum of five years' teaching experience were included in the study.

Data collection and documentation

I chose semi-structured narrative interviews as the main data-collection method. This allowed participants to freely share their feelings, experiences and memories (Flick, 2006; Kvale, 2007; Riesman, 2003). I made field notes and kept a reflexive researcher's diary in which I dealt with my own biases, thoughts and impressions during interviews. I also made audio recordings, and thereafter verbatim transcriptions, of the interviews. Table 3.4 (Chapter 3) provides a comprehensive overview of the data-collection methods, instruments and recording of data used.

Data analysis

I employed thematic content analysis as my method of data analysis for four reasons: first, the unobtrusiveness of this technique tied in with my feminist stance (Krippendorff, 2004); second, thematic content analysis allows for replicable extrapolations from other texts (Krippendorff,

2004); third, this method focuses on language and linguistic features (Mayring, 2004); and fourth, Cohen's suggestion that re-analysis and replication is possible (Cohen *et al.*, 2007).

1.8 Research assumptions

Assumption 1:

Beginner teachers face many challenges when starting their teaching careers which leaves their professional identities in a state of vulnerability and open to influences, (Varah et al, 1984; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Le Maistre & Pare, 2010)

Assumption 2:

Beginner teachers draw on memories of their own teachers to navigate their professional identities in their new professional environments. (Vuorikoski, 2001; Rogers, 2002; Britzman, 2003; Rogers & Fuller; 2007, Ticknor, 2010)

Assumption 3:

Memories of own teachers' communicative behaviour in the classroom has a major influence in the way beginner teachers perceive teachers positively or negatively, and influence their own classroom behaviour and professional identities as beginner teachers. (Danielewicz, 2001, McCroskey, 2001; 2004; Uitto, 2011;2012)

1.9 Quality measures

The quality criteria applied to ensure the validity of this study are discussed in depth in Chapter three. The question "To what extent can we trust this study?" is answered by including a discussion of the quality measures applied in this study, namely trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity. Trustworthiness is warranted when the findings in a qualitative study reflect the meanings described by the participants (Lietz *et al.*, 2006) and overarches all other criteria. Next I provide a brief synopsis of aspects of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity to explain how the trustworthiness of this study was ensured.

Although *trustworthiness* and *credibility* are used interchangeably by several authors (Shenton, 2004; Morrow, 2005), I distinguish between these two concepts by using trustworthiness as an

all-encompassing term for quality measures in the study. The aims of credibility are discussed by different authors as “the study was conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject has been accurately identified and described” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delpont, 2011:419); comprehensive reporting on processes and interaction with adequate depth to illustrate the convolution of cases (Toma, 2006); and meticulous and methodical reporting of data, correlation between the data and the emerging analysis and thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973). Credibility can be obtained by way of several methods, such as co-analysis, debriefing with peers (Shenton, 2004) and member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I employed these methods by frequently engaging in debriefing and co-analysis sessions with my supervisor and peers and by performing member checking.

Transferability refers to the extent to which findings can be applied successfully to other contexts or groups (Toma, 2006). As the primary researcher for this study, I established transferability by including rich and thick descriptions (Seale, 1999; Lincoln & Guba, 2005) and providing appropriate and abundant information about participants’ historical and current contexts, as well as their wider surroundings and influences on their lives (Firestone, 1993).

Dependability deals with the consistency of a study (Gasson, 2004). I ensured dependability in this study through extensive reporting of the details of the study and by including excerpts from my researcher’s diary in the form of thought moments dispersed throughout the study (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, I included a transparent audit trail by storing electronic and original copies of all audio recordings, transcriptions, field notes, my researcher’s diary and all other relevant material pertaining to the study.

Confirmability entails the processes used by the researcher to deal with biases, prejudice and subjectivity (Patton, 2002a; Lincoln & Guba, 2003; Gasson, 2004; Toma, 2006). I addressed confirmability by dealing with biases, prejudice and subjectivity in my researcher’s diary and included thought moments in the text in which I discussed these by way of reflective commentary.

Authenticity ensures an honest depiction of the lived experiences of participants in the study (Neuman, 2006). I used qualitative research methods and suitable paradigms to truthfully relate participants’ narratives of real experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2006). I took care to understand the meaning of their utterances precisely by paraphrasing my understanding and checking it with them during interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). I further kept an extensive audit trail

as proof of my understanding, capturing and accurate reporting of the data (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

1.10 Ethical considerations

In this study, I considered the ethical aspects of reflexivity, mutual respect, sensitivity and empathy, and the protection of participants (Chege & Sakurai, 2011), as well as the four philosophical principles suggested by Beauchamp and Childress (2001), which include autonomy and respect for the dignity of people, non-maleficence, beneficence and justice.

Each participant received a letter in which the purpose of the study was outlined (Beauchamp & Childress, 2001; Mack, Woodson, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). All the participants took part in the study voluntarily. I also emphasised again during interviews that they could withdraw at any time during the study without any adverse consequences and assured them that all the information shared would remain confidential. I protected the privacy of participants by using pseudonyms for them and for their own teachers. I did not include any personal information regarding their current teaching positions or phone numbers in the consent letters. Due to the nature of this research, fundamental rights of individuals, such as their right to respect, trust, sensitivity and integrity, were employed throughout the research process (Ryan, 2010). No harm was done to participants and I took care to make sure that they felt comfortable during the interviews (Ryan, 2004).

1.11 Limitations of the study

Demographically, this study was limited to the Gauteng province in South Africa. It was thus placed in a specific context which did not include other South African provinces where more diversity may have been evident. Different languages are spoken in different provinces in South Africa, and ethnic groups are also usually more concentrated in specific areas. This study did not include a wider area which may result in limited findings. Participants were representative of four South African races (Black, Coloured, Indian, White) and were all beginner teachers with less than five years' experience. Although the research sample included racial diversity, it still implies that only two participants of each race participated in this study. Although, the possibility that generic findings may be applied to other contexts does indeed exist, it should be conducted mindfully and with the particular and unique context of this study in mind.

1.12 Clarification of concepts

In the following section I will clarify the key concepts used in this study to avoid confusion and illustrate the specific meaning of terms as they are used in this study, and only for the purpose of this study.

Identity, self, the core self and personality

Researchers concerned with identity work have used different terms to refer to identity or the notion of the ‘self’. From various literature sources on identity, it became evident that ‘identity’ and ‘self’ are interchangeably used to refer to the same concept (Danielewicz, 2001; Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Sutherland *et al.*, 2010). Beijaard *et al.* (2004:124) note that it “remains unclear how exactly the concepts of ‘identity’ and ‘self’ are related”. Brewer (1991), Phinney (2007) and Schwartz *et al.* (2006) define personal identity as those characteristics that differentiate one individual from others and focus on the question ‘Who am I?’ which denotes the individual’s goals, values, beliefs and world view (cf. Chapter 2). For the purpose of this study, I chose to use the concepts identity, the self, the core self and personality interchangeably to refer to the core being of an individual, thus the set of characteristics that sets one person apart from others.

Professional identity and teacher professional identity

Teacher professional identity is recognised as an independent theoretical concept leaning on tenets from educational, psychological and sociological paradigms of teaching (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000). In existing literature, authors distinguish between teacher identity, professional identity (of teachers) and teacher professional identity. For the purpose of this study, I extended Fitzgerald’s (1993:3) view of identity to include professional identity as “*the academic metaphor for self-in-context*” (italics in original). Because this study explores the identity of teachers, I use the terms professional identity, teacher identity and professional teacher identity interchangeably.

Influence

Influence can broadly be described as an aspect or person with the ability to have an effect on the character, development, or behaviour of an individual. For the purpose of this study, the

influence of own teachers includes their holistic personas, in other words, *all* the physical and psychological aspects perceived by participants throughout their entire schooling and tertiary careers. Other influences, apart from own teachers, have also been discussed in this study. Therefore, ‘influence’ in this study pertains to all the aspects (specifically those of own teachers) that had an effect on beginner teachers’ thoughts, beliefs, actions, reactions, communicative behaviour, experiences and perceptions of experiences.

Own teachers and teacher-like figures

For the purpose of this study, ‘own teachers’ refer to those teachers who had an influence on participants at any given time throughout their school and tertiary careers. Typically, these are teachers with whom participants had contact in the instructional communicative setting, namely the classroom. The core characteristic of own teachers is their influences on professional identity, regardless of the nature of the influences. Another important characteristic is that own teachers stood out in the memories of participants. Participants had been in contact with several teachers during their school and tertiary careers of approximately sixteen years, but for some reason only chose to share memories of certain teachers. In this study, I also refer to the own teacher’s voice which relates to the memory of being influenced in some way by a specific teacher. Reference is also made to teacher-like figures. This concept refers to family members or any other individual who had taken on the role of own teachers at any point during participants’ years at school or tertiary institutions and includes mentor teachers during their early years of teaching.

Beginner teachers

The term ‘beginner’ teachers refers to the teachers whose professional teacher identities are explored in this study. For the scope of this study, beginner teachers are those who have between one and five years’ teaching experience. Beginner teachers may also be referred to as learners when they relate memories from their time as *learners* during their school years.

Racial differentiation

In this study, I differentiate between four different races in South Africa. I use the terms Black, Coloured, Indian and White grudgingly³ (because of its negative social connotations in terms

³ I acknowledge my supervisor’s use of this expression and use it with her permission.

of racial discrimination) to distinguish between participants on the basis of their racial identification. However, I purposefully collected data based on race, together with other selection criteria, to explore possible diverse findings across races. For the purpose of this study, I consider race as a social construct, and not “as an indicator of absolute, ‘pure’ strains of genetic material or physical characteristics” (Francis, 2008:112). I also use the terms Black, Coloured, Indian and White for differentiation because they are the terms with which South Africans are familiar (Soudien, 2001).

1.13 Outline of chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction and background to the study

In Chapter 1, I locate myself and the reader in the study, and the study in the unique South African context. I describe my post-modern writing style and set the scene for the study to unfold by inviting the reader to participate in the journey. I provide background information relevant to the study in the form of a general overview. Next, I describe my view of my position as researcher and the rationale for my interest in this field of research and the specific study and explain the purpose of the study, as well as possible contributions to the field of beginner teacher identity. I also state the research questions that guided this study and explain the conceptual framework, after which I briefly introduce the research design and provide an overview of my methodological choices and discuss the ethical considerations and quality criteria I followed in this study. I conclude by providing a clarification of the central concepts used in this study.

Chapter 2: Review of existing literature

Chapter 2 provides a succinct review of the existing literature that informed this study. I discuss the dual nature of the literature review unique to this study and review recent literature focused on professional identity and how it is influenced by the own teacher. I present findings on the role of the own teacher from both the South African and a global perspective. I present the palimpsest conceptual framework developed from three constructs, namely the Possible Selves theory of Marcus and Nurius (1986), the Communi-biological paradigm and Instructional Communication model of James McCroskey.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

In Chapter 3 I explain and justify my chosen research design and methodological strategies. I extend the metaphor of the palimpsest by developing a threefold methodological and research design. I explain the methods of data collection, data analysis and data interpretation used in the study. Lastly, I discuss the ethical considerations and quality measures on which I relied.

Chapter 4: Results and literature control of the study

In Chapter 4 I first introduce the participants in the study by using Salvador Dali's Paranoiac Critical method and selected paintings. I then present three clusters of main themes, consisting of seven themes altogether, as well as the correlating categories that emerged from the analysed data. I include direct quotations from narrative interviews with the participants, field notes and entries from my researcher's diary to complement the results.

Chapter 5: Interpretation of the findings

In Chapter 5, the results are related to the literature discussed in Chapter 2. I point out findings that echo findings in the existing literature and those that differ from them. I further discuss the silences perceived in the literature in relation to this study and concepts that emerged from the findings, but about which existing literature is silent. A section regarding the generation of new knowledge is included in this chapter.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by summarising the themes and categories that emerged in this study after which a summary of novel findings is presented. Next, I describe the limitations as well as the significance of the study and revisit research assumptions. I conclude the chapter with recommendations for future training, practice and research with regard to the role of own teachers in the professional identity of beginner teachers.

1.14 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I contextualised the study on three levels by first locating myself in the study, navigating the reader through the study, and describing the study in a contemporary socio-political climate. I then validated my reasons for embarking on this specific study (rationale) by highlighting its purpose and introduced the research questions that had directed the study.

Thereafter, I offered a brief overview of the chosen research design and the conceptual frameworks on which the study was based, clarified my research assumptions and described the quality measures and ethical matters considered in this study. I described the possible limitations of the study and clarified all the concepts relating to it. Finally, I provided a brief summary of each chapter. In the next chapter, I will review the existing literature dealing with own teachers' influence on the professional identity of beginner teachers.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

“I am disillusioned enough to know that no man's opinion on any subject is worth a damn unless backed up with enough genuine information to make him really know what he's talking about.”

~ H.P. Lovecraft ~

2.1 Introduction

As the narrator of my own story, I needed to ensure that I had listened to as many other similar stories as possible. If the same story is told numerous time, it tends to lose its impact and, in some cases, its candour. In this chapter, I will show that although no two or more stories are unerringly identical, there are tangents to many of these stories. I demonstrate that some stories lie closely together, some intersect largely and some stand directly in opposition to others. Most importantly, I set out to place my story, and especially the way I tell it, in its proper position in the body of knowledge on teacher professional identity, with a specific focus on the role of own teachers in the construction of a professional identity by beginner teachers across four different South African cultures. In this chapter I discuss existing literature dealing with the influence of own teachers on the professional teacher identities of beginner teachers and provide an analysis of similar studies undertaken abroad and locally. I point out the similarities and differences between my study and other relevant studies in terms of the focus of their primary research questions and their results. I also provide a summary of findings based on my study of the relevant literature. I propose a conceptual framework, developed from different tenets of theoretical frameworks and communication models against the backdrop of a post-modern writing style, thus extending the metaphor of a palimpsest (described in Chapter 1). James McCroskey's Communi-biological paradigm and instructional model of communication and the rationale for drawing on these constructs to create a conceptual framework are discussed, as well as the alignment between these two constructs and the Possible Selves theory of Marcus and Nurius (1986).

2.2 The concept of teacher professional identity

The construction of a teacher professional identity is a messy process. Teachers all around the globe have tried for many ages to define the concept of teacher professional identity. Bullough

(1997) and Bullough and Gitlin (2001) state that attention to identity has been emphasised as a crucial element in teacher education. One of the reasons why it is so difficult to accurately define the term teacher identity is its close link to identity. Teacher professional identity cannot be examined without a close look at the concept of identity. The majority of identity and identity-related theories stem from the same very fundamental question: “Who am I?” (Brewer, 1991; Phinney, 2007; Schwartz *et al.*, 2006). Identity theories attempt to explain a state of being, and specifically a state of being as perceived by an individual (Olsen, 2008). One reason for the existence of several identity theories is that identity has been examined over different periods, in different circumstances, by different researchers in different countries and from a variety of different angles. The results of a study of teacher identity conducted in post-World War II Germany in the late 1940s would have differed vastly from the results of similar studies undertaken in post-Apartheid South Africa decades later. Yet the same concept or the same tenets of teacher identity will have been examined in both cases. In the following section, I discuss the concept of teacher professional identity by focusing on identity as an overarching concept that funnels into a focused discussion of teacher identity. This section forms the backdrop for the section on the different ways in which beginner teachers construct their professional teacher identities, other influences on their professional identities and, finally, the influence of own teachers on their professional identities.

In the section that follows, I will illuminate the ideas of researchers involved in the examination of identity by first distinguishing between personal and professional identities. This will be followed by a discussion of the compound nature (multiplicity) of identity. I will then address the ‘tenses’ of the self, consider the self in various contexts (contextualised selves) and finally provide an overview of teacher identity as a tenet of professional identity.

2.2.1 Personal and professional identities

Identity as the overarching concept is central to this study. However, two identities are at play: those of beginner teachers and those of their own teachers. Rogers and Scott (2008) maintain that current conceptions of identity consist of four basic assumptions: (1) that identity is dependent upon and formed within multiple *contexts* that bring social, cultural, political and historical forces to bear upon that formation; (2) that identity is formed in *relationship* with others and involves *emotions*; (3) that identity is *shifting, unstable and multiple* in nature; and (4) that identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through *stories* over

time. I frame the discussion of identity and teacher identity against the backdrop of these assumptions.

Personal identity (those characteristics that distinguish one individual from others) focuses on the question “Who am I” and denotes the goals, values, beliefs and world view held by an individual (Brewer, 1991; Schwartz, Montgomery & Briones, 2006; Phinney, 2007). Beauchamp and Thomas (2011) underline the links between the concepts identity, the self and agency by stating that identity combines both a personal and professional element. Erikson (1959) emphasises the importance of a personal and social identity in shaping an established and healthy personality (Carvalho-Malekane, 2015). The forming of an identity involves two main questions: “Who am I?” and “What is my place in this world?” (McAdams, Josselson & Liebich, 2006; Schwartz *et al.*, 2006; Sokol, 2009). Researchers agree that the view an individual holds of herself (personal identity) exists in relation to external aspects regarding the work environment to arrive at a professional identity (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001; Jansen, 2001; Rogers & Scott, 2008 and Beijaard *et al.*, 2004). The personal identity of an individual can therefore be further described as the picture an individual sees when looking at herself through her own, subjective *personal life lens*, as opposed to the professional identity that could be described as the picture she sees of herself when looking at herself through the *lens situated in the workspace*.

The professional identities of beginner teachers form part of their social identities. Social identity centres on the questions “Who are we?” and “Who are they?” (Carvalho-Malekane, 2015). This identity involves other relationships in the community and society (Bowles, 1993; Sokol, 2009). Social identity can also include categories such as race and gender (Ashforth 2001; Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep, 2006a). Jansen (2001) distinguishes between the personal and professional identities of teachers by stating that the ‘personal identity’ of teachers is “the understanding teachers hold of themselves in relation to official policy images”, and according to Fitzgerald (1993:3), “... identity is defined as *the academic metaphor for self-in-context*” [italics in original]. Researchers agree that the professional self, like the personal self, “evolves over time” (Kelchtermans, 1993), that context is a matter of “space and location”, and that the identity of a teacher is “a matter of where, within the professional pertinent array of possibilities, a particular person is located” (Coldron & Smith, 1999:714). Rogers and Scott (2008) suggest that the teacher has a specific responsibility in terms of personal and professional identity by saying that “teachers should work towards an *awareness* of their

identity and the contexts, relationships, and emotions that shape them, and (re)claim the authority of their own *voice*". In other words, teachers should make a psychological shift in how they think about themselves as teachers and about their professional identities. Rogers and Scott (2008) are of the opinion that ...

... contexts and relationships describe the *external* aspects of identity formation; and stories and emotions the *internal*, meaning-making aspects. Awareness and voice represents the 'contested' place where the normative demands of the external encounter the internal meaning making and desires of the teacher.

It is important to note the interconnectedness of the personal and professional identities of beginner teachers. The personal identity of an individual is linked directly with her professional identity in the sense that one must first be able to see the self ("my core self") before one will be able to see the self in a professional (or any other) context (myself in the workplace). Later in this chapter (2.4 below), I will discuss the connection between the construction of a personal and a professional identity.

2.2.2 Multiple identities

Identity is not stagnant, but changes constantly. Mead (1934) initially related the *self* (though stable) to being part of a reflexive process and suggested that individuals create a "generalised other". This "generalised other" was viewed as an integration of many aspects and attitudes which, when integrated, were reflected in the individual's attitude toward her/himself. This was when the notion of the self being able to take on different forms was born (De Volder & Lens, 1982; Gecas, 1982; Suls, 1982; Epstein, 1984; Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984). Researchers pursued and extended this idea: in the 1920s and 1930s, the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's theory informed ideas about "multiple I-positions" (Bakhtin, 1981). Research moved towards the idea of identity being not-so-stable, which led to Goffman's (1963) suggestion that each person has a number of "selves".

Rogers and Scott (2008) made three claims about the dynamic nature of identity, namely that identity (1) is always "in the making", rather than stable; (2) shifts according to context and relationships; and (3) is therefore varied and multiple. These claims are backed up by other researchers in the field of identity research. Gee (2001:99), for example, writes that "the 'kind of person' one is recognized as 'being' at a given time and place can change from moment to moment in the interaction, can change from context to context, and of course, can be ambiguous

or unstable”, and Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) describe identity as relational, shifting and constantly in the process of becoming.

2.2.3 Tenses of the self: past, present and future selves

“There are selves too big for one person to contain. You cannot call them selfish. There is nothing-ish about selves. They are the self, as it were, itself.”

~ P.J. O’Rourke ~

The concept of the self has aroused the interest of many researchers and has been the core of many grounded theories. It seems that there are a few central aspects occurring in grounded theories regarding the self, namely the ‘good’ self, the ‘bad’ self, the tenses of the self (past, present and future), motivation, social and/or historical background and agency.

In terms of grounded theories, the past selves and the ‘bad selves’ have apparently been somewhat neglected in the late 1900s. Furthermore, it seems that the concept of motivation has been linked to the present and ‘good selves’, and that of distortion to the past and ‘bad’ selves. According to Foote (1951), all motivation is a consequence of the individual’s set of identities, and when “doubt of identity creeps in, action is paralyzed”. Gollwitzer and Wicklund (1985) related the self-concept to motivation through the concept of self-definition. Self-definitions are described as the self having a “readiness to engage in certain classes of behaviour” (Gollwitzer & Wicklund, 1985). Stryker (1968) suggests that identities continually seek validation and that the “most important behaviour is in the service of confirming particular identities”. He believes that the more important the identity is, the more it is in need of validation (Stryker, 1968). The self in the present state is continually searching for a ‘trigger’ to initiate behaviour, and this trigger presents itself as some form of motivation and has a direct influence on the individual’s behaviour. The ‘trigger’ can be either a negative or a positive experience or stimulus.

Research conducted until the late seventies has shown that the focus has been primarily on the now self, with limited attention being paid to the individual’s future self (Gecas, 1982; Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984). Some research has been conducted to explore the individual’s understanding of the future, but researchers have not yet engaged extensively in determining

how the future is represented in the self-concept (Goldrich, 1967, Lessing, 1968; De Volder & Lens, 1982).

2.2.4 Contextualised selves

“The frame, the definition, is a type of context. And context, as we said before, determines the meaning of things. There is no such thing as the view from nowhere, or from everywhere for that matter. Our point of view biases on our observation, consciously and unconsciously. You cannot understand the view without the point of view”.

~ Shpancer, N. in *The good psychologist* ~

Context refers to the setting of an event, or even of words. Clandinin and Huber (2010) refer to context as “the landscapes past and present in which [a teacher] lives and works”. Contexts inexorably determine our notions of who we perceive ourselves to be and how others perceive us, (Rogers & Scott, 2008). Rogers and Scott (2008) demonstrate the ‘unconscious’ nature of perceiving a context by saying that “we do not necessarily perceive contexts (which include ways of thinking and knowing) as much as we absorb them, often taking them for granted as what is ‘real’”. Within any context there exists a set of norms, or norms perceived by the active role players in the context, and it is expected that these norms will be adhered to by the role players within the assumed context (Rogers & Scott, 2008). It is these ‘norms’ within the context of the lives of beginner teachers that will be explored in his study, with the focus on own teachers as part of their unique contexts.

Beijaard *et al.* (2004) and Hamman, Gosselin, Romano & Banuan, (2010) state that over the past few years of research in this field, situational and contextual factors within the framework of teacher professional development have received less attention than the characteristics or content (roles and values) of teacher professional identity. The same authors also claim that studies have predominantly focused more on “student teachers being authored by micro- and macro-contextual forces of change, as opposed to authoring their own stories” (Rogers & Scott, 2008:743). It is thus fitting to recognise the contexts in which the influence of own teachers take place in this study.

Erikson’s (1959) theory, which was formulated in the psychoanalytic tradition, provided insight into the “inner, sometimes conflicting forces which affect identity during particular life

phases”. Of significance to this study is the fact that researchers agree that identity changes according to shifts in time and place (different contexts) and is “never gained nor maintained once and for all” (Erikson, 1959). Ball (1972) maintains that the identity of a person is a flexible presentation of self “that differs according to specific definitions of situations”, and according to Stets and Burke (2000), the self is reflexive and can take itself as an object and can categorise, classify or name itself in particular ways and organise itself in relation to other social categories or classifications. Therefore, if the self can organise itself according to different social circumstances, it implies a change in the self, hence the self is not static. Sachs (2005) emphasises the reciprocal nature of identity as negotiating between experiences and the meaning-making of those experiences.

2.2.5 Teacher identity

As stated in Chapter 1, the terms teacher identity and teacher professional identity are here used interchangeably. However, in the literature, certain studies referred to used only one of these terms, even though the other is implied. Therefore, in this section, I will give an account of the understanding of the concept teacher identity based on studies that showed a preference for this term.

About thirty years ago, teacher identity was viewed as the possession of “a defined set of assets required for the profession” (Rosenshine & Stevens, 1986). Over the years the concept of teacher identity has evolved to be seen as consisting of sub-identities relating to teachers’ different contexts and relationships (Beijaard *et al.*, 2004; Alsup, 2006; Rogers & Scott, 2008, Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Sutherland *et al.*, 2010), as multi-faceted and constantly evolving (Beijaard *et al.*, 2004), as dynamic within a variety of contexts (Danielewicz, 2001) and as a dynamic ongoing process influenced by a range of external experiences, for example life experiences and internal factors such as emotions (Flores & Day, 2006; Rogers & Scott, 2008). In recent years, there has been renewed debate around the issue of the multifaceted concept of teacher identity across several educational settings (Mannix & Cagney, 2014). Three seminal reviews of the literature produced in the past decade (Beijaard *et al.*, 2004; Rogers & Scott, 2008; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009) emphasise the importance and interrelated nature of notions of identity, context, emotion and agency (Mannix & Cagney, 2014). From these perspectives it seems that when teachers’ identities are formed, at least in part, by the exterior

forces of context and relationships, identity inevitably becomes a multiple and shifting matter, in process and changeable (Rogers & Scott, 2008).

Carter and Doyle (1996:139) conclude that “from a biographical frame . . . becoming a teacher means (a) transforming an identity, (b) adapting personal understandings and ideals to institutional realities, and (c) deciding how to express one’s self in classroom activity”. Beauchamp and Thomas (2011) view teacher identity as a “complex and dynamic phenomenon” and are of the opinion that teacher identity not only gives rise to the question Who am I? but also to the questions *Who am I as a teacher?* and *What does this identity mean in terms of the way I teach?* Drake, Spillane and Hufferd-Ackles (2001) and Spillane (2000) refer to teacher identities as their (teachers’) “sense of self as well as their knowledge and beliefs, dispositions, interests and orientation towards work and change”. Day, Kington, Stobart & Sammons, (2006) conducted an extensive review of literature on identity produced up to 2005, which revealed that identities are a “shifting amalgamation of personal biography, culture, social influence and institutional values which may change according to role and circumstance”. Sachs (2005) suggests that the concept of identity expands the idea of a link with practice, emphasising that through their experience in learning teachers discover not only “how to be”, but also “how to act” and “how to understand” their work. Olsen (2008) believes that identity, and in particular the professional identity of a teacher, is dynamic, not fixed, and suggests a relationship between “some kind of core identity and multiple selves”. Akkerman and Meijer (2011) view teacher identity as an “ongoing process of construction”, which relates to a variety of social contexts and relationships.

Drake *et al.*, (2001), and Spillane (2000) provided the following definition of teacher identities from a South African perspective: “By teachers’ identities we mean their sense of self as well as their knowledge and beliefs, dispositions, interests and orientation towards work and change.” Carrim (2001) added to the body of knowledge on South African beginner teachers’ identities by conducting relevant research in this field and reminding us that “teachers are not the same”. According to Jansen (2001), “the notion of ‘educator’ continues to homogenise teachers and teaching and is unable to analytically address the specific realities experienced by teachers or the complexities of their identities”.

Teacher identity is an evolving process and should be studied as such. Teacher identity should also be considered as part of a holistic, interactive system, namely as a human being with

changing emotions, circumstances, biological aspects and numerous other facets. In this study, two identities will be explored, which will be discussed in the next section.

2.3 The dual nature of the literature review

“What constitutes a problem is not the thing, or the environment where we find the thing, but the conjunction of the two; something unexpected in a usual place (our favourite aunt in our favourite poke place) or something usual in an unexpected place ...”

~ Jeanette Winterson, 1985 ~

The primary research question on which this study is based, i.e. how own teachers influence the professional identity of beginner teachers, implies that the literature review is twofold in nature. Two aspects are significant, namely i) (the) role(s) of the own teacher(s), and ii) the professional teacher identity of the beginner teacher. These aspects will have to be considered separately and in conjunction with each other. The role of the own teacher as such implies the *teacher identity or the teacher identity as perceived* by the beginner teacher. It is important to distinguish between the perceived teacher identity (as perceived by the beginner teacher) and the real or actual teacher identity displayed by the own teacher. The way beginner teachers regard their own teachers may be very different from the own teachers' real identities. The view that the beginner teacher holds of the own teacher is influenced by many factors, some of which are not connected to the own teacher's actual teacher identity. McCroskey *et al.*, (2004) explains this in his research on teacher credibility, a concept which I will discuss later in this chapter. The professional identity of the own teacher also changes constantly, is unstable and is influenced by various external factors.

To explain the dual nature of this literature review, the image of a Ferris wheel comes to mind: one cannot stop the wheel randomly to inspect a specific part, but must study that part while the wheel is moving. To acquire a holistic picture, one has to take into account other factors that affect the wheel: the speed of movement, the direction in which the sun shines, and whether there is any wind. Professional teacher identity should be considered in much the same way: I intend to study the influence of the role of the own teacher, but cannot ignore the fact that the emerging professional identity of a beginner teacher is an on-going process, constantly being influenced by a myriad of other factors, while the own teacher is simultaneously experiencing the same processes. Olsen (2008), and Sfard and Prusak (2005), acknowledge identity as both

a product and a process, resulting from the effects of a variety of contexts on a teacher, at the same time representing the interactions of the elements of these contexts. I am cognisant of the fact that the beginner teacher is constantly ‘building and changing’ her identity, while focusing on the specific influence of the own teacher who is also building and changing her own professional identity.

Finally, the interrelatedness of the literature review is significant: although it is two-fold in nature, it was born of *one* primary research question. The echo of concepts dealt with in the section on the professional identity of beginner teachers will therefore be heard in the discussion on findings of similar studies conducted both in South African and abroad. This is not an indication of a repetitive exhaustion of the same concepts, but rather an indication of the interwoven nature of the intricate process of establishing a professional teacher identity. It will become clear from the discussion of the various studies conducted that the same concepts were studied through different theoretical lenses and by applying different paradigms and a wide range of methodologies.

2.4 Professional identity construction as a function of personal identity construction

In the following section I explain how beginner teachers construct their personal and professional teacher identities. As mentioned in 2.2.4, the beginner teacher is an individual *in context*. The personal identity, being the ‘first’ or ‘original identity’ of the beginner teacher, cannot be detached from her identity as a professional. Therefore, it is important to first understand how beginner teachers construct their personal identities and how, as a function of this process, they then construct their professional identities. An exploration of the ‘tools’ used for identity construction will lead to a better understanding of how beginner teachers navigate the different influences that affect their professional identities, and specifically the own teacher’s influence.

In the following section I will discuss the ways in which beginner teachers construct their personal identities. During the review of the existing relevant literature, the aspects of language, the timespan during which identity formation takes place and the ways in which beginner teachers utilise their family and socio-political environments came to the fore as key elements in the formation of an emerging professional identity.

2.4.1 A timeframe for identity construction

The time or time span of the process of teacher identity construction is relevant to this study since the influence of an own teacher comes into play at some point during that time. Thus it is necessary to know what the current thoughts of educational researchers are regarding the time, and more specifically the starting point of teacher identity construction. Swennen, Volman and Van Essen, (2008) conducted a study on five teacher educators from three generations which showed that the formation of teacher identities, and even of teacher educator's identities, began when they were still young children. Their study further showed the formation of teacher identity to be grounded in the private lives of teachers, as well as in their parents' careers in education.

Vuorikoski (2001) mentions the many years of prior exposure that beginner teachers had during their schooling, saying that they "have been subjected to a lifetime of 'teacher education'". He also claims that student teachers and subsequently beginner teachers do not enter teacher education programmes waiting to be filled with the skills, aptitudes and experiences appropriate for a first-year teacher, but that teacher socialisation occurs through the observation and internalisation of particular models of teaching as experienced by the receiving pupil. Vuorikoski (2001) employed a life-history approach as a research method and the results of his work reveal that the use of teacher biographies showed changes in the practices and classroom behaviours of teachers.

Ticknor (2010:285) agrees with Vuorikoski that the identity of a teacher is not "limited to those who enter the profession; the identity of teacher has been observed, judged, and critiqued by all who have been in a classroom". She views teaching as the one profession to which everyone has regular access without having to join it (Ticknor, 2010). Britzman (2003) concludes that teachers learn to be teachers by teaching and interacting with others who value and daily engage in the practices and discourses of a 'teacher'. Authors Rogers (2002), and Rogers and Fuller (2007:145), believe that within "our and our students' histories of participation or past lived experiences as and with teachers, teacher identities are enacted and formed".

Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) conducted a literature study to provide an overview of issues dealt with in the relevant literature and their implications for teacher education in terms of teacher identity. In this study they refer to the work of Riopel (2006), who feels that the work of teacher educators is closely connected with what happens in early practice and points out

two possible research topics that may help to reveal the needed links across preparation programmes and beginning practice in terms of identity development. First, Riopel (2006) refers to an exploration of the relationship between success and failure in early practice and the preparation provided in a teacher education programme. The fact that student teachers are confronted with thinking about their significant own teachers in the course of a teacher education programme will alter the identity construction process – hopefully towards the construction of a more positive professional identity, and preferably with the guidance of skilled teacher educators. Second, Riopel (2006) suggests that a study should be undertaken of the ways in which the demands of beginning practice draw on competencies developed in previous preparation.

The findings of a study conducted by Beauchamp and Thomas (2011), which focused on the first few months of practice, confirm those reported by Anspal, Eisenschmidt & Löftström, (2012) a year later. They also found that when teachers enter the school communities of their initial practice, they experience identity shifts. They are of the opinion that throughout teacher education, students construct an identity informed by their previous school experiences, the ideas and approaches promoted by their teacher education programmes and the ideal teachers they hope to become.

2.4.2 Context: Family and socio-political issues

One cannot isolate the concept of identity or teacher identity from social contexts. Layder (1993) agrees with this and suggests that researchers need to consider both the micro-world of teachers' experiences and activities and the wider pre-existing social relationships and realities in order to present a "holistic picture of identity formation". Teachers are always part of certain social communities, whether they include dealing with parents or learners, or the personal social context of a teacher. Gee (2001) proposed that identity suggests a particular kind of person within a particular context; "while one might have a 'core identity', there are multiple forms of this identity as one functions across different contexts". Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, (1998) added to research on teacher identity with specific focus on social class, gender and race. They (1998:84) posed that:

What we call identities remains dependent upon social relations and material conditions. If these relations and material conditions change, they must be answered, and old 'answers' about who one is may be undone.

Learning to teach is not merely a matter of applying mechanical skills, or of mirroring what we have learnt; it is the time when one's past, present and future are set against the backdrop of an ever-changing and sometimes tense environment. The professional context in which beginner teachers find themselves play a major role in the process of their construction of a professional teacher identity. Professional contexts are volatile as they are subject to many different changes: changes in an institution, policy changes and changes in school leadership and management all contribute towards the instability of the professional context. On a macro-level, these changes have major effects on the identity formation of beginner teachers. Many beginner teachers enter the professional world of teaching having only been exposed to the fairly stable environment of a tertiary institution. Suddenly they are facing challenges on different managerial and administrative levels: nationally, provincially (as in the South African context), and institutionally in the school environment.

Researchers are increasingly paying attention to the shaping effect of the professional context (Gu, 2012). Gu (2012) regards policies and institutions as social structures that are always “anterior to individuals” and therefore provide an enduring context for them, and Jansen (2001) and Moore (2002) considered teacher identity by focusing on how it is influenced by policies. Moore, Edwards, Halphin and George, (2002) place special emphasis on the importance of the policies and institutions that *restrict* the development of teachers. Miller (2003) conducted research on the construction of teacher identity in the political, social and professional contexts, and Lasky (2005) elaborated on contextual factors such as the political and social environment as significant to the development of the professional identities of beginner teachers.

It is important to consider the ways in which beginner teachers construct their professional identities, since the influence of own teachers is seen as a central factor in this process. By looking at *how* beginner teachers navigate their emerging professional identities, the role of own teachers as significant influences may also be revealed. From a review of relevant literature, aspects of relationships and emotions, agency, reflection and the concept of modelling or role modelling surfaced as the paramount ways in which beginner teachers navigate their emerging professional identities. In the section that follows, I will discuss the ways in which beginner teachers construct their professional identities.

2.4.3 Relationships and emotions

My aim with this study was to explore what I personally perceive as one of the most influential role players in professional identity, namely the own significant teacher. The focus of this study is thus overtly on a *relationship* – the relationship between a beginner teacher and a significant own teacher during any period of the beginner teacher’s schooling. Rogers and Scott (2008:45) point out that relationship is essential to identity, “primarily because to have an identity one must be recognized as a particular ‘kind of person’ by others”. They further state that an individual forms various relationships within multiple contexts, and brings forth several aspects of him/herself. Smagorinsky *et al.* (2004:21) studied identity formation in new teachers and concluded that identity is also constructed “through engagement with others in cultural practice”. Samuel and Stephens conducted research among black South Africans⁴ and observed “multiple layers of relationship and negotiation”, with teachers having to develop a “comfortable” personal teacher identity while at the same time having to satisfy state requirements (Samuel & Stephens, 2000:478).

Gergen (2009) conceptualises the individual as a relational being, always embedded in relationships with others. Relationships may be temporary or long term, but they are always plural, interconnected and unavoidable. Gergen (2009:84) states that all meaning is created within relationships and that there are “at least three essential ingredients in the creation of bonds: negotiation, narration, and enchantment”. Negotiation and narration link to my suggestion that language is an essential tool for beginner teachers’ identity construction. In this study, I explored the influence of the own teacher on the identity construction of the beginner teacher during/in a teaching relationship, as well as through memories of time spent with the own teacher. Gergen (2009:84) underlines this idea by stating that “bonding through narration occurs when ‘we’ is used to describe a relationship that has developed over time to create a ‘we’”. For the purpose of this study, it is significant that the bond (the ‘we’) that exists in the mind of the beginner teacher is not necessarily the same as the bond perceived by the own teacher at the time. As a young learner or student, the beginner teacher may have perceived the purely professional engagement in the classroom as a bond that was more meaningful than the usual learner-teacher relationship, and even though the own teacher might not have been aware of the beginner teacher’s perception at the time, it is still true that a bond existed. Similarly,

⁴ Black South Africans: “Black people” is a broad term that includes Black Africans, Coloureds and Indians who were South African citizens prior to 1994. (Black Economic Empowerment Act, 2003, cf. Chapter 1).

Ticknor (2012) found that although each beginner teacher constructed different bonded relationships, they bonded with each other, with her as a researcher, and with educational mentors, school-aged students and individuals outside the realm of education. Ticknor (2010) is of the opinion that these relationships fostered productive professional identity construction and bolstered professional confidence to seek opportunities for agency in the classroom; in other words, beginner teachers learned to become teachers within relationships.

Complex relationships between teachers, learners, colleagues, mentors and the wider school community provoke a multitude of fluctuating emotions. Research shows that emotions have been increasingly recognised as a salient aspect of identity formation (Hargreaves, 2001; Zembylas, 2002; Winograd, 2003). Britzman (1993:252) maintains that “feelings are made in social relationships”. She further comments on the inconsistency between institutional structures and “expectations of how teachers *should* behave and feel”, the actual “structure of feelings” that teachers already hold because of who they are, and “the lives they live”. Hargreaves (2001) describes how teachers’ emotions are “embedded in the conditions and interactions of their work”. Hargreaves (2001:1061) introduces the concept of “emotional geographies” and explains that it consists of...

...the spatial and experiential patterns of closeness and/or distance in human interactions and relationships that help create, configure and colour the feelings and emotions we experience about ourselves, our world and each other.

This implies that teachers’ emotions are shaped by the conditions of their work and then manifest in their interactions with learners, parents, colleagues and others.

2.4.4 Agency

Agency is “a way of positioning oneself so as to allow for new ways of being, new identities” (Lewis, Enciso & Moje, 2007). Ahearn (2001:112) defines agency as the “socio-culturally mediated capacity to act”, which implies that agency is in most cases a social event and takes place in relation to and *with* other role players. Lantolf and Thorne (2006:143) agree with Ahearn’s definition and state that agency “entails the ability to assign relevance and significance to things and events”, which are what our socio-cultural context consists of. Beginner teachers should be able to make meaning of “things” and “events” in their new positions and incorporate this in their professional identities. Beijaard (2009) explains that three identity-related concepts seem to play an important role in the construction of a professional

teacher identity, namely ownership, sense-making and agency. Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) also suggest that the change-agent motive is a central aspect of the emerging teacher identity.

Holland *et al.* (1998:56) view human agency as possible by way of improvisation and self-directed symbolisations and describe agency in terms of how beginner teachers decide on new actions when finding themselves on a new terrain: “Agency lies in the improvisations that people create in response to particular situations.” Improvisation occurs when a person is confronted with unfamiliar social contexts, which do not allow the usual ways of interacting to fit and therefore prompt on-the-spot actions. These actions are creative, innovative and imaginative. The emotional and cognitive dissonance created by new or unfamiliar situations causes a break from expected actions and creates opportunities for new actions. New or different actions lead to new experiences, new or other views of the self, thus a ‘new’ identity being brought into existence, allowing the ‘old’ or previous identity to grow and change.

The first possibility of agency, namely improvisation, as stated by Holland *et al.* (1998), is significant to the construction of a professional teacher identity. To improvise, the beginner teacher must think in new ways and will need to learn novel concepts, which has implications for the beginner teacher’s use of language. In most cases her/his vocabulary will extend to deal with new thoughts and concepts. Thus the language-identity sphere will have to be adjusted to allow for new possibilities of being.

Thought moment 2.1

When thinking about agency, the image of Ms Elven comes to mind: I was aware of thinking what she would have done in a particular situation and often that would change the direction of my behaviour or decisions. I remember the concept of “authentic material”, how I would use it over and over in my mind and conversations to familiarise my tongue with it, because I liked how it sounded when she said it.

Research diary, 25/05/2012

Ticknor (2010) examines the way in which pre-service elementary school teachers construct their professional identities and place agency, together with identity, discourse and relationships, at the core the construction process. She believes that pre-service teachers can use improvisations or in-the-moment actions to make decisions when teacher education

coursework and fieldwork classroom practices conflict (Ticknor, 2010). Danielewicz (2001) writes that pre-service teachers “need to feel capable of actions as teachers, first and foremost, as motivation, to keep them invested in teaching when outside factors ... cause them to question their sanity in choosing a profession as a teacher”. She also points out the relevance of agency and context as factors influencing what she refers to as “professional vulnerability”.

2.4.5 Reflection

Reflection has been a critical issue for decades and has its origins in philosophy. As early as in 1933, Dewey wrote about the value of reflective thinking for personal and intellectual growth. Since Freire (1972) and Habermas’ (1974) work on reflection, research in this field has become more sophisticated and focused. The close connection between reflection and identity development was further documented in research on teacher education (e.g. Korthagen, 2004; Walkington, 2005; Freese, 2006), and Ryan and Ryan (2012) developed a two-dimensional model of the pedagogical field of reflection in higher education, emphasising the importance of reflection as a “consistent developmental process”. The fact that I had given serious thought not only to my own teaching practices, but also to my own teachers, had an immense impact on how I perceived myself as a teacher. Becoming aware of an aspect of behaviour and then thinking about it implies *action*, which in turn has a bearing on the agency of a beginner teacher.

Since 2000, several educator programmes in the UK have moved towards a practice of reflection by specifically strengthening the relationships between educators and pre-service teachers during the teaching practicum of pre-service teachers (Brown, 2002). To move towards a more reflexive model, the supervisor of ‘practice teaching’ in the UK system has been replaced by a mentor of in-school learning (Walkington, 2005). The interest shown in this notion by Australian educational researchers has led to the evaluation of traditional Australian practices (Ramsay, 2000; Hastings & Squires, 2002).

Heller, Wood and Shawgo (2007) examined the impact of a language arts methods course on the field experience practices of one pre-service teacher in a Professional Development School (PDS). The study focused on the secondary teaching experience of Mr Nathan, who was teaching a Grade 8 class. By looking at course syllabi and reflective observation notes on Mr Nathan teaching a poetry lesson, the authors put forward that effective teachers are meta-cognitive about their teaching and encourage students to be motivated to learn. Their study is

noteworthy in that it illustrates a case where active reflection led to a change in classroom practice.

In a study conducted by Beauchamp and Thomas (2010), they moved away from the traditional notion of retrospective reflection and focused on anticipatory reflection, i.e. reflection that contains an “element of imagination, a looking forward to a future possibility”, which the student teacher may construct. This study shows that the majority of participants employed reflective practice to arrive at a better understanding of who they were as teachers at that specific point in time.

Thought moment 2.2

Turning back to two of the main characters of this chapter: I had focused more on the influence of Ms Elven, because I wanted to be like her. I thought about how she did things and what decisions she had made. However, Mr Tatum may have had an even greater impact on the construction of my teacher identity even though I was not acutely aware of the specific influence. The construction of my own teacher identity would have been very different and I would have been a different teacher who made different decisions if I had had the knowledge as a beginner teacher to reflect on his presence as a significant own teacher. Though I had no conscious thoughts about the role of Mr Tatum, I later realised that I had constructed a specific perception of male teachers who had a definite influence on my teaching actions.

Research diary, 2012

2.4.6 Teacher modelling/role modelling

Timmerman’s (2009) study of teacher educators has led to the opinion that the teacher educator is also always a teacher. This opinion is shared by several other education researchers (Wideen, 1998; Meijer, 1999; Lunenberg *et al.*, 2007). Lunenberg *et al.* (2007) conducted a study with the focus on the teacher educator as a role model. They based their study on Blume’s (1971) idea that “teachers teach as they are taught”. These authors maintain that they have discovered what they refer to as “almost a blank spot” in both the body of scholarship on teacher education and the actual practices of many teacher educators. This discovery underlines the need for more studies dealing with the role of the own teacher as key influential factor in the identity construction process of a beginner teacher. The study conducted by Lunenberg *et al.* (2007) has significance for this study as it deals directly with the position of the educator teacher or, in this case, the ‘own’ teacher. They refer to the point of view expressed by Wideen *et al.*

(1998), which is that an investigation of the crucial role of the teacher educator in the ‘total ecology of teacher education’ is ‘missing from the research’.

According to Lunenberg *et al.* (2007), modelling seldom receives explicit consideration, despite the fact that teacher educators persistently influence the learning of their students, even when they are displaying inadequate behaviour. The following question is central to my study: How does the behaviour of ‘own’ teachers influence the identity construction of a beginner teacher, even if the own teachers display inadequate behaviour?

Thought moment 2.3

Mr Tatum was introduced as one of the three main characters in the literature review. He displayed grossly inadequate behaviour, which had a definite impact on the construction of my own teacher identity, albeit unconsciously. This idea also links to one of the means employed by beginner teachers to construct a teacher identity, namely that of reflection, as described earlier.

Research diary, 2012

The concept of modelling, or the teacher as role model, is problematic in the sense that it does not focus specifically on the process of identity construction as such, but rather on the professional development of student teachers as a way to change education and improve teaching practice (Lunenberg *et al.*, 2007); therefore, on the *outcome* (or application of the *outcome*) of the identity process. Literature on education that deals with role modelling is also silent about first, the way in which modelling of own teachers takes place, and second, the influence it has on professional identity. Modelling, as described in the relevant literature, does not deal much with the construction of professional identity process. This gives rise to the question: How does (role) modelling the own teacher influence professional identity?

2.5 The role of own teachers in the professional identity of beginner teachers

From the literature review it appeared as if the concept of the own teacher is ‘disguised’ in educational literature in the sense that very little reference is made to this concept by using the specific term. A term that is semantically probably the closest to what I refer to as the ‘own teacher’ is ‘role model’ (Lunenberg *et al.*, 2007; Timmerman, 2009). The following section will be divided into two subsections that will deal with the international landscape and the South African scenario regarding the role of the own teacher respectively.

2.5.1 International landscape: The role of own teachers

Timmerman (2009) conducted a study in which the development of a professional teacher identity is perceived as a socialisation process: personal experiences in different socialising contexts are assumed to play a significant part in professional development. This study addresses the influence of own teachers as part of the process of socialisation towards becoming a teacher. According to Timmerman (2009), teachers are observed in their work by young people more than is the case for any other professional cluster. Timmerman (2009) deals with the question of the impact of teacher educators' own role models on their teaching views and practices, and asks whether they imitate only the positive role models and reject the bad ones.

Timmerman's (2009) study adds to the findings of Lortie & Clement (1975), which indicated the influence of school teachers by providing insight into i) the socialisation process, and ii) the influence of early school experiences in the development of teacher's identity and professionalism. However, the results of Timmerman's study contradicted the findings of other studies, which had found that the choice to become a teacher was not a pragmatic one. Also, the innovative attitude of the teacher educators in this study was grounded in their role models. These findings are in contrast with earlier findings by Lortie & Clement (1975), which were that the teacher educators' former teacher experiences were conservative.

Consistent with recent teacher education research is the finding that beginner teachers 'forget' all about pedagogy once they start teaching; they revert to earlier ideas about teaching, e.g. conceptions of teaching observed while at secondary school (Timmerman, 2009). In the Netherlands, research conducted by Korthagen (2004) on teacher identity showed how beginner teachers reflect on past role models, both positive and negative, and map out life events that have influenced their decision to teach. However, although Korthagen refers to past positive and negative role models, he does not focus on these role models' effect on professional identity, but rather on the essential qualities of a good teacher, and how people can be helped to become good teachers, which is also a focus on the 'ideal' or 'becoming better', a notion which resonated in the work of Beauchamp and Thomas (2010).

Beauchamp and Thomas (2010) conducted a study on teacher identity in Canada, with the focus on beginner teachers' reflection on their future identities. Student teachers expressed the need for a teacher to provide inspiration. The focus of the study was how student teachers want to

be, or how they envision themselves. Commenting on what kind of teacher they would like to be, participants gave descriptions such as: “A teacher who pushes students to achieve” and “A very inspiring teacher that creates projects that no other teacher would create”.

While conducting a study in Belgium, Schepens, Aelterman and Vlerick (2009) focused on beginner teachers' professional identity formation inspired by the tension between two points of view expressed by laymen about people who become teachers: being a born teacher (i.e. based on demographics and personality traits), and becoming a teacher (i.e. based on experience). Although this study does not focus explicitly on the role of the own teacher, it does add one important finding: student teachers do not simply accept what they learn during teacher education, but differ with regard to how they deal with influences, depending on the value they personally attach to them. This finding corresponds with the findings of research conducted by Beijaard *et al.* (2004).

Schultz and Ravitch (2012) examined the writing of new teachers in two different pathways into teaching: a university-based teacher education programme and an alternative certification programme. Despite the fact that this study was focused on the comparison of the different educator programmes, it did yield important and relevant findings. An analysis of these teachers' narratives revealed that their professional identities were shaped by their membership of a range of knowledge communities, their schools, network of friends and the two educator programmes (Schultz & Ravitch, 2012). Furthermore, they revealed different processes leading to taking on a teacher identity. The teachers in the university-based programme described learning to teach and taking on professional identities in relation to their mentor teachers whose classroom they shared. This stood in sharp contrast to the experience of their peers, who did not have mentors to imitate and learn from. When asked how they learned to teach, participants from the certification programme often said that they drew on models from their own experiences as students and had to invent how to be a teacher on their own without modelling or collaboration (Lortie, 1975). This study does not dig deeper into the implications of these statements by the participants since it did not pertain to the focus. However, it is comments such as these that underline the research questions of this study: On which ‘models from their own experience’ did they draw? How did these ‘models from their own experience’ appear and how did they influence the participants of this study, either consciously or unconsciously?

Ekiz (2006) refers to “a certain role model” as one of the factors that contribute to the diverse teaching experience of beginner students and one of the motives for choosing teaching as a profession, which include teaching as the only job available, personality, ability, the social environment, interrelated sets of thought, expectations about training. However, Ekiz (2006) does not elaborate on the influence of the “certain role model” on teacher identity construction.

Gu (2011) conducted a study in Hong Kong and China and found that teacher identities were legitimised in the learning community by adopting discursive strategies. According to Gu (2011), studies have seldom focused on the processes and their development, apart from those mentioned above. Some of the key findings of this study are that the construction of teacher identities is an on-going process that involves identification and dis-identification, negotiation of meanings and interaction between the individual and the social. Tsui, Choe, Lim, Acorda, Chan, Taylor and Tu, (2007) examined the teaching experience of an EFL teacher over an extended period of six years and employed Wenger’s Communities of Practice model. In this study Wenger’s theory of identity emphasises the individual’s participation in social activities, thus enabling us to account for identity construction in practice. This is significant because it essentially highlights the fact that teacher identity is being constructed as part of a social process, which implies interaction with significant other people, i.e. the own teacher.

An interpretative case study was conducted by Franzak (2010) in New Mexico to determine how participation in a Critical Friends Group impact the development of an English teacher’s identity. The participant evolved from being tentative with sharing insights to being an articulate novice teacher with increased confidence. This study demonstrated the effect of (discourse with) other teachers on a beginner teacher, but did not specifically deal with the own teacher as influence. Dang Thi Kim Anh (2004) conducted a study at the University of Melbourne to examine the evolution of the professional identities of student teachers in a paired-placement teaching practicum in Vietnam. This study highlighted the importance of teachers’ influencing each other in an educational setting, but did not explicitly refer to the role of the own teacher.

2.5.2 South African scenario: The role of own teachers

Beginner teachers in present-day South Africa have to deal with a wide range of factors in facing the diverse and unique character of our country. This not only has important implications for educational aspects such as classroom practice, linguistic challenges and cultural issues,

but also for the professional identity of a beginner teacher. How did the political changes over the past few decades influence the professional identity of beginner teachers? More importantly: Where does the role of the own teacher fit into the bigger South African picture *in addition* to the professional identity of beginner teachers? I know that if Sarah had been my teacher I would want to be exactly like her.

Thought moment 2.4

Sarah had all the makings of an excellent pre-school teacher and she instilled in me a love of languages and literature by constantly telling me stories. However, I was formally taught and influenced by a white male-dominated generation that had an enormous impact on how I constructed my professional teacher identity. I have always wondered what had become of Sarah's baby. Suppose for a moment that he had grown up to be interested in a teaching career and had the opportunity to study teaching. What would have been the challenges he had to face? Who would have been his teaching role models? How would his experience have differed from mine?

Research diary, 2012

Wolhuter, Van der Walt, Potgieter, Meyer and Mamiala (2012) investigated the sources that inspired South African student teachers' career choice. In this study he included interaction with a mentor as one of the inspirational factors, but the study does not directly deal with the influence of the own teacher. However, the conclusion of this study is important for this study: Wolhuter *et al.* (2012) found that not much research has been undertaken to determine what exactly inspires, motivates or drives student teachers to involve themselves in teacher education programmes and to persist with their studies. As interaction with a mentor was included in this study as an inspirational factor, it is evident that the own teacher as possible mentor has to be considered in the construction of a teacher identity, since inspiration cannot be disregarded in the process of identity construction.

In the past decade, extensive research was conducted by Vandeyar (2008; 2010; 2011) and Vandeyar and Vandeyar (2011; 2014) regarding teacher and academic professional identity. Vandeyar and Jita (2006) found that teacher's knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning were shaped significantly by their previous experiences as teachers in different schools and earlier experiences as students. These findings corresponded with those of Schifter (1996), Ball (1997), Jita (1999) and Polettini (2000). Although this study centred on the construction of identity in terms of curriculum reforms in South Africa, it does refer to one key aspect that

is essential to my study in their discussion of findings: they draw attention to the need for uncovering teachers' prior experiences. This study focused on the teacher identities of mathematics teachers, while earlier research conducted by Jita (2004) focused on the identity of a science teacher. Jita (2004) explores the relationship between this teacher's multiple identities and the teaching practices in his science classroom, in essence making the case that changing classroom practices result from changing teacher identities. Jita (2004) further explains how the participant used his experiences of challenge and marginalisation in his own life as a catalyst for constructing a counter-identity that allowed him to change his teaching practices.

The aim of my study is to add to the work done by researchers such as Vandeyar and Jita by adding one tenet to the field of professional identity that seems to be unexplored, namely the influence of the own teacher. Samuels (2001), Dhunpath (2000) and Reddy (2000) have conducted insightful studies on student teacher, teacher educator and scientist biographies at the University of Durban Westville, alongside Carrim (2001), Soudien (2001) and Matheson and Harley (2001), who all placed a new focus on practitioner identity and the problem of change.

Much has been written about teacher professional identity in South Africa from many perspectives. South African researchers have covered numerous different influences on the professional identity of South African beginner teachers: the influence of policy making on teacher identity (Jansen, 2001); the identity construction of immigrant teachers and academics (Vandeyar, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009); teacher identities of maths and science teachers (Jita, 2004); the link between identity and classroom practice (Sithole, 2004); the impact of leadership and management on teacher identity (Grant, 2005; Matoti, 2008); the issue of teacher retention (Marais, 2010); the inspirational factors that play a role in the future profession of South African student teachers (Wolhuter *et al.*, 2012) and the effects of curriculum revisions on teacher identity (Msibi & Mchunu, 2013).

2.6 Summary of findings

Several important aspects have emerged from a review of the existing literature on the role of own teachers in the professional identity construction of beginner teachers. For the purpose of this study, I regard teacher professional identity to be fluid, dynamic, continuously changing and unstable (cf. Mead, 1934; Danielewicz, 2001; Olsen, 2008; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011).

Furthermore, existing literature considers teacher professional identity and the construction thereof to be a process (cf. Day *et al.*, 2006; Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). I also agree with authors who view teacher professional identity as a state of being that is continually influenced by a myriad of different factors (e.g. Danielewicz, 2001; Beijaard *et al.*, 2004; Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Day, 2006; and Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). In the next section, I will summarise key findings in the light of the research question by referring to existing literature and dividing the findings according to how they relate to professional identity, beginner teachers, own teachers and bonding and contextual influences that affect the professional identity of beginner teachers.

2.6.1 Professional identity

The first set of findings involves identity, professional identity and the ‘self’. A review of the literature in this field was important, since the focus of the study was the professional identity of beginner teachers. The following five findings connected to the scope of this study emerged from the literature: First, language is a core element in identity construction (Bakhtin, 1981 & 1990; Wittingstein, 1991; Rorty, 1992; Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Gee, 2005; Olsen, 2008; Ticknor, 2010). Language was significant in this study because it forms the basis of interaction between beginner teachers and own teachers. Second, identity combines a personal and a professional element (Fitzgerald, 1993; Bullough, 1997; Coldron & Smith, 1999; Jansen, 2001; Rogers & Scott, 2008; Beijaard *et al.*, 2004). Third, the more important the identity, the more it is in need of validation, and when identity is in a state of uncertainty, action does not take place (Foote, 1951; Stryker, 1968; Gollwitzer & Wicklund, 1985). This finding is noteworthy since the beginner teacher is expected to become involved in certain new activities. Action is therefore a particularly important aspect of beginner teachers’ professional identity. Another aspect of the professional identity of beginner teachers is the interplay between their possible selves in their new circumstances. Fourth, the present self is continually searching for motivation to induce behaviour; this motivation has a direct influence on the behaviour of the individual and can be perceived either positively or negatively (Lessing, 1968; Zurcher, 1977; De Volder & Lens, 1982; Epstein, 1984; Hamman *et al.*, 2010). Fifth, possible selves are interrelated, created within the parameters of a social context, and are connected to depictions of the present self (Hamman *et al.*, 2010).

2.6.2 Beginner teachers

In this study, the professional identity of beginner teachers is explored against the backdrop of one specific influence, namely that of own teachers. During the literature review certain findings pertaining to beginner teachers came to the fore. First, beginner teachers learn to become teachers within relationships. They form various relationships in multiple contexts, which bring forth several aspects of the self, and must develop a ‘comfortable’ personal teacher identity in order to grow professionally (Samuel & Stephens, 2000; Smagorinsky *et al.*, 2004; Rogers & Scott, 2008; Ticknor, 2010). Second, teacher identities are enacted and formed within beginner teachers’ histories or past lived experiences with teachers (Rogers, 2002; Britzman, 2003; Rogers & Fuller, 2007; Ticknor, 2010). Third, beginner teachers do not enter the teaching profession with a ‘clean slate’, but have been subjected to examples of teaching and teachers as learners for a number of years, have had early experiences as beginner teachers at different schools, and tend to teach in the ways they were taught (Rogers, 2002; Britzman, 2003; Lunenberg *et al.*, 2007; Ticknor, 2010). Fourth, the beginner teacher’s professional identity has been informed by past school experiences, the ideas and approaches promoted by their teacher education programmes, and an image of the kind of teacher they hope to become (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011; Anspal *et al.*, 2012). Fifth, beginner teachers’ identity alters as soon as they enter new teaching environments (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011; Anspal *et al.*, 2012). Sixth, beginner teachers ‘forget’ all about pedagogy once they start teaching; they regress to past concepts, memories of observations and perceptions of how they were taught at school (Rogers & Fuller, 2007; Timmerman, 2009).

2.6.3 Own teachers and bonding

The crux of the study is addressed in this section, where the focus is on own teachers and their influence on the professional identity of beginner teachers. Literature dealing with this topic was scant and the term ‘own teacher’ was rarely used. The findings in this regard were threefold: First, interaction with a mentor is an inspirational factor in teacher education (Wolhuter *et al.*, 2012). Second, Lunenberg *et al.*, (2007) and Wideen *et al.* (1998) pointed out one important role player in the complete bionetwork of teacher education, namely the teacher educator as own teacher. This finding relates to the scope of this study since the entire educational careers of participants were studied, including teacher educators. Beginner teachers construct different bonded relationships with different role players, for example educational

mentors, learners and individuals outside the realm of education (Ticknor, 2012). Third, bonded relationships nurture fruitful professional identity construction and strengthen professional confidence in terms of classroom behaviour (Ticknor, 2010).

2.6.4 Contextual factors

Contextual factors that influence the professional identity of beginners are repeatedly discussed in more recent literature. Findings connected to this study include, first, that the formation of teacher identities begins in young children and is grounded in beginner teachers' personal lives as well as the parents' careers in education (Britzman, 2003; Rogers & Fuller, 2007; Swennen *et al.*, 2008; Ticknor, 2010). Second, beginner teacher identity construction is a continuous development and involves identification and dis-identification, negotiation of meanings and interaction between the individual and social circumstances (Dang Thi Kim Anh, 2004; Tsui *et al.*, 2007; Franzak, 2010; Gu, 2011). Third, the nature of professional contexts (e.g. policies, institutions and political environments) shapes the professional identity of beginner teachers (Lasky, 2005; Gu, 2012) and sometimes restricts professional identity development (Jansen, 2001; Moore, 2002; Moore *et al.*, 2002; Miller, 2003).

2.6.5 Literature review: Conclusion

Twenty-two years after South Africa became a democratic country, the various teaching contexts, each of which provides its own unique challenges, are still characterised by large discrepancies. It is now more important than ever to ensure that education students are fully equipped to enter the different teaching environments. Furthermore, in the light of recent unrest at institutions of higher educational, student teachers should be motivated to still want to choose a profession that is now perceived as having become even more unstable in recent years. The development of a strong sense of the self, and particularly of the professional self, making sense of past experiences and examining strong role models from the past, may help beginner teachers to cope in unstable environments. Further research in the field of human capital as an influence on the professional identity on beginner teachers would expand the existing literature in this field.

In the section that follows, I will discuss the conceptual framework against which the findings of this study were interpreted.

2.7 Conceptual framework: Palimpsest of a paradigm, theory and model

In this section, I propose a conceptual framework consisting of a wide variety of diverse concepts. Jabareen (2009:51) defines a conceptual framework as a “network, or ‘a plane’ of interlinked concepts that together provide a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon or phenomena”. In this study, the conceptual framework serves exactly this purpose: it was created and developed to offer a framework or point of reference in which all interrelated concepts are linked together. The concepts contained in this conceptual framework are irregular in the sense that they can take on a variety of forms in changing contexts (Jabareen, 2009). They are made up of the *history* of earlier research, such as the ideas of McCroskey (Jabareen, 2009). All these concepts fit together as they stem from a single primary research question that explored the role of own teachers in the identity construction of beginner teachers. Vithal and Jansen (2004:19) view a conceptual framework as an “elusive construct, a less well-developed explanation that leaves room for the interpretation of the reader”. The proposed conceptual framework allows for deconstruction: the initial deconstruction of concepts regarding communicative behaviour as explained in the existing literature, and then their re-application to appreciate the new meanings created by the participants in this study.

I employed the guidelines suggested by Jabareen (2009) and followed a multidisciplinary approach to explain specific educational phenomena for the process of building a conceptual framework for multidisciplinary phenomena linked to different bodies of knowledge. In a similar fashion, Diamond and Mullen (1999:101) wrote about a “post-modern hybridized or split text” (cf. Chapter 3, 3.3.1.2 (i)). I proposed the meta-theoretical (cf. Chapter 3, 3.3.1), and methodological paradigms (cf. chapter 3, 3.3.), and this conceptual framework likewise takes on the form of a post-modern, hybridized and split nature or, as I prefer to call it, a nested conceptual framework. I discuss the three constructs involved in the conceptual framework: the Communi – James McCroskey biological paradigm (2001), the Possible Selves theory of Marcus and Nurius (1986), and McCroskey’s model of instructional communication (2004). I discuss the rationale for the inclusion of each of these constructs and explain how they fit into this study. Finally, I draw the tenets of each together and present the core characteristics of each as encapsulated in the conceptual framework.

2.7.1 The Communi-biological paradigm: The first layer

“Of course genes can’t pull the levers of our behaviour directly. But they affect the wiring and workings of the brain, and the brain is the seat of our drives, temperaments and patterns of thought.”

~ Steven Pinker ~

The Communi-biological paradigm introduced by James McCroskey (2001) forms the first ‘layer’ of this palimpsest and nested conceptual framework. This paradigm engages itself in the biological and genetic origin of communicative aspects. I chose the paradigm as the first layer because I agree with McCroskey’s finding that genetics and neurobiology account largely for human communication traits and behaviour. McCroskey argued that genetics and neurobiology accounts for as much as 60–80% of the variance in human communication behaviour (Beatty & McCroskey, 2001:36). This paradigm will be the ‘underwriting’ of the palimpsest conceptual framework: although I will introduce other theoretical frameworks, the biological nature of human communication, language and identity will not be isolated or ignored. It is the first inscription that cannot be erased.

2.7.1.1 Overview of the Communi-biological paradigm

McCroskey, Teven, Minielli and Richmond-McCroskey, (2014) provide an overview of the scholarly legacy left behind by James McCroskey. Largely, McCroskey’s goal was to examine the effectiveness of communication from a variety of theoretical and philosophical standpoints and in a variety of contexts, including different variables (McCroskey *et al.*, 2014). McCroskey coined the term “communication apprehension” in 1977 (Beatty, 2009:893) and defined it as “an individual’s level of fear or anxiety with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 1977:78). Initially, McCroskey developed a theory to explain the cause of communication apprehension based on learning theory, which posed that anxiety forms part of socially conditioned behaviour; hence it can be “unlearned”. However, he later realised that this learning-based model did not sufficiently account for discrepancies in treatment studies (McCroskey, 1984). He rejected the learning theory paradigm in favour of a “new paradigm based on biological factors” (McCroskey, 2010:322). Together with Beatty, he provided empirical evidence that human behaviour is powerfully determined by innate, inherited traits that remain consistent across a variety of communication contexts (Beatty &

McCroskey, 2001). The Communi-biology paradigm proposes that nature determines numerous human communication orientations, such as assertiveness and responsiveness (Cole & McCroskey, 2000), argumentativeness (Wahba & McCroskey, 2005), communication apprehension (Neuliep, Chadour & McCroskey, 2003), humour (Wrench & McCroskey, 2001), verbal aggressiveness (Beatty & McCroskey, 1997) and willingness to communicate (McCroskey, Richmond, Heisel & Hayhurst, 2004). McCroskey and his colleagues also found that communication traits are predictive of one's perception of one's own communication competence (Teven, Richmond, McCroskey & McCroskey, 2010). However, McCroskey was not the only scholar interested in combining the fields of neuroscience and education (cf. Bruer, 1997; Zull, 2002, Huitt & Hummel, 2003). In the next section, I extend the neuroscientific approach to education by considering memory from a biological perspective.

2.7.1.2 Memory-work as a social science research method

This study deals mainly with participants' *memories* of own teachers. The role of own teachers actually consists of the *perceived memory* of that role. It is therefore fitting to explain the workings of the human memory as it is currently understood. In the section that follows, I discuss memory from a biological point of view.

Zull (2011:15) explains memory as “the result of physical connections between neurons” in the brain. He therefore states that different individuals' recollection of past events and experiences will differ as a result of each individual's genetic make-up. Zull (2011) refers to plasticity, which he defines as “the brain's ability to change with experience” over time. Not only do the brains of different individuals have different structures, but their experiences and the ways in which their minds react to them also vary. He also provides insight into memory and emphasises the variance between individuals' memories by suggesting two biological ideas. The first idea is that “living things must deal with the present, using existing cellular machinery” (Zull, 2011:180), and he explains that all individuals continuously undergo chemical and metabolic reactions that influence their behaviour and specifically their forming of memories. The second idea is that “cells have the ability to change their structure and their existing machinery” (Zull, 2011:181). The genetic compositions of individuals differ, therefore the ways in which their cells change under different circumstances are also unique.

2.7.1.3 Application to this study

The communicative behaviour of a person, or teacher, is embedded in language, communication and all other communication-related aspects. I will draw on the foundations of instructional communication, as researched extensively by James McCroskey. McCroskey *et al.*'s (2014) scholarly legacy includes significant influences on the communication context, such as teacher credibility, power, attraction and model teacher emulation. When McCroskey *et al.*'s research failed to yield empirical support for his communication apprehension hypothesis, he redirected his focus from a learning theory to a model focused on biology (McCroskey *et al.*, 2014). Stemming from this shift in focus, a new sub-discipline emerged in 2001: Communi-biology and communication traits: a model that provided evidence that human behaviour is strongly determined by “inborn, biological traits that stay consistent across a variety of communication contexts” (McCroskey *et al.*, 2014:124).

McCroskey's Communi-biological paradigm adds an important aspect to the theoretical lens of this study, which explores the role of the own significant teacher on the professional identity of beginner teachers. As explained earlier in this chapter, the nature of any identity is dynamic and fluid. It is therefore necessary to approach the concept of professional identity, the myriad of influences thereon and the construction thereof from diverse perspectives. In addition, one section of the conceptual framework deals with both the biological and genetic traits of communicative behaviour and memory.

2.7.2 The Possible Selves theory: The second layer

I purposively chose the Possible Selves theory for its description of the ‘shifting’ of identities over a period of time to represent the second ‘layer’ of the palimpsest as part of the conceptual framework. The concept of possible selves was introduced during the mid-80s to add to the conceptions of self-knowledge of that time. According to Markus and Nurius (1986), possible selves represent individuals' ideas of what they might become. It is also a representation of what individuals would like to become and also what they are afraid of becoming (Markus & Nurius: 1986).

2.7.2.1 Overview of the Possible Selves theory

At the core of the Possible Selves theory is the self-concept. Self-concept is characterised as a complex dynamic phenomenon by many researchers (Rosenberg, 1979; Greenwald, 1980;

Cantor & Kilstrom, 1983; Tesser & Campbell, 1984). In 1986, Markus and Nurius considered one critical domain of self-knowledge, that of possible selves, to be unexplored and expressed the opinion that the self-concept was typically regarded as a “single, generalized view of the self”. They define possible selves as the type of knowledge that pertains to “how individuals think about their potential and about their future” (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and further link possible selves to the dynamic properties of the self-concept, i.e. to motivation, distortion and change, “both momentary and enduring”. In addition, possible selves derive from representations of the past self and include accounts of the future self (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The past and future selves are different from the current or now selves but, according to Marcus and Nurius (1986), the different selves are all closely connected. It is upon these links that I will draw to establish a link with my exploration of the influence of the own teacher.

2.7.2.2 Application to this study

The Possible Selves theory is significant for research on teacher identity as it focuses on the examination of the development of the newest teachers: student teachers engaged in their final teaching practicum and newly qualified teachers during their first year of teaching (Hamman *et al.*, 2010). What makes it relevant to this specific study is that it provides a theoretical framework for examining future-oriented, identity-relevant, goal-directed thinking in the present (Hamman *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, it examines individuals (teachers) at varying points of transition from student to teacher. This study is an investigation of the role of own teachers in the professional identity of beginner teachers, and this theory implies that even though the beginner teacher may have more than a year’s teaching experience, she still fits into the role of beginner teacher in relation to the own teacher.

In Chapter 1, I discussed my own experiences with own teachers, two of whom were very positive and motivating. Unfortunately, there are many teachers/teaching students who have had dreadfully destructive experiences involving own teachers. The own teacher’s influence is not necessarily always purely positive. There are teachers who teach a subject they like, but defy the influence of one or more own teachers in all of their teaching practices as a result of painful or negative experiences. The fact that the Possible Selves theory deals with distortion (of the image of the own teacher in this case), proves it to be particularly functional for the scope of my study.

2.7.3 McCroskey's Instructional Communication model: The final layer

In order for people to influence each other, they need to be *together* in a physical or psychological situation. For own teachers to have an influence on beginner teachers there must have been contact in specific situations over a sustained period. Usually the more time two people spend together, the more complex these influences become. However, it is not impossible for people to have a profound influence on each other after spending just a short time together. In the case of the beginner/own teacher, the *relationship* at the time is important. For the purpose of the study, the beginner teacher is still a learner or beginner teacher at the time during which the influence occurs. This relationship is also indicative of a power relationship: the beginner teacher is a learner or student while the own teacher is a practising teacher and therefore in a position of authority. This relationship of power has an effect on the interaction taking place between the own teacher and the beginner teacher (or learner) as they are not equals in this relationship. This has bearing on the way they communicate: the initial form of communication is *instructional communication*, rather than social or any other kind of communication. The lens then, through which the learner (beginner teacher) perceives the own teacher and her behaviour is in a way tainted with the instructional nature of the communication setting.

2.7.3.1 Overview of McCroskey's model of Instructional Communication

The perceptions and experiences of the beginner teacher (as a learner) take place mainly in a specific environment or space, namely the classroom. It is possible that beginner teachers (as learners) and own teachers may find themselves together in other spaces, such as sports teams, or during participation in cultural and other school activities. However, the core sphere of 'togetherness' is in the classroom. McCroskey's Instructional Communication model provides a foundation for instructional communication and a framework for a better understanding of the diverse aspects relevant to the classroom, and was specifically designed to explain communication behaviour in such a context. McCroskey (2004) recommends six core components in his model of instruction. For the purpose of this study, the focus will be on four of these components, namely the instructional environment, teachers, teachers' verbal and non-verbal (communicative) behaviour and learners' perceptions of the teacher. I will explain each component briefly below.

First, the instructional environment includes elements such as the nature of the classroom, the sociocultural background and history of the specific institution, the diverse group of learners attending the institution and the cultural (and other) variances they bring, the physical and social climate and the political environment (McCroskey *et al.*, 2004). All these factors play a role in the dynamics of the teacher-learner relationship, consequently they are the influences on the role of the own teacher. Most of these factors are beyond the control of the learners and own teachers, however, at the time the learners may not perceive this to be case, which in turn will have an influence of how they perceive the own teachers.

Second, teachers are also responsible for the variance in the instructional system as they differ from each other and from their students. As regards the teachers, the main differences lie in their pedagogical knowledge, levels of intelligence, content knowledge, communication competence and experience of living among other people (McCroskey *et al.*, 2004). Their world views may also differ from those of their students and all these elements play a role in the communicative choices they make in the classroom, the behaviour resulting from those decisions, and subsequently in their students' perceptions.

Third, teachers' verbal and non-verbal behaviours introduce another aspect of variance in the instructional communication environment. No two teachers communicate in exactly the same way. What teachers say, how they say it and what they "do nonverbally constitutes a continuous stream of messages which impact the meanings which are stimulated in students' minds" (McCroskey *et al.*, 2004:199).

Fourth, learners' perceptions of the teacher will be generated "primarily on the basis of the teachers' verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors" (McCroskey, 2004:199). It is in some cases true that the learners have certain perceptions about the teacher even before there is any direct contact between them (McCroskey, *et al.*, 2004). These pre-existing perceptions may affect how learners experience the teacher. In other cases, where the teacher is completely unknown to the learners, they will start to develop perceptions of the teacher as soon as exposure takes place (McCroskey *et al.*, 2004).

2.7.3.2 Application to this study

McCroskey's model of instructional communication accounts for all the important aspects of the influence of the own teacher on the professional identity of the beginner teacher as a learner,

which relates to the principal research question formulated for the purpose of this study. One of the results of McCroskey's research into the instructional environment indicates that teacher temperament is demonstrated in teacher communication behaviours, which are observed by students (McCroskey *et al.*, 2004). McCroskey *et al.* (2004) found a connection between these behaviours and students' perceptions of the teacher, which in turn influences learners' motivation, affective learning and the loss of learning. This finding links to the Possible Selves theory, where the term 'possible selves' is defined as the type of knowledge that concerns the level of motivation of an individual, the properties of the self-concept and the thoughts of individuals about their potential and their future (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

2.7.4 Pulling the conceptual threads together: The final palimpsest

Like the palimpsest, the three conceptual constructs as explained above sometimes obscure each other – at times the 'writings' are knitted together so closely that it becomes difficult to extricate them from each other, while at other times they are clearly discernible next to each other. The Communi-biological paradigm is the 'underwriting', the non-negotiable underpinning of human communicative behaviour. It involves our genetic make-up, hormones, endocrine and many other systems, in fact all the physical and biological aspects that no one can control or change. It is the unique and individual genetic blueprint that may explain why each individual reacts differently. The Possible Selves theory, the second layer, is to some extent the 'sub-conscious' layer of the palimpsest and elucidates the psychological driving forces of the individual's communicative decisions, which result in a variety of dissimilar communication behaviours. Finally, McCroskey's Instructional Communication model provides a pragmatic explanation of the way the significant role players fit together, mutually influencing each other. It offers a concrete platform for understanding the symbiosis of the own teacher and the beginner teacher in the classroom environment: the language-identity sphere where they meet for the first time and perceptions are formed. In the next section, I highlight the specific tenets of the Communi-biological paradigm (McCroskey, 2001), the Possible Selves theory (Marcus & Nurius, 1986) and McCroskey's Instructional Communication model, to which the findings of this study will be matched.

The Communi-biological paradigm, (McCroskey, 2001)

In the first place, individuals' biological and genetic origin of communicative aspects differ, and so do the ways in which they recollect past incidents, attach meaning to events, experiences

and memories (McCroskey, 2001; Zull, 2011). Second, human behaviour is determined by innate, inherited traits that remain consistent across a variety of communication contexts and is different for each individual (Beatty & McCroskey, 2001). Third, nature determines several human communication orientations. The aspects focused on in this study include assertiveness (Cole & McCroskey, 2000), responsiveness, argumentativeness (Wahba & McCroskey, 2005), humour (Wrench & McCroskey, 2001), willingness to communicate (McCroskey *et al.*, 2004) and perception of one's own communication competence (Teven *et al.*, 2010).

The Possible Selves theory (Marcus & Nurius, 1986)

First, the concept of Possible Selves refers to the type of knowledge displayed by individuals when they refer to the ideas of what they might become, would like to become, or are perhaps afraid of becoming (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Second, possible selves are linked to motivation, distortion and change (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Third, possible selves derive from representations of the past self and include accounts of the future self (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Fourth, the past and future selves are different from the current or now selves, and fifth, the different selves are closely connected (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

McCroskey's Instructional Communication model (2004)

According to this model, instructional environments differ in terms of the nature of the classroom, the sociocultural background and history of the specific institution, the physical and social climate and the political environment (McCroskey *et al.*, 2004). Own teachers bring variance into the instructional context, mainly in terms of pedagogical knowledge, levels of intelligence, content knowledge, communication competence and experience amongst others (McCroskey *et al.*, 2004), and their verbal and non-verbal forms of behaviour are inconsistent with the instructional communication environment. Their communicative behaviour and what they "do nonverbally constitutes a continuous stream of messages which impact the meanings which are stimulated in students' minds" (McCroskey *et al.*, 2004:199). Finally, beginner teachers' perceptions (while they are learners) of own teachers are generated "primarily on the basis of the teachers' verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors" (McCroskey *et al.*, 2004: 199).

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I explained the concept of teacher professional identity by discussing the concepts of identity and teacher identity in different sections according to the most significant aspects embedded in each. I briefly pointed out the dual nature of the literature review. Thereafter I discussed the ways in which beginner teachers construct their professional identities as a function of their personal identities. After the discussion of these relevant concepts, I moved on to a review of the existing literature on the influence of own teachers on the professional teacher identities of beginner teachers. I provided an analysis of similar studies in the international and national landscapes, and a summary of findings from the relevant literature. Following the literature review, I proposed a conceptual framework which had been developed from different tenets of the Communi-biological Paradigm (McCroskey, 2001), the Possible Selves theory of Marcus and Nurius (1986) and McCroskey's Instructional Model of Communication (2004). In the next chapter, I shall discuss the research methodology as well as the rationale for all the methodological choices made for this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH STRATEGY

“To maintain the state of doubt and to carry on systematic and protracted inquiry – these are the essentials of thinking.”

~ John Dewey (1977) ~

3.1 Introduction

In her novel, “Die Judaskus”, Joan Hambidge (1998) describes how the author had to walk through a forest like the wanderer referred to by Umberto Eco (1980), having to decode signs. In this study, I am an entity wading through a forest of stories, also decoding signs to find or create the space for the stories of my participants. Hambidge (1998) describes that the author had to exploit all her semiotic skills to survive in this symbolic forest. However, instead of using semiotic skills to survive, I will draw on specific paradigms, methodology and strategies purposefully chosen to guide me through this study. Hambidge (1998) also comments on the omnipresent dangers in the forest. The danger in my quest lies in that I can deviate too far from the focal point of my participants’ stories; I can become entangled in less significant details of other stories or even my own. I am in danger of being lured away from their voices, telling their stories, by strong voices of narrators of others stories. Hence, I made heedful selections of methodologies and strategies that were employed, to arrive at a new cleared-out space in this forest of stories to plant a new story that can grow and branch out in new directions. The stories of my participants are inimitable in character: I want to tell the story of how own teachers influence the construction of identity of the beginner teacher. That is my focus; these are our stories.

The aim of this study is to explore the role of the own teachers in the process of the identity construction of beginner teachers. In chapter 2, I presented a conceptual lens in the form of a palimpsest to this study that was derived from an exploration of the literature relevant to my study. In chapter 3, I explain my role as researcher, refer to, and quote from my researcher’s diary to shed light on how I dealt with all aspects during the journey of this study. I explain and elaborate on my methodological decisions as they inform the study. I justify my choice of research design and data collection strategies. I also set out the ethical issues that I encountered and dealt with during the study. I describe the dilemmas, challenges and limitations that were

part of this journey. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of the steps taken to ensure quality.

3.2 Role of the researcher

In the section that follows I explain my role as researcher as primary author of the text. In this section I highlight how I see myself in the research process and how I view my ‘duties’ (or different roles) as author and researcher. At first I found it overwhelming to explain my role as researcher; it seems limiting to explain it in a few pages. Also, I was plagued by the question of loosening myself of who I am, and isolating myself in a sense to only being ‘the researcher’. Besides, or maybe as a result of, this continuous emotional conflict, I experienced a period of complete ‘dryness’ in my writing. I could not write. An entry in my research diary captures this moment in the following thought moment. Thereafter I explain my role as researcher as I had eventually figured it out.

Thought moment 3.1

I think I need to express myself more tangibly. It’s a period of desolation and dryness. In English there is not an expressive word for “magteloos”, powerlessness does not describe it completely. You are stripped of power, NOT able to do something or act in a particular way, says Google. I am decomposing, falling apart, I am not able to construct my story. My story writes itself now.

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; **the centre cannot hold**;*

[Who wrote this?? I’ve always known, I don’t even know that now]

Research Diary, 2014

3.2.1 My role as ‘reader/writer-researcher’

From a young age, I have been an avid reader, I read everything I could lay my hands on. Before I could read, my parents read to me often, mostly fantasy, fairy tales and Bible stories. Thereafter, I read all the teenage novels available at the time and because I grew up in small towns (we moved around frequently) there was not a great variety of teenage literature available in the libraries. During my years as a university student, I was exposed to a variety of literary texts as part of my field of study. I have strongly been influenced by Afrikaans

writers of poetry and prose, especially the group of writers called ‘Die Sestigers’⁵. With their writing as vehicle, this group of writers (and others) commented on the political and socio-political milieu of the time in South Africa. Their writings and the literary works of other authors who I had met through the South African writers became the lens through which I viewed the world. At the same time, in my very early twenties, I met my most significant ‘teacher influence’ with whom I spent a great deal of time, discussing my new-found worldviews and was subsequently influenced by *her* worldviews.

I think it was during the course of this period that the most profound developments in my own identity construction occurred. In 2000 I wrote a collection of poems that were published in an Afrikaans anthology (Nuwe Stemme 2) in 2001. This marked the pinnacle of my ‘career as reader’ which was evident from the poems I had written and the beginning of my ‘career as writer’. My years of reading reflectively and engagingly culminated into this selection of poems where the voices of my favourite and most influential authors was audible through the intertextual style of writing I had employed. This role is significant to the study because I am still an engaging and involved reader; where in this case the stories I read are those of my participants of the study. I cannot read in any other way than regarding the story/transcribed interview as text and more so as *literary* text. Nor can I write in any other way than involving the voices of other authors and include literary elements. Therefore, I view my role as researcher also as one of reader/writer, reading and writing in the only way that I can.

3.2.2 My role as ‘woman-researcher’

“‘There’s this world,’ she banged the wall graphically, ‘and there’s this world,’ she thumped her chest. ‘If you want to make sense of either, you have to take notice of both.’”

~ Jeanette Winterson (1985) ~

I am a white female South African citizen. To my mind I am first and foremost a woman, then a human being, a person. I cannot truly explain my strong inclination towards womanhood and women rights but it does affect my role as researcher. During my adolescent phase, I mostly read romantic novels, which I would later learn were not regarded by literary critiques as ‘good’

⁵ Giliomee (2003:83) describes this literary movement, known as the Sestigers, as “the generation of the sixties who embraced secularization, modernity, racial tolerance and sexual freedom, and used modern literary techniques and subject matter to explore these themes”.

literature, however popular. In these stories, women were always waiting for the perfect male partner and only when he was ‘found’, she could be entirely happy. These story lines bothered me from a young age: I could not understand why women could not be strong or also make important decisions, have the great jobs or drive *cool* cars. It also bothered me that from all the stories I had read, all the women had more or less similar physical characteristics. I remember wondering about their friends who may have been overweight or disabled or *less-perfect*, would they then never find fulfilment in life? Obviously one had to be perfect to find the perfect man, to be perfectly happy. I remember feeling uncomfortable with the portrayal of women; and the fact that I have not been or could not be exposed to literature illustrating women otherwise, was in itself an indication of the fact that women were not yet as liberated as they should have been.

I was introduced, exposed to and exposed myself to women writers and literature again during my years as a university student. As referred to, it was during this time that I had met my personal most influential own teacher, who happened to be female. It is significant that although I do not regard myself as a pure feminist in the traditional way, I should state that I regard the world around me from what I like to call “female eyes”. I cannot loosen myself from my core identity which includes a strong inclination towards women not only viewed as a minority group, but also as the stronger sex. In this study I will explore the stories of (mostly) female participants and I regard it as my role as researcher to tell their stories from the point of view of a *woman*.

3.2.3 My role as ‘researcher-in-society’

I regard my role as researcher also as one of social commentator. While I guarded against the explicit sharing of my own world views with participants, I correspondingly reflected on what participants shared also from a socio-political point of view. I wrote in my research diary about their relations to their worlds and specifically the South African landscape. I cannot and should not untie *myself as researcher* from *myself as South African*. I find this terminology problematic to some extent. I am an African, not *only* a South African. In the majority of cultures in South Africa, people who call themselves *African*, are expected to be black, which I am not. I was born in Africa and I am as much a child of Africa as my black (or other) counterparts. I am not really politically inclined nor have I ever played a role in any kind of politics. However, I am *human-inclined*, which to my mind, implies that I am on the side of

the person, whomever that person may be. If the person/participant has suffered any discrimination or injustice I automatically side with the person suffering from the injustice.

From my perspective of my role as ‘reader/writer-researcher’, I view my role as researcher to include the one of ‘writer’. As a result of the strong literary influence of the ‘Sestigers’ and other anti-Apartheid writers, I cannot but observe my role as that of social commentator. I listen to the stories of participants, but also look at these stories against the backdrop of the history of our country and all the other innumerable socio-political factors influencing the role of the own teacher in the lives of my participants.

Thought moment 3.2

Tonight I watched the old Afrikaans movie, *Fiela se kind* (Fiela’s Child). I watched her brown mouth when she whispered to herself: “*Vandag moet jy seil Fiela, vandag moet jy laag seil soos ‘n slang.*”^{*} I had the same feeling I always have when white people are misusing a position of power: how can I be part of them?

Research Diary, Somewhere in December 2014

^{*} “*Today you have to slide Fiela, today you have to slide low, like a snake.*”

3.2.4 My role as ‘mindful observer’ – researcher

Nieuwenhuis (2015) distinguishes between four types of observation in qualitative research, namely, the complete observer, observer as participant, participant as observer and complete participant. Although he describes observation in this case as a method of data collection, I view my role as researcher correspondingly as one of observer. In this study my role as researcher was a blend of the characteristics of the ‘observer as participant’ and the ‘participant as observer’, as suggested by Nieuwenhuis (2015). In the case of the researcher being the ‘observer as participant’ the distinct quality drawn upon is that of the researcher looking for patterns of “behaviour in a particular community to understand the assumptions, values and beliefs and to make sense of the social dynamics” (Nieuwenhuis, 2015:25). In this study my role as researcher was to learn about the stories of participants not only by listening to the actual words, or engaging in discourse, but also through a careful study of their communicative behaviour and the paralinguistic clues in their speech. Therefore, as researcher, I am also an observer who not only listens empathically but also listens to how a story is told. Another characteristic of the ‘observer as participant’ is that the researcher remains uninvolved and “does not influence the dynamics of the setting” (Nieuwenhuis, 2015). Although the research

‘setting’ in this case was the interview situation, the same principles can be applied. My role as researcher entailed that I had to remain uninvolved to a certain extent and not influence the dynamics of the interview situation too severely even though I had played the role of observer and, to an extent, participant.

Furthermore, my role as ‘participant as observer’ is evident during the interview and research process. I view myself as a ‘participant’ to some extent, mainly because I created certain questions in the minds of the participants. I put the process of thinking about the role of the own teacher into motion, I started and directed the thoughts of participants and can thus not otherwise be viewed than being a participant in this process. My role as participant necessitated only a very small portion of the research process. My role was largely that of catalyst to specific thought processes of participants. I further view myself as a participant because I had the power to change the direction of the interview with particular probing questions.

The core of this aspect of my role as researcher is the *mindfulness* with which I regarded the research process. I fulfilled my role as researcher from a point of mindfulness, I was attentive to detail, to the emotions of participants and the subtle changes in their communicative behaviour, and as heedful as I could be to their needs. I consider myself as a thoughtful writer. The thoughtful and reflective nature of my writing is evident in my research diary in which I reported extensively on aspects of the whole research process. Reflexivity was another element of my approach to the research process. According to Watt (2007), the researcher is the primary ‘instrument’ of qualitative data collection and analysis, reflectivity and reflexivity is thus essential. Being reflexive is particular part of reflective research. Reflexivity indicates reflection on different levels and the consideration of (or ‘thinking about’) more than one concept at the same time (Lubbe, 2005). Reflexivity also involves the process in which the researcher contemplates the ways in which their own behaviour, values and perceptions may impress upon the research setting and may play a role in the data gathering and process of analysis (Gerrish & Lacey, 2006; Lambert, Jomeen & McSherry, 2010). Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) poses that it is through reflexivity that the researcher’s construction of what is being explored becomes more visible. For the purpose of this study I use the concepts of reflexive and reflective together, while Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000) distinguish between the two.

3.2.5 My role as post-modernist researcher

I view myself as post-modernist researcher in terms of the writing style that I chose to employ throughout the study. Taking on the role of a post-modernist researcher allowed me to involve the reader of this text/study. In the next section I explain the ‘role’ of the reader as part of my text and describe the writing style which I chose for this study, with intertexts as a central concept.

The reader as part of a post-modern study

People listen to stories and experience events, and make sense of them from within their own paradigms; each person therefore looks at life through a different lens. These lenses are coloured by our different social and historical backgrounds, our personality traits and the variances in our genetic makeup. The traditional narrative consists mainly of a theme, characters, a plot, key events and a specific setting. Connelly and Clandinin (1999, p. 101) describe the crucial elements of the narrative as emplotment, character, scene, time and place. Watson (2006, p. 84) added two supplementary elements of stories (narratives) to those suggested by Connelly and Clandinin, namely the narrator and the audience. In this study, I expand Watson’s (2006) idea by granting these elements a very unique position in the scope of my study. I will refer to ‘my’ story as ‘our’ story since, by reading this text, you have already become part of ‘my’ story. I write this ‘story’ with the reader in mind, thinking about how this text will affect you, what possible rippling effect this may have as a result of the different interpretations by different readers.

The significance of intertexts in this study

Lemaster (2012:1), who describes intertextuality as the “reference to or application of a literary, media, or social ‘text’ within another literary, media, or social text”, distinguishes between two forms of intertextuality: first, a *book in a book*, where intertextuality is a “brief or prolonged reference to a literary text in a second literary text”, and second, *other text in a book*, where intertextuality is a “brief or prolonged reference to a media or social ‘text’ in a literary text”. Although closer to the latter, this study took on a unique intertextual format, where the ‘book’ is represented by the study in which several intertextual references are dispersed, including socio-political issues, my personal thoughts (as presented in thought moments), personal visual palimpsests, palimpsests of different research aspects, various quotations from the works of

other authors, the narratives of participants about influences exerted by their own teachers and other intertextual influences in their lives.

According to Lemaster (2012:1), intertextuality influences a text in two ways. First, intertextuality can “sometimes destabilize, or shake up our understanding of the original text”. Seen in this light, intertextuality serves as an underlying presentation of the concept of professional identity and involves the reader in both the nature of the study and the writing style. Second, intertextuality can also influence the reader’s understanding of the text, “causing us to ‘reflexively’ re-read, or reconsider, our understanding of the original text” (Lemaster, 2012:1). This is the most significant reason for adopting an intertextual writing style. The ‘hidden’ or secondary reason is to urge the reader to make sense of the research findings (and the entire study) in accordance with his or her own subjective world view and paradigmatic stances. Barthes (1967:39) describes intertextuality as a way to bring a new text into being when he says that “any text is a new tissue of past citations”. With this approach, I create room for numerous interpretations of the findings of the study, which may lead to further research in the field of beginner teachers’ professional identity.

The function of intertexts in this study

The intertextual writing style has two functions. The first is that it “invites a *comparison* between your understanding of the text outside of the book [study], and its use inside of the book [study]” (Lemaster, 2012, p.1). In this case “book” is substituted with “study”, inviting the reader of the text to “perceive beyond what is written” by regarding the intertexts used in this study as part of and relevant to the study. Lemaster (2012:1) further states that:

... intertextuality involves an implicit comparison by putting two ‘texts’ together. When literature references another text, we are asked to draw from our knowledge of the text in its original form, and compare this to how it is being used, changed, or reframed by the primary book.

The purposeful intertextual writing used for this study poses a similar request to the reader of the study. Comprehension of the ‘scientific’ text in its original form (the study) should be ‘reframed’ in correlation with the reader’s own subjective interpretation of other texts included or referred to in the study. Lemaster (2012:1) summarises the function of the intertextual writing of this study as follows:

Intertextuality asks us to think about why the author is choosing this particular literary or social text, how they are including the text in the book [study], and to what effect is the text re-imagined by the book [study], or the book [study] shaped by the text.

The second function is to provide a rationale for the metaphorical use of the palimpsest throughout the study. The employment of an intertextual writing style accounts for the role of ‘other’ literary influences, such as the description of my role as researcher (3.2); the palimpsest conceptual framework (cf. Chapter 2); a palimpsest research design and methodological decisions (3.4); the use of Dali’s Paranoiac Critical method to introduce participants (cf. Chapter 4); and the inclusion of intertextual influences on the professional identities of participants (cf. Chapter 4). Furthermore, intertextual writing allows me the freedom to include other ‘voices’ “without recourse to traditional notions of authorship” (Lemaster, 2012:2). Lemaster (2012:2) summarises the function of intertextual writing in this study as follows:

It subverts the concept of the text as self-sufficient, hermetic totality, foregrounding, in its stead, the fact that all literary production takes place in the presence of other texts; they are, in effect, palimpsests.

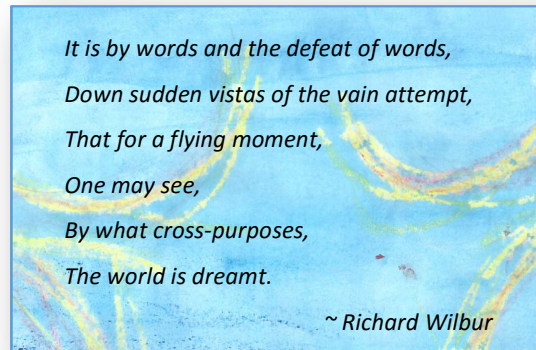
The study as a post-modern palimpsest metaphor

According to the post-modern approach followed in this study, the study itself becomes an intertext of sorts, placed in a variety of literary (and other) texts, as well as in the current South African socio-political milieu. In the following section, I discuss the metaphor of the palimpsest on which this study was based. This study took on the form of a “post-modern hybridized or split text” (Diamond & Mullen, 1999:24). This writing style is best explained by the concept of a palimpsest, also the extended metaphor through the whole study. In a palimpsest (from palim: again; psestos: rubbed smooth), different texts can be set against one another and can switch places, or can be reinscribed, like on parchment, canvas and brass (Diamond & Mullen, 1999:24). The original palimpsest was a parchment prepared from the hides of animals, preferably calfskin, and used for writing on as early as in the sixth century in Western Europe. It was more durable than paper or papyrus and less expensive. However, because of the dense consistency of the material, it was difficult to erase the writing. In order to reuse these palimpsests, scholars would wash the writing from it using milk and oat bran, but the earlier inscriptions, though faded, would always remain and could be deciphered if one looked at it closely. What is significant is that the same concepts or writings dealing with the same kind of topics would be written on the same palimpsest, and usually by the same people. In rare cases

palimpsests were stolen because texts were regarded as offensive or even as heresy. Religious leaders would then try hard to ‘undo’ the offensive texts. In many cases, this proved to be impossible, and those palimpsests were then buried or hidden.

Palimpsests are created by using various different materials on surfaces in numerous layers. I purposefully created and included purely personal and original examples of palimpsests to visually illustrate the integrated nature of the life stories of teachers and the people and events that influenced them, as well as my own understanding and interpretation of the concept. The figures below are examples of my own palimpsests. Each one is accompanied by an explanation of its relevance in thought moments from my researcher’s diary.

Figure 3.1: Own palimpsest I (2013)



Thought moment 3.3

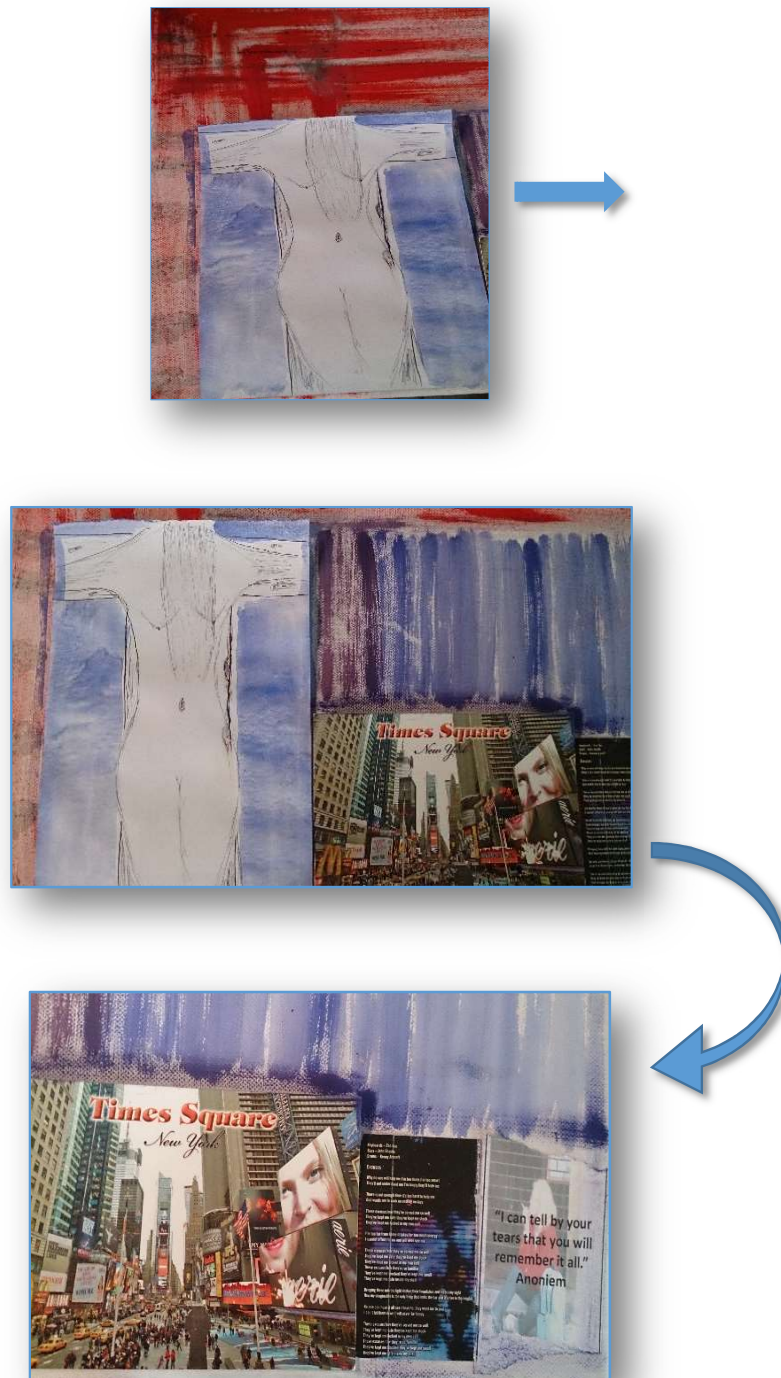
Relevance of Own palimpsest I (2013)

I created the first layer of this palimpsest with a pencil sketch of a nude female torso on a white canvas. The second layer consists of water colour paint and I added a layer of coloured crayon on the pencil and water colour. The final inscription was another layer of water colour and an imprint of a quotation.

During the planning stage of this study, I initially felt that it was very important to demonstrate my stance as a feminist researcher. With this palimpsest and the accompanying quotation, I intended to illustrate my ‘nakedness’, coupled with fear in terms of the study I embarked on. I was scared, with nothing to protect me.

Research diary, 2013

Figure 3.2: Own palimpsest II (2015)



Thought moment 3.4

Relevance of Own palimpsest II (2015)

After I returned from the AERA conference in the States, I had experienced growth on different levels. I thought about the changes to my professional identity and included a picture of myself as a young teacher, also taken abroad (UK, 2010). I was now able to ‘cover’ myself as a nude female with layers of memories, which manifested in personal and professional growth.

Significantly, the pencil sketch of the nude female torso on white canvas and water colour over the pencil were now less evident. I covered the first inscription with layers consisting of a postcard memento from AERA conference (USA), an earlier picture taken during my teaching years and lyrics of a song as intertexts and added a layer of translucent glue. I had to use the glue since the layers became ‘thicker’ and this reminded me of memories which glue experiences of events and people together.

Research diary, 2013

3.3 Paradigmatic perspectives

In this text, the concept of the palimpsest was foregrounded as the postmodern writing style. This concept will be drawn upon further in my description of my choice of paradigmatic perspectives. As in the case of a theoretical or conceptual framework as discussed in chapter two, I am of the opinion that in this study I cannot employ a sole paradigmatic perspective. In the next section I will discuss the paradigmatic choices which guided my underpinning philosophy regarding the nature and reality of being and what can be known about it (ontology), and the nature of the relationship between the researcher and what can be learned (epistemology), (Terreblanche & Durrheim, 1999). Thereafter I will describe my choice of methodological paradigm, where methodology postulates how researchers should go about pragmatically studying what they believe can be known (Terreblanche & Durrheim, 1999).

Thought moment 3.5

I find it challenging to try to ‘box’ my beliefs in chapter three. When reading about the various paradigmatic perspectives in qualitative research, I came to the realisation that in every one of these perspectives is a tenet with which I agree, which speaks to me. I guess this is the case because all qualitative researchers are trying to explain the same phenomena: human beings and their behaviour. I came to the conclusion that I will not be true to myself as writer or as my role as researcher if I chose only one perspective. I will have to choose those closest to my core beliefs.

“I can see it, hear it, feel it, taste it – but I can never be on the inside of it with you. I cannot even be sure whether I really know what it is like. Is it ‘like’ my own? Or incomparable? Just as I can never know if what you see at any given moment is exactly the same as what I see. We look at a colour. We both call it red. But it is only because we have been taught to call it by that name. There is no guarantee – not ever – that we see it in the same way, that your red is my red.” – Andre P. Brink, Before I forget, 2005

Research diary, 2014

3.3.1 Meta-theoretical paradigm

“So the past, because it is past, is only malleable where once it was flexible. Once it could change its mind, now it can only undergo change. The lens can be tinted, tilted, smashed.”

~ Jeanette Winterson, (1985) ~

3.3.1.1 First layer (Underwriting): Interpretive social science, constructivism and interpretivism

Interpretive social science is related to hermeneutics, which means “making the obscure plain” (Blakie, 1993:28). Interpretive research also includes the constructivist approach to social research (Neuman, 1993). It emphasizes a detailed examination of text, and true meaning is only discovered through a detailed study of the text (Neuman, 1997). I view myself as a constructivist-interpretivist researcher because I strongly lean towards the tenets of both the constructivist and interpretivist paradigms. Thus, the first ‘layer’ of my meta-theoretical stance is firstly two-fold in the sense that I embrace the perspectives of both the constructivist and interpretivist researcher. According to Cohen *et al.* (2007), interpretive researchers “begin with individuals and set out to understand their interpretations of the world around them”. Glaser

and Strauss (1967) added to this approach by stating that theory must surface from ‘particular situations’: these ‘situations’ are the interaction I had with participants during interviews. Cohen *et al.* (2007) further explains that the emerging data mirrors the meanings and purposes of the participants (‘those people who are their source’). This happened during the interviews I conducted: the data collected was unique and original, participants shared not only a variety of stories, but a variety of *details* in a story.

The aim of the interpretive researcher is to understand what an individual’s ‘reality’ is, how it carries on at one time and place *and* to compare that reality to other/more realities in different times and settings (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The diversity in the cultural and historical backgrounds of participants showed that an interpretive stance is significant for this study. Although this study focused on one primary question, the stories shared by participants were embedded in different realities, which I have to bear in mind when interpreting the findings. Cohen *et al.* (2007) states that the interpretivist approach embraces the diversity of sets of meanings (data) and the understanding (interpretations) thereof, which links strongly to the nature of the stories shared by participants. During an interview with Cassie, I became aware of the value of the interpretivist approach. She was teaching in Rustenburg during the Marikana strikes⁶. When I started the interview with the probing question of asking participants to tell me more about themselves, she mentioned the strikes in her very first response by saying that they were all heavily affected by it:

- Cassie: So, all the kids ... it’s a Black school ... I teach Grade 2, full work load, and ja... we were very ... highly effected by the strikes.
- Y: In what ways?
- Cassie: Well, I’m not really so sure what actually happened with the political side of the strike, but... I can’t even tell you what the end result of that was, to be perfectly honest, but obviously the kids in the community ... the parents are employed, most of them by mines. By Impala in particular. As a result, I mean, when you don’t have a pay cheque for five or six months, there’s not money to pay school fees which you can imagine what that does to people.

⁶ Marikana strikes: The Marikana massacre started as a strike at a mine owned by Lonmin in the Marikana area, close to Rustenburg, South Africa in 2012. The event resulted in the deaths of 44 people, 41 of whom were striking mineworkers killed by police.

De Vos *et al.* (2011:7) states that from a constructivist point of view, the research participants become active and involved role players in “all the phases of the process and indeed become partners in the total endeavour”. This view of De Vos *et al.* (2007) was evident in the interview with the participant whom I named Fairy. She was very interested in the research process itself as well as the primary research question. She also stayed in contact with me and frequently asked about my progress. She says the following about the study:

- Fairy: Maybe you must do a psychological study instead of an educational one, because it feels to me as if we border more on a psychological...this has also a lot of psychological insight, so it's different fields, you know, it is partly educational and partly educational psychology.
- Y Yes?
- Fairy: So I think what you now...you are sitting on a very big thing here, I think. I don't think you realise how big this whole thing is. It can be a new... it can be a beginning of something big. That's how I feel.

Creswell (2007:20) agrees by adding that participants want to understand the world they live in and in this manner “can influence the course of the total process and have a say in everything that takes place”. This view of Creswell (2007:20) holds a strong link to the interview protocol as a data collection strategy which I followed: I created an opportunity for participants to ‘have their own say’ in all the research events. I established a participant-researcher relationship where participants felt that they have a platform to construct and re-construct their stories until they felt they have shared their stories in the most authentic way. Following a constructivist approach created the opportunity for me as researcher to employ member checking not only as quality measurement, but also as yet another way of involving the participant as active role player in the research events.

3.3.1.2 Second layer: Un-critical social science, postmodernism and feminism

Both feminist and post-modern research criticise positivism and offer alternatives that build on interpretive and critical social science (Neuman, 1997). The basic nature of social reality suggested by the interpretive approach, is that human social life is ‘an accomplishment’, ‘intentionally created out of the purposeful actions of interacting social beings’ and is ‘largely what people perceive it to be’ (Neuman, 1997:69). The second layer of the palimpsest consisting of meta-theoretical paradigms deal with the tenets of postmodernism and feminism

as branches of an ‘uncritical’ social science. I purposefully used my own term ‘uncritical’ to state categorically that although this study includes paradigms that may be regarded in some scientific communities as ‘critical’ and criticizing other paradigms, the aim of this study is not one of criticism. Next I describe tenets of the postmodern and feminist approaches that have been employed in the study.

i) Postmodernism

In terms of the format of the study and the style of writing I followed a postmodernism approach. I employed a post-modernist paradigm specifically in terms of the *writing style* and my approach to the *text*. This is also the reason I refer to the study interchangeably as ‘text’ and ‘study’; invariably, the study is a text, (cf. Chapter 1). The fact that I offered the choice of autobiographical sketches through any visual medium of the participant’s choice further elucidates my choice for a post-modern writing style.

Thought moment 3.6

On Post-modernism:

*“Two hundred miles from the surface of the earth there is no gravity. The laws of motion are suspended. You could turn somersaults slowly slowly, weight into weightlessness, nowhere to fall. As you lay on your back paddling in space you might notice your feet had fled your head. You are stretching slowly slowly, getting longer, your joints are slipping away from their usual places. There is no connection between your shoulder and your arm. You will break up bone by bone, fractured from who you are, drifting away now, the centre cannot hold.” – Jeanette Winterson, *Written on the body**

Research Diary, Somewhere late 2014

Postmodernism values ‘voice’: the subjective and multiple voices of individuals (Jansen, 2007). Postmodernism also emphasises concepts such as “uncertainty, disorder, indeterminacy and regression” rather than inevitable progress (Jansen, 2007:21). I believe these concepts link strongly to the nature of the construction of a teacher identity: the researcher cannot know beforehand if there even will be a process of identity construction or what the nature of the construction, if any, will be. It is the uncertainty which I explored during interviews by asking relevant questions and by analysing the disorder of an identity construction process to come closer to understanding. The construction of a teacher identity is a lifelong process and the format of this text mirrored the nature of that construction process: the slippery, complex

process I believe it to be. Jansen (2007:22) states further that the postmodernism approach “assigns values to multiple meanings rather than the single, authoritative voice of the expert/scientist.” In this text there is no single voice. Not only were stories and memories of different stages of their lives shared by participants, but the heart of the text is the voice of the own teacher which took on a variety of different tones, intonations and nuances and was even completely silent in some cases. Although this study is in no way arts-based in the full sense of the word, I made use of participants’ visual representations of their life stories as intertexts (described in chapter one) to create linguistic and creative depth and to extend the idea of the life stories of the teachers I want to examine. This study/text took on the form of a “post-modern hybridized or split text” (Diamond & Mullen, 1999). The idea of postmodernism was further strengthened in the sense that participants had a *choice*, I created the opportunity but did not ‘force’ them or even implied that I had ‘wanted’ them to make use of this opportunity.

ii) Feminism

“As far as I was concerned men were something you had around the place, not particularly interesting, but quite harmless.”

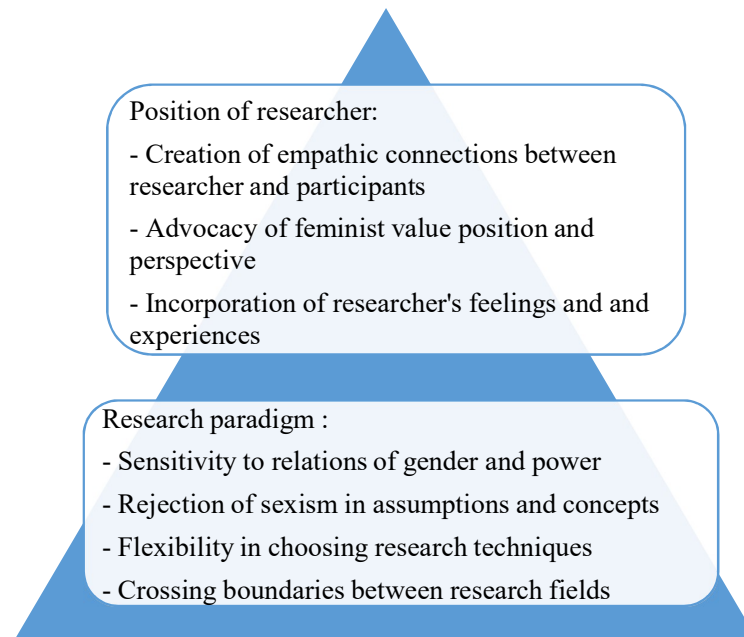
“There are shades of meaning, but a man is a man, wherever you find it.”

~ Jeanette Winterson (1985) ~

Feminist research is usually conducted by women (though not limited to women), who hold a feminist self-identity and consciously use a feminist perspective (Neuman, 1997). Feminist research typically includes multiple research techniques. Olsen (1994) states that feminist research is based on a deep mindfulness that the experiences of women differs from the conventional interpretive perspective. Neuman (1997:80) believes that women emphasises “accommodation and gradually developing human bonds”. He further poses that women see the social world as a “web of interconnected human relationships, full of people linked together by feelings of trust and mutual obligation (Neuman, 1997:80). Although this study was set against the backdrop of a feminist research paradigm, I do not wish to include the ‘critical’ tenets that are also associated with feminist research. In some cases, feminist researchers set out to “correct the male-orientated perspective”, that some believed has predominated the development of social science (Neuman, 1997:80). However, this aspect has by no means been foregrounded in this study and was not the aim of the study.

Furthermore, this study entailed memory-work, since the ‘answer’ to the research question was elicited from the memories of participants’ own teachers. Haug (1997:2) stated that “memory-work was developed with and for the feminist movement”, which proves the feminist paradigm suitable for this study. In this study I have initially endeavoured to share the narratives of beginner teachers, the fact that there were more female participants was mere coincidence. I did find it easier to conduct interviews with female participants, but I cannot be sure that the reason for this is purely because of their gender. Although I am inclined towards a feminist perspective, I did not attempt to ‘right any wrongs’ as a result of so-called male dominance. The following diagram includes the core characteristics of feminist research which I embraced during the course of this study:

Figure 3.3: Core characteristics of feminist research employed in this study (Adapted from Neuman, 1997)

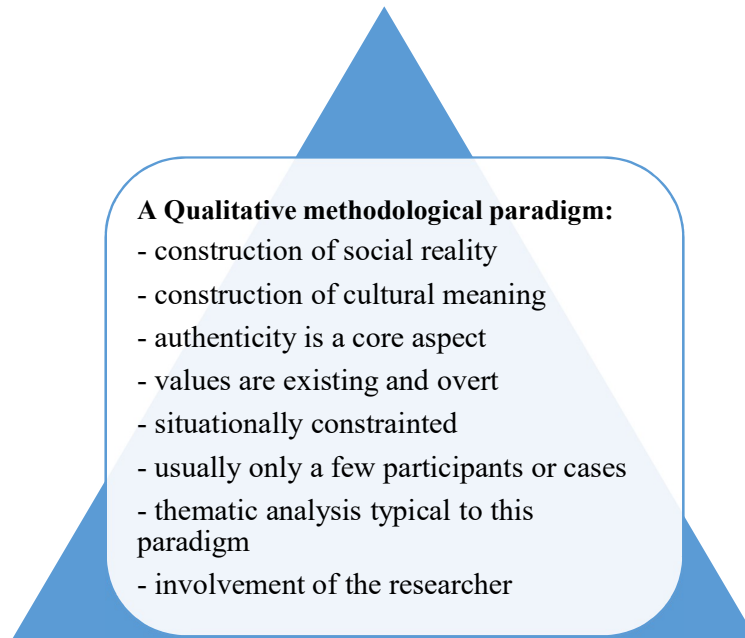


3.3.2 Methodological paradigm: A qualitative approach

As a qualitative researcher I was mainly interested in exploring the subjective experiences of participants from an insider perspective (Durrheim, 2006; Fouché & Delport, 2011). In the following section I discuss the characteristics of a qualitative methodology and elaborate on the reasons for my choice of a qualitative mode of inquiry in this study. I also discuss the limitations and challenges enfolding a qualitative methodological paradigm. The diagram that

follows illustrates the core characteristics of the qualitative methodological approach I embraced during this study:

Figure 3.4: Core characteristics of a qualitative methodological paradigm (Adapted from Creswell, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Mostyn, 1985)



3.3.2.1 The “What?” and “Why?” of a qualitative methodological approach

I positioned the chosen methodological paradigm closely to that of Uitto (2011), who has conducted numerous studies on own teacher – student relationships in Finland. Uitto (2011:34) states that “this research is narrative in its starting-points and overall approach”, a statement which links to my writing style as being ‘story-like’ and leaning heavily on literary elements. Not only my intended writing style of this study, but also the fact that I attempted to explore the life stories of participants, indicated the suitability of qualitative research. Qualitative research is *idiographic* and *emic*, according to Shenton (2004). This means that the researcher focuses on one or a few participants and the emerging categories of data come from the individual studied (Shenton, 2004).

Qualitative research foregrounds the individual and their experiences, thoughts, perceptions and emotions. The qualitative researcher attempts to understand the reality of the individual in her context by taking on an insider’s (emic) perspective while asking questions about a social phenomenon in a setting where it occurs naturally (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Berg, 2007;

Creswell, 2007). I made use of multiple qualitative data gathering methods namely, semi-structured interview, field notes, visual texts and a researcher's diary. These methods enabled me to immerse myself as far as possible in the unique reality of each individual participant. I was cognisant of the fact that I dealt with *different* participants, not only from diverse historical and social backgrounds, but dissimilar in the sense that *no two human beings are the same*.

Qualitative researchers agree that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in their unique realities and knowledge comes to the fore by communication and interaction (Merriam, 2002; Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009). Therefore, I was very aware of the fact that I could not regard participants as 'isolated entities', but rather as 'entities' forming part of a specific 'whole'. Throughout the process of data gathering and analysis, I was aware of the fact that I should also examine the larger social context in which the participant functions, and that their larger social contexts also formed part of an even larger social context.

3.3.2.2 *The messiness of and limitations of qualitative research*

"It is not the one thing nor the other that leads to madness, but the space between them."

~ J. Winterson (1985) ~

Shenton (2004) posed that despite the use of parallel criteria, the qualitative research methodology has been widely criticized especially in terms of the acceptability thereof for larger, conventional audiences. Shenton (2004) said the application of parallel criteria outside may create logical inconsistencies. Kaplan (1964:3) distinguishes between two kinds of 'logic' evident in social research: "reconstructed logic" and "logic in practice". Kaplan (1964) believed that all research mix both types, but that there is a proportional difference between each type of logic in quantitative and qualitative research. Kaplan (1964:5) described "reconstructed logic" as a "highly organized" method and that it is "restated in an idealised, formal and systematic form". Reconstructed logic is usually associated with quantitative research. Logic in practice stands opposite to a reconstructed logic. According to Neuman (1997:330), 'logic in practice' is the logic of "how research is actually carried out". It is "relatively messy, with more ambiguity", tied to specific cases and "orientated toward the practical completion of a task and has fewer set rules", (Neuman, 1997:330)

Questions such as: “If we acknowledge multiple realities, how can we assure that those involved in the research are the “true” knowers?” were raised by researchers (Sparkes, 1998; Shenton, 2004). Sparkes (1998) raised doubts about participant checking as technique of verification and suggested that member or participant checking should rather be viewed as an embellishment on the emerging findings and regarded as additional data. Sparkes (1998) also asked “if the researcher is the instrument of the investigation, how is it possible to conceive of confirmability?” It is important to be cognisant of the limitations of a qualitative approach, however, it should not be compared to quantitative research. The conditions for and paradigms of quantitative research differ vastly from those of qualitative research. Qualitative research investigates social phenomena and a phenomenon in itself can hardly be duplicated. Furthermore, qualitative research should only be regarded in the light of the paradigms stated by the researcher.

I found that conducting research from a qualitative paradigm to be messy, cluttered and even macabre at times. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) illuminated the essential subjectivities of conducting qualitative research, but have also revolutionized this field of subjectivity in social research. Ryan and Golden (2006) are of the opinion that “descriptions of the data collection procedures in most published research, even qualitative research, are often dry, brief, predictable, and sometimes perfunctory”. These authors (Ryan & Golden, 2006:1192) further posited that researchers continue to unpack and uncover the “multi-layered power dynamics, shifting boundaries, self – censorship fractured selves, and unsympathetic inter-subjectivities” in conducting face-to-face research.

However, few researchers address the complexities of ‘mucking around’ (De Marrais, 1998), and the everyday messiness inherent across all the phases of conducting qualitative research. Researchers’ self-doubt, the “banal moments of angst, awkwardness, embarrassment, uncertainty...” (Horton, 2008:364), or the inevitable revisions researchers make to the original research design are often absent from the published studies - especially in studies across national, cultural and linguistic borders. Tsui *et al.* (2004) foresaw that even more researchers will find themselves constrained by cultural and/or language barriers. De Marrais (1998) argued that

“...regardless of researchers’ epistemological stances, and other types of reflexivities, researchers conducting studies across national, cultural and

linguistic borders, ought to engage in nuanced elements of on-going reflexive practices.”

A reflexive and reflective way of working was my method to ‘counter’ the limitations suggested and messiness of employing a qualitative research paradigm. I found that critically reflecting and writing about the study as a process, enabled me to make sense of what initially appeared to be a messy and confusing process.

3.4 Research design and methodology

In the section that follows, I explain my rationale for using an integrated research design including tenets of the narrative inquiry, life history and case study designs. I discuss the process of selecting suitable participants for the study through purposive, maximum variation and snowball sampling. I also provide an overview of the data collection, documentation processes and describe the method by which data were analysed.

3.4.1 An integrated research design

In the next section I will explain my decision for including tenets of the *narrative inquiry*, *life history* and *case study* research designs. The story-like nature of this text and the fact that I was primarily exploring the *stories* of individuals, made the *narrative inquiry* design essential. The primary research question involves the role of the own teacher as influence on the identity of beginner teachers, however, I had to bear in mind that there may be other influences which swayed the identity construction and other significant role players in this process. The possibility existed that there could be no significant teacher or another person taking the place of the significant teacher. Depending on the context of each of the cases and the South African context in which this study was conducted, I needed to create space for a significant ‘teacher-like’ other figure in the lives of the participants. Certain tenets of the *life history* design provided to be suitable for this possibility. There was also the question of time: the influence of the own teacher could have been evident during any given moment in the life of the participant, a key aspect of the life history design (Goodson & Gill, 2011). Lastly, this research design took on some characteristics of a *case study* design in the sense that it allowed the researcher to be integrally involved in each case, the case study may be linked to the personality of the researcher and the richness of the case portrayed (Verschuren, 2003). (Cohen *et al.*, 2011:291) point out that one of the strengths of a case study is that they allow the researcher to

“...observe effects in real contexts, recognizing that context is a powerful determinant of both causes and effects, and that in-depth understanding is required to do justice to the case.”

I will now discuss each of these designs separately and the ways in which they fit the study in more detail.

3.4.1.1 *Narrative inquiry*

Creswell (2007) includes a narrative inquiry design as part of biographical research. Biographical research further includes life stories, life histories, narratives, autobiographies and auto-ethnographies, however, they all have one aspect in common: the construction of the unfolding experiences of an individual over a period of time (Creswell, 2007). Narrative inquiry is based on the understanding that human beings comprehend and give meaning to their lives through stories (Andrews, Squire & Tambokou, 2008; Trahar, 2009). Carter (1993) posed that it is through stories that the possibility is created to encapsulate the richness, diversity and complexity that are involved in teaching experiences. Craig (2007:74): described narratives as “the most likely medium to capture the contingencies of human experience as lived in the context and over time.”

Researchers agree that the particular purpose, the audience and specific contexts in which stories are told should be borne in mind when a researcher approaches the analysis of personal memories of participants (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2005; Riessman, 2008; Spector-Mersel, 2010). These memories are considered through narrative research. Carter (1993) is of the opinion that stories are mere constructions from a specific viewpoint in the mind of the participant and the researcher will never ‘know’ everything through stories from participants. However, the story told by the participant is what their reality consists of during the time of retelling. These stories are true and important for the participants (Uitto, 2011). The fact that memories are not permanent or final, but an active, interpretative, and changing process should also be borne in mind by the narrative researcher. (Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault, & Benton, 1992).

3.4.1.2 *Life history*

Goodson and Sikes (2001) suggest that up to six life histories could deliver rich and thick data and should be used to find theme saturation. I included ten participants for this study representative of different cultures to ensure that saturation will be reached and to account for

diversity in terms of race and gender. I also included five participants in the initial pilot study. Cohen *et al.* (2011) suggests that life history enables the researcher to use a variety of interview techniques. Cohen *et al.* (2011:199) refer to a strategy which involves a “judicious mixture of participant observation and casual chatting, supplemented by note-taking”. I chose life history method (also biographical method) as part of the research design for this study because of its collaborative and reciprocal development of understanding (Goodson & Gill, 2011). Samuel (2009:3) described the goal of the life history researcher as...

...an attempt to structure the process of the telling of stories to yield rich, in-depth details about the specific life experiences, memories and interpretations that the individuals produce.

Schwandt (2007:21) agreed with this by stating that life history methodology...

...focus on the generation, analysis and presentation of [amongst others] the data of a life history (the unfolding of an individual's experiences over time), life story, [and] personal experience narrative.

These descriptions of life history show this methodology to be appropriate since I explored various events in the lives of beginner language teachers as well as the ways in which they had constructed meaning thereof. Samuel (2009:4) further described one of the aims of the life history researcher to be the construction of a process of story-telling from which the researcher can gather “‘told’ memories, experiences and recollections’ from individuals. The life history researcher aims to analyse and interpret these narratives, also “allowing other readers to decide on how credible, authentic and trustworthy the stories appear in relation to their (readers’) own life world (Samuel, 2007:4). Significant to my study is Samuel’s view on the ‘unit of investigation’, (Samuel, 2007:4): the storyteller constantly constructs her own stories in all aspects of her life, whereas the life history researcher chooses to segregate one section of the storied life; that what is aimed to be investigated (Samuel, 2007:4). Samuel (2007:4) states that:

The storyteller provides the ingredients for understanding more in-depth and in interconnected ways how the researcher’s specified domain is reinforced, subverted, challenged in relation to other realms of the person’s lives.

I explored the influence of significant own teachers in the lives of the participants; however, I it was necessary to have knowledge of and attempt to understand other aspects of the participants’ lives.

3.4.1.3 Case study design

In case study research, the researcher is interested features of a small number of cases in-depth over a period of time (Neuman, 1997). The data are usually more “detailed, varied and extensive” (Neuman, 1997). Ragin (1994:92) concludes that “almost all qualitative research seeks to construct representations based on in-depth, detailed knowledge of cases”; a view that underlines my choice for a qualitative methodological paradigm. Case study research allows researchers to examine one or two cases, or compare a limited set of cases, focusing on several factors (Neuman, 1997). The specific context of each case and the formation of its parts are studied to illustrate a specific issue (Neuman, 1997). Walton (1992:122) is of the opinion that “the logic of the case study is to demonstrate a causal argument about how general social forces shape and produce results in particular settings”. In this way, a case study can establish cause and effect, which is the ‘how’ and the ‘why’ of a specific phenomenon. Designing this study as a case study was fitting, since the nature of this study mainly involves a specific ‘issue’, namely the influence of own teachers (in the process of identity construction of beginner teachers). The fact that case studies observe effects in authentic contexts and distinguish context as a significant factor, made this design suitable to include my selection of participants from different ethnic groups. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:316) suggest seven hallmarks of a case study, which resonated with my study. Table 3.2 illustrates these hallmarks:

Table 3.1: Hallmarks of a case study as implemented in this study (Adapted from Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995:316)

Hallmarks of case studies	According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1995)	Ways it was implemented in this study
Thick description	Concerned with rich and vivid description of events relevant to a case	Vivid and in-depth description of events included
Chronological narratives	Provides a chronological narrative of relevant events	Interview questions were structured to elicit a loosely chronological narrative
Description/analysis blend	Blends a description and analysis of events	Chapters four and five include descriptions and analysis of the case
Perceptions of actors	Seeks to understand the perceptions of individual actors or group of actors	Perceptions of participants are highlighted, including several verbatim quotations; verbatim transcriptions were interpreted
Specific events	Focuses on specific events relevant to the case	Specific events are fore fronted in the presentation and analysis of data
Role of the researcher	Integral involvement from researcher and case study may be linked to personality of the researcher	A postmodern paradigm was embraced, inclusion of authentic intertexts from other sources and personal researcher's diary
Report writing	Richness of the case is portrayed in writing up the report	

Yin (1984) and Merriam (1988) suggested three types of case studies namely, exploratory, descriptive and explanatory case studies. This study typically classified as a descriptive case study because of its strong focus on narrative accounts (Yin, 1984). The pilot study (3.4.4.3) included in this study was used as an exploratory case study which Yin (1984) suggested is valuable to generate hypotheses that are tested in larger scale studies, such as this study. Although the aim of the pilot study was rather to test research strategies, it proved to be valuable in terms of initial findings and the correlation of findings with the research questions.

Yin (2009) identified four main case study designs, the single-case design, the embedded, single-case design, the multiple case design and the embedded multiple-case design. Although this study showed characteristics of all four designs, it can largely be categorised as an example of a single-case design. In this design the researcher is interested in a “critical case, an extreme case, a unique case, a representative or typical case” (Yin, 2009:46). The ‘case’ in this study

consists of ten, purposively chosen participants from cross-cultural backgrounds and the influence of their own teachers in their teacher identity construction process. Though some comparisons were made during the process of analysis, the comparative factor was not the sole focus of the case.

3.4.2 Selection of participants

I found the section of this research study that involved interacting with people the hardest. I remember being wary of this section from the onset. The following entry in my research diary indicates my thoughts about this a long time before I even began with the selection of participants and data collection.

Thought moment 3.7

I have just read Carien's dissertation and I cannot describe how good she seems to work with her participants. I am so worried about my own: where will they come from, how will I find them, how will they be and most of all: HOW will I get them to be willing to talk to me?? I remember my years as beginner teacher SO well, besides the fact that I was so confused and struggling to find my feet, I truly would not have the time to be interviewed by someone. Even in my last year as a teacher I never wanted to participate in any research regarding teachers. I have always figured that 'university people' and anyone interested in educational research should rather get into a classroom to see what it's really like. Maybe this is Karma?? Getting back at me for my attitude? ☺ Ai, I hope not. It's just that I'm so scared they will not have TIME, teachers never have enough TIME, I know that it is really true. I WAS ONE.

Research Diary, Somewhere in the middle of 2013

The selection and finding of participants for this study was by far the most challenging aspect of this journey. I use the term *participant* indicative of the active role that human beings play in the research process as contributing participants (Mertens, 2008). Initially I wanted to focus only on the role of the own teacher of *language* teachers (see pilot study), but I realised that for the purpose of this study, the subject field or phase⁷ of the beginner teacher was not truly significant. I wanted to share the stories of those teachers who were willing to talk to me about their significant teachers and I became conscious of the fact that influential teachers may have

⁷ In South Africa the Department of Basic Education divides grades into two "bands" called General Education and Training (GET), which includes grade 0 plus grades 1 to 9, and Further Education and Training (FET), which includes grades 10-12. The GET is subdivided further into "phases" called the Foundation Phase (grade 0 plus grade 1 to 3), the Intermediate Phase (grades 4 to 6), and the Senior Phase (grades 7 to 9).

been from other fields of expertise. My thoughts around the selection of participants resonated with what Uitto (2011:28) describes in her dissertation which involved the storied lives of teachers:

In principle, any (former) student was a potential participant in my research. However, I wanted to reach those who would find the topic significant and would therefore voluntarily participate.

I employed purposive and snowball sampling in this study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Silverman, 2000; Goodson and Sikes, 2001) as well as maximum variation sampling (Terreblanche, Durheim & Painter, 2006). I had to find innovative ways to engage participants. A positive fact was that I am a lecturer at a teaching university and have working relationships with students who had become beginner teachers in the past few years. I further relied on the fact that I have been a teacher for twelve years and drew on contact I still have with former colleagues and the beginner teachers at their schools.

3.4.2.1 Purposive sampling and maximum variation sampling

Cohen, *et al.* (2007) are of the opinion that the quality of research relies greatly on the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been employed. In the case of biographical research designs random sampling is not suitable because a specific phenomenon is being studied (Goodson and Sikes, 2001). As such I made use of purposive sampling suggested by Goodson and Sikes (2001) and regarded by Cohen *et al.* (2011) as a core characteristic of qualitative research. In purposive sampling researchers “handpick” the cases to be included in the sample mainly based on their possession of the particular characteristic being sought (Cohen *et al.*, 2001:114). Purposive sampling entails the purposeful selection of individuals or groups based on the relevance of specific characteristics they possess to the phenomenon that is being studied (Gray, Williamson, Karp & Dalphin, 2007). Additionally, I drew on some of the tenets of maximum variation sampling, which is employed when the focus is on the “broadest range of information and perspectives on the subject of the study” (Terreblanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006:290). I purposefully selected a small sample to ensure in-depth analysis and information-rich cases, based on detailed selection criteria (Patton, 2002a). Participants had to be novice or beginner teachers with no more than six years teaching experience. The sample had to allow for some cross-cultural diversity, since I was interested in the possible differences or similarities that could perhaps be found between different cultural groups in South Africa. The use of maximum variation sampling was suitable in this regard: I was cognisant of the fact that

I had to select participants from a variety of backgrounds. The sample also had to include participants of both genders. Next, participants had to be fluent in either English or Afrikaans in view of the fact that I am fluent in those two languages and not any other. Finally, and most importantly, participants had to display a willingness to participate in this study and share their stories freely. Table 3.3 provides a summary of research participants.

Table 3.2: Participants in the study

No	Name	Gender	Racial group	Language group	Teaching experience (years)
1	Msizwe	M	Black	English	3
2	Thabiseng	F	Black	English	4
3	Jantjies	M	Coloured	English	3
4	Tarryn	F	Coloured	English	3
5	Rajesh	M	Indian	English	4
6	Vanjaria	F	Indian	English	3
7	Steven	M	White	English	4
8	Cindy	F	White	English	5
9	Pieter	M	White	Afrikaans	2
10	Elsa	F	White	Afrikaans	3

3.4.2.2 *Snowball sampling*

Babbie (2008) and Baltar and Brunet (2012) suggested snowball sampling as an appropriate method when the members of a certain group are difficult to discover (cf. 3.4.2.2) and also

valuable in exploratory, qualitative and descriptive research. I identified a few beginner teachers who assisted me with locating possible participants through snowball sampling (Babbie, 2008; Baltar & Brunet, 2012; Cohen *et al.*, 2011). The limitation in this case with snowball sampling was that these ‘initial’ participants knew mostly only beginner teachers of their own culture. I specifically wanted to include participants across different cultures and hence found it difficult to find participants from other cultures than my own. Despite these challenges (elaborate description in 3.4.2.3) I managed to find beginner teachers from different gender and cultural groups mainly through the help of my supervisor (an Indian lady) who put me in contact with beginner teachers from Indian schools.

Additionally, I used social networks and word of mouth to recruit beginner teachers for this study. Facebook is one valuable snowball sampling tool because its users share information quickly and easily with each other (Bhutta, 2012). After I had obtained ethical clearance I posted an advertisement on Facebook, outlining the aim of the study and details about my search for possible participants. I shared the information on many South African teacher groups which already existed on Facebook. I did not receive much interest via Facebook, and none of my participants were located through this method. However, people reacted positively towards the message and some teachers sent me information of other teachers, but none of these led me to beginner teachers. It was interesting to see that some comments referred to teachers being too busy for interviews and other suggestions of rather questionnaires to save time. It bothered me from the start of the study that I would probably struggle to find participants because they are beginner teachers.

The method which delivered the best results in terms of data population was word of mouth. I told friends, family and colleagues about the study and asked them to put me into contact with any beginner teachers of whom they knew. All the participants in this study were located in this way. One challenge of snowball sampling was that it did not truly ensure a broadly representative sample. However, I dealt with this aspect by choosing people from different cultures with which to ‘start’ the snowballing process.

3.4.2.3 Challenges within the selection process

I encountered a variety of challenges within the process of finding suitable participants for this study. It was especially difficult to locate participants from other ethnic groups than my own. One reason for this was that my former teaching colleagues were still employed at Afrikaans

schools and mostly had contact with Afrikaans speaking beginner teachers. My own student teachers who were beginner teachers and whom I was able to contact, were either not teaching at that point and a few were teaching in other provinces. Although I knew that the initial participants did not fit the cross-cultural nature of the study, I conducted interviews with them and gathered the data that I could find. I used this data to conduct a pilot study (see 3.4.4.3) to test research strategies and methods.

I contacted schools in the province in search of more culturally-diverse participants and made a startling discovery: there were almost no beginner teachers teaching at rural or township schools; the teachers from other cultural groups (especially Black teachers) have been teaching for at least twelve years and more. There also seem to be very few male teachers at rural or township schools and those employed have also been teaching for many years. I remember one principal actually (and literally) laughing at me for enquiring about beginner teachers in that area; she seemed to assume that it was a common fact that there are no or very few beginner teachers taking up posts at rural or township schools. Another problem was the time constraint of beginner teachers. They seem to be overloaded with extramural activities, and their weekends were packed with marking, setting of papers and more extramural activities.

Thought moment 3.8

As if the process of finding participants is not difficult enough, I even struggle to find the correct pseudonyms. A name is so important. I wanted to capture the essence of the beings they had shared with me in the pseudonyms that I choose. I found that rather difficult. Jeanette says the same about names:

*“Naming is a difficult and time-consuming process; it concerns essences, and it means power. But on the wild nights who can call you home? Only the one who knows your name.” (Jeanette Winterson, *Oranges are not the only fruit*, 1985)*

Research Diary, 2015

3.4.3 Data collection

I engaged in data collection for a period that extended over two years, only during three of the four school quarters as stipulated by the ethical rules of the Department of Education. I engrossed myself in the data collection process until data saturation occurred on two levels: first, (on a theoretical level) I did not collect any more data when the details of the participants’ stories started to repeat and second, when the different participants were repeating the same

details. Theoretical saturation indicates the point where the researcher does not collect new material because it no longer supplements the revealing analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Although purposive sampling seemed an adequate sampling technique for this study, it also includes a lack of generalisability, participant bias and a lack of representativeness (Cohen *et al.*, 2011; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

I involved new research participants until the data seemed saturated (Bowen, 2008; Cohen *et al.*, 2011; Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002). I employed a multiple data collection approach to yield in-depth and rich data (Creswell, 2002; Nieuwenhuis, 2010). I also made use of both crystallisation and triangulation techniques to ‘validate’ results. However, in this study, my aim was not as much the ‘validation’ of data, than participatory meaning-making from the stories of participants. I further believe that participants differ and that, as a researcher, I cannot elicit data from different participants in exactly the same ways and using the same methods. My paradigmatic perspectives allowed me to use the following multiple data collection methods: semi-structured interviews, other media of the participants’ choice such as visual text (authentic material), researcher diary and field notes. Table 3.4 provides a summary of the methods of data collection, instruments and recording of data.

Table 3.3: Data collection methods, instruments and recording of data

Method of data collection	Semi-structured interviews	Authentic material	Field notes	Researcher's diary
Instrument	Initial interview protocol guidelines and digital recorder	Visual text, intertexts, authentic material photographs, sketches (if applicable to participant)	Researcher's journal, handwritten notes and typed document	Researcher's handwritten notes and typed document, intertexts from a variety of sources, authentic material
Recording of data	Verbatim transcripts	Hard and electronic copies of visual representations	Notes during interviews by researcher	Researcher's journal and authentic material where notes were recorded
Method of analysis	Thematic analysis, coding and categorisation of emergent data.	Visual data will be interpreted together with participant, thematic analysis	Thematic Analysis	Thematic Analysis

3.4.3.1 Overview of data collection and documentation process

I collected data through a process of two steps. Data collection and documentation turned out to be an iterative process, as I was constantly moving back and forth between direct contact with participants, reading transcriptions and reflecting in my research diary on the process and interviews. I attached guiding interview questions in the interview schedule in Appendix A.

First, I only made contact with the first participant whom I had found through former colleagues and other friends who knew about the study. I had a few 'leads' on other participants, but only contacted them after I had conducted the first interview. I had one interview with the first participant, then reflected in my research diary on the interview. With all the interviews, I obtained written consent from the participants and told them in broad terms what the study is about when I initially contacted them. All the participants were phoned to set up interviews. Initially I purposefully tried to be vague in terms of the specific research question, so that the participants would not be prepared to 'answer' the specific question. However, I shared enough to broadly prepare them for the interview. I asked them if they would prefer me sending them more information electronically, but none preferred this. I obtained their demographic details

as part of the interview and recognised the value of this method: it served as an ice breaker to help participants to connect with me when telling me firstly about themselves in general. I then transcribed the first interview myself, in order to check if the posed questions were relevant. Already during the first interview, I deviated vastly from the interview schedule I had set up prior to the interview. This turned out to be the case with all the participants and at first it bothered me that I did not ‘stick’ to the predetermined set of questions. I thought about it and reflected on it in my diary. I came to the conclusion that, following my paradigmatic perspectives, my own chosen role as researcher and the nature of the chosen research design that not ‘sticking’ to my questions was part of the stories unfolding by itself.

Second, I discussed the idea of intertexts as way of expression with the participants. I utilised the details in their stories that dealt with ‘other voices’ such as books they have read or characters in movies that had an influence on them. Rajesh mentioned a character from a series of science YouTube videos that he liked to watch and who he recognised as an important influence on his teacher identity construction process. Cassie drew to a large extent on the insights of authors of books she had read. I regarded these ‘other’ influences as intertexts in the growth process of the participants as teachers, as part of their professional identity and dealt with them as ‘real’ influences. I realised that the stories of influences can come to the fore in any form, and a postmodern paradigm allowed space for this. In some cases, these suggestions were made telephonically after I had seen them for the first time. Some participants were keen on the idea, however the two male participants were sceptical and I could sense they were uncomfortable with this idea. In some cases, intertexts were referred to during the interviews, without the participants knowing that they were actually referring to the concept. Intertexts included references to movies, books and any other authentic material that were significant in each case.

The last stage I referred to in my researcher diary as the ‘wrap-up’ discussion. During this stage I recaptured the main features of the participants’ stories with them. I made sure that I understood them correctly and that the meanings we constructed together were exactly what they had intended to share. The narrative interviews were loosely structured and I made notes of points that I wanted to return to; I did not want to interrupt the flow of participants’ speech. During this wrap-up discussion, I reminded the participants about certain points they had raised earlier and asked them to elaborate or clarify. The data collection stage was an iterative process

throughout. I frequently wrote in my research diary and re-read field notes, added to the diary and to the field notes as I listened to the audio recordings and later read the transcriptions.

3.4.3.2 *Semi – structured interviews*

In the next section I will discuss the methods of data collection. I choose to discuss them in one section in an integrated way, because the data collection procedure involved all these methods, sometimes even simultaneously. I cannot loosen them from each other as they form one interlaced thread of this part of the research journey.

I purposefully chose semi – structured narrative interviews as the main data collection strategy because the nature thereof specifically suited this study. I liked the idea of Clandinin and Connelly (2002), who proposed that the technique of narrative interviews can be used to create field texts in narrative inquiry. These field texts can then be converted to written texts through transcriptions of the audio recordings. Participants described their activities, opinions, experiences and memories through narrative interviews (Flick, 2006; Kvale, 2007; Riesman, 2003). I transcribed the interviews without changing any of the utterances of participants; I wanted to arrest the ‘raw’ data to capture as much authenticity as possible.

I suggested the option of including a physical, visual presentation to all participants. Only one participant (the first) was willing to engage in this method and drew a picture of how she viewed her significant teacher. Visual data could offer a valid way of understanding an individual’s thinking and experiences (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Flick, 2002; Pink, 2001). Pink (2001) found that visual data can be viewed as trustworthy text. I was interested in unique ways of inquiry that could illuminate information about the participants’ experiences with their own significant teachers. I provided participants with the opportunity to tell their stories through a visual medium of their choice: paintings, collages, photographs or any other visual medium of their choice. I discarded my initial idea to tell my participants about the concept of nested micro-narratives (discussed in Chapter two). I originally wanted to show them my way of ‘having told’ my own story by means of my own nested micro-narrative, to encourage and elicit new ways in which they can tell *their* stories. However, as soon as I began with the narrative interviews, I sensed that I should rather *listen*, not only to their stories, but also to the ways they wanted to tell them. I also used field notes and my researcher’s diary as data collection methods which I describe in 3.4.4.1 and 3.4.4.2.

3.4.3.3 A Pilot study

“To teach how to live without certainty and yet without being paralyzed by hesitation is perhaps the chief thing that philosophy, in our age, can do for those who study it.”

~ Russell, B. ~

After I had developed the interview protocol, I conducted a pilot study and defined the criteria for selection of participants. In the next section I discuss the aim of the pilot study and what I have learnt from conducting it.

3.4.3.3.1 Aim of the pilot study

The aim of the pilot study was twofold in nature, first, to test the research protocol in order to know if it needed refinement and second, to add rigour to the final execution of the research strategy by having ‘practised’ all the techniques prior to conducting the study. I conducted the first interview with ‘caution’. I submitted the transcription of my first interview to my supervisor, because I did not feel comfortable with how it went. I obtained valuable data but I was worried about my *method* and the way in which I had asked questions. I discussed this with her at length and read more about methods of interviewing. I found what I may have been doing during the first interview in the work of Kathard (2009:21) who raised the issue of symbolic violence as described by Bordieu (1999) as the process whereby the researcher becomes dominant during the research process by the specific words they chose. Kathard (2009:21) suggests that the researcher should strive to “recognise these limitations and overcome them, not as a magnanimous gesture of inclusion, but to allow new knowledge to emerge”. Kathard (2009) further explains ways to deal with this, one of which is to work critically through one’s own beliefs, prejudices and assumptions, which I did in my research diary. She also suggested a process of asking self-exploratory questions such as who I am, who I was, where my own knowledge sprung from and what are my concerns as researcher (Kathard, 2009). Together with my supervisor, we worked through the transcription of the first interview and decided how I could refine my questioning techniques. When describing inquiry through the process of storytelling, Kathard (2009:24) refers to “difficult spaces being disrupted”, and states that this could generate pain. Since it was my aim to explore the positive *and* negative influences of significant own teachers, I encountered “difficult spaces” when participants relate painful memories of negative influences.

The initial challenges (described in 3.4.2.3) I experienced in finding participants, turned out to be very valuable. I used data gathered to conduct the pilot study, mainly to ‘test’ the research strategies of my choice. Although the first set of data obtained consisted only of White female voices, it provided me with the opportunity to refine interview questions and other research strategies. I made field notes when interviewing these participants, reflected in my research diary and transcribed all the interviews.

3.4.3.3.2 Insight gained from the pilot study

I gained valuable insight from conducting the pilot study and ‘practising’ research strategies. I found that my paradigmatic perspectives were in line with the questions I asked and the type of data I captured. However, I made numerous changes to my questioning techniques and interview style. Initially I asked set questions and became irritable and worried when participants deviated from answering these specific questions. After conducting two interviews, I realised the tool that I chose (semi-structured interviews) allowed for exactly this development during an interview. It was *okay* for participants to ‘deviate’ from my set questions and tell their stories as their memories unfolded. My preparation prior to interviews also changed; I prepared better by adding previous answers from participants as questions for the next participants. Similarly, I prepared myself mentally in a different way for the environment where the interviews were conducted. At first I prepared myself mentally for how it would play out, I even had a mental picture of the setting. I had a picture in mind when I went to a school (for example), and in some cases it would not play out at all like I imagined. Conducting the pilot study prepared me for the fact that I could encounter many unforeseen circumstances and that I needed to keep an open mind. The pilot study taught me to prepare myself to be more open for what I may encounter and in a sense, to be *less* prepared.

3.4.4 Data documentation

In this section I describe how I went about documenting the data that have been collected. I made use of field notes, audio recordings and transcriptions for data documentation purposes.

3.4.4.1 *Researcher's diary*

"The unexamined life is not worth living."

~ Socrates (470 – 399 BC) ~

I kept a researcher diary in which I dealt with biases, challenges as they arose and all other personal critical moments. I recorded personal reflections in the diary which proved to be valuable specifically during the data analysis stage, but also throughout the whole process. I followed the approach of Goodson and Sikes (2001:25) who are of the opinion that "more people take the view that interpretations/ explanations/ analyses are, inevitably, coloured by and shaped by a range of influences". Goodson and Sikes (2001) believe the biography of the researcher to be one of the most prominent such influences. I adopted a reflective role and reflect on personal experiences interwoven into the patterns emerging from the data collected from participants in the researcher journal. This view linked to the post-modern writing style adopted in this text. According to Goodson and Sikes (2001) more researchers have moved towards the notion of 'writing themselves into' their research since the 1980s. Some researchers (e.g. Atkinson, 1990) believe that personal background information will enrich their work, enhance the rigour of their research and in this way biases will become overt. However, I was cognisant of the fact that there are researchers who disagree with this view (Troyna, 1994; Cotteril & Letherby, 1993) and exercised caution with biographical detail.

Dewey (1938:6) described reflection as the "reconstruction and reorganisation of experience which adds meaning to that experience". It was in my research diary that I recorded and reflected on significant and less-significant moments, memories, events and thoughts. Stevens and Cooper (2009) suggest six defining attributes to a journal namely that it is written, dated, informal, flexible, private and archival. I drew specifically on the flexibility principle of a journal that these authors view as central to a journal (Stevens & Cooper, 2009). Virginia Woolf (1954:84) describes this flexibility:

What sort of diary should I like mine to be? Something loose knit and yet not slovenly, so elastic that it will enhance anything, solemn, slight or beautiful that comes to mind. I should like it to resemble some deep old desk, or capacious hold-all, in which one flings a mass of odds and ends without looking them through. (April, 1919)

I realised early that my perception of the research activities may be slanted as a result of factors such as my ethnicity, gender, socio-political background and research agenda (Goodson & Gill, 2011). It is important to not only state these possible biases but also deal with them in such a way that I am able to approach the study as objectively as possible. Ortlipp (2008:695) points out that the problem of bias in qualitative research is still largely debated in methodology texts and states that there is a “lack of agreement on how much researcher influence is acceptable, whether or not it needs to be ‘controlled,’ and how it might be accounted for”. Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 501) refers to this as “the interpretive crisis”.

I experienced the research journey as an intensely personal and emotional process, and to some extent as an ‘interpretive crisis’. I experienced immense self-doubt and was constantly troubled about my ability as researcher. I wrote about these emotions in my research journal. I also found it difficult to keep writing in a ‘scientific’ way and not to become too distracted by my own literary interests and way of writing. There were times that I could not ‘contain’ my thoughts and ideas, and I would then write about this in the research journal. There were also days that I could not write at all. It felt as if my own words had somehow dried up, and then I would listen to songs I have always liked or read my favourite literary works. It was as if the words of other authors would then possess more meaning than my own and I would draw new creative insights from their words. The act of writing (in) a section that was still *part* of my study but not the study, aided me in staying focused and building many daily observations of seemingly unimportant events into the study as part of the research process.

3.4.4.2 *Field notes*

According to the view of Saldana (2009) rich analysis may occur from field notes that are the researcher’s written documentation. I used a journal in which I recorded handwritten field notes. I first explained to the participants why I may write while they are talking, however in some cases I could sense it made them uncomfortable when I started writing. I then only jotted down key phrases to remember and think about later. Immediately after the interview had taken place, I wrote down what came to mind and what I had observed during the interview. I also included my own thoughts and feelings at the time. I read later that this was in line with the beliefs of Bogden and Biklen (2003), who states that the content of field notes involves both descriptive and reflective aspects. My field notes included aspects of the setting of the interview, my state of mind before the interview, observations during the interview and certain

aspects that struck me in a specific way during the interview. In addition, I made written notes on the transcriptions since I listened to them repeatedly. In some instances, I remembered aspects that I did not include in my field notes or research diary and I then added these directly on the transcriptions. Every time after I had conducted an interview, I experienced feelings of elatedness and a heightened sense of awareness. This entry in my research diary illuminates these emotions:

Thought moment 3.9

Fairly anxious about first interview. I'm sure I won't stick to my questions and then what? Dunno why I should be talking to strangers and not become connected. I connect, I'm a connector, I live off connections. What if I don't like the person? What if there is no connection?

Later

It's exhilarating stuff! I get to ask all the questions I want without being frowned upon for asking personal questions. [Don't get why I shouldn't be asking 'personal' questions anyway? Why is "how are you", a stupid behavioural conditioned question not offensive?] This girl has got a story to tell. But she didn't tell me the whole story yet. I suspect she wants me to disclose/admit something, I'm not sure. SO many aspects I want to touch on in the study that came to the fore today. If she outs in an interview, how will I keep away from gender stuff then? Just say it coward. GAY stuff. You are gay. And it's OKAY.

Research Diary, February 2014

The use of field notes posed some challenges and limitations. De Walt and De Walt (2002) describe such challenges: the summary and analysis of the field notes may be time consuming and researchers are not always able to write down notes immediately after interviews, which could imply that important facts may be lost. In addition, the quality of the field notes may be compromised as the researcher may not always be accurate when recording them (De Walt & De Walt, 2002). I found that simultaneously working with the audio recordings, transcriptions and field notes aided in remembering the essence of what was being said during interviews.

3.4.4.3 Audio recordings and transcriptions

After data have been collected by conducting the interviews (and other methods already discussed), the data was transcribed. I did some of these transcriptions personally (and at least a fifteen minutes of each) as Goodson and Sikes (2001:33) suggest "it can aid analysis in that ideas and themes can emerge or be developed as a consequence of repetitive listening and

intimate engagement with the data”. For the rest I made use of the services of a professional transcriber, owing to the time-consuming nature of transcriptions. The external transcriber was made aware of the confidentiality procedures of the study and signed a form to guarantee that all information would be kept confidential.

Although I did not code all the interviews personally, I revisited the audio recordings frequently to hear the voice of participants again. The audio recordings included background noise from the diverse settings where interviews were recorded. Listening to the voice of participants and the background noise, propelled me back in time and reminded me of the emotions, thoughts and sense of the situation I had experienced at the time. My field notes also aided this process. I listened to the recording once and then listened to it again, while reading the transcriptions to ensure the quality and accuracy. I made notes on the hard copies (while listening) wherever the transcriptions were inaccurate or unclear. The audio recordings and transcriptions can be found in the appendices, which also serve as part of the audit trail of the research process (Creswell, 2002).

3.4.5 Data analysis and interpretation

In this section I will highlight the main methods of data analysis and interpretation of the existing data. Gu & Lai (2012) believes that initial data analysis often generated new questions and with that in mind, I started with the first participant’s interview as a ‘trial run’. I had some themes in mind, but as I progressed I realised that the data tell their own story, the story unfolds itself. Gu & Lai (2012) further suggests that themes may be constructed from the data rather than pre-determined by the theoretical framework. This view linked with the post-modernist view of text writing itself and was suitable for this study. I did not choose one specific and fixed method beforehand. In a way, the data analysed and interpreted itself. I used a mixed method of inductive and deductive thematic analysis as well as part of content analysis.

3.4.5.1 Thematic content analysis

Elliot (2005) suggests analysing data from a clean script, where one eliminates the pauses, intonations, false starts and utterances that are common in everyday speech. A clean transcript focuses on the content of what participants say and makes the material easier to read for the researcher and the readers (Carvalho – Malekane, 2015). However, I found that a ‘clean script’ is firstly too clinical as text and thus hindering the natural flow of the narrative and secondly,

I was not able to remember the ‘sense’ I had during the interviews. Cohen *et al.* (2011) suggests that the life history researcher (who I am, amongst others) should decide on the extent of ‘intrusion’ upon assembled data: editing, cutting and changing names and places imply that the researcher actually re-builds a story with data from the participant. Not only should the actual writing (process of re-construction) be done with the utmost sensitivity, but it is also the task of the researcher to represent the material in the most authentic way possible (Cohen *et al.*, 2011). I decided not eliminate any aspect or make any changes whatsoever to the raw transcription.

Furthermore, I did not translate those transcriptions of interviews that were conducted in Afrikaans. I wanted to initially, but my supervisor suggested that I leave it in the participant’s mother tongue to safeguard the authenticity of the data. Many of the participants also made utterances in their own vernacular, which I had also left as spontaneous as it was said. I also did not eliminate the settings of participants since it not only represented the South African context but also the unique cultural diversity that I hoped to portray in the study.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggests that data analysis is a gradually evolving process which moved between the data set and literature until some themes that could potentially address the research question emerged. I found myself reading through the literature review again, mainly to ensure that I do not drift too far away from the research question. The data were extremely rich and shed light on so many other socio-political issues and it was challenging to keep the main research question in mind.

I employed tenets of content analysis as method of data analysis for several reasons. First, the data I collected was mainly in text-format. I also converted the visual data that I gathered to textual format. Krippendorff (2004:18) defines content analysis as a “research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of their use”. Second, content analysis is viewed as an unobtrusive technique (Krippendorff, 2004:40). Third, it focuses on language and linguistic features, meaning in context and is systematic and verifiable (Mayring, 2004). This tenet of content analysis proved to be specifically useful and suitable in complementing the strong focus on language, the language-related theoretical framework and the post-modern nature of the text. Lastly, Cohen *et al.* (2007:475) suggest that data are in a “permanent form (texts)”, which makes verification through reanalysis and replication possible.

3.5 Ethical considerations

The next section deals with the ethical considerations of the study. The care of my participants was extremely important to me during the course of the study. I reflected continuously in my research diary and engaged in a great deal of thought with my supervisor and peers regarding this aspect. I included the ethical aspects described by Chege and Sakurai (2011) namely reflexivity, mutual respect, sensitivity and empathy and the protection of participants. Additionally, I regarded the four philosophical principles suggested by Beauchamp and Childress (2001) which include autonomy and respect for the dignity of people, non-maleficence, beneficence and justice. Although there are numerous approaches to ethical considerations by many educational researchers (Fulford, Dickenson & Murray, 2002), I found the abovementioned principles and ethical guidelines the most appropriate for this study.

3.5.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Informed consent is one way to ensure respect for people during research (Beauchamp and Childress, 2001; Mack, Woodson, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). Participants received a letter of informed consent prior to the start of the interview. I went through the contents of the letter with each participant and explained the content which included an explanation of key aspects of the research, the purpose of the research, the participants' roles in the study, the format of interviews and potential risks and benefits that could result from their participation. Subsequently, the true nature of the research was made known to participants from the onset. Consent forms were signed by all participants of the study. I made sure that the language used in the consent forms was unambiguous, clear and stating the exact purpose of the research. I further emphasised that they could withdraw any time during the study and that participation in the study was entirely voluntary (De Vos et al, 2005; Halai, 2006; Kvale, 2007; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2008). In some cases, I sensed that the process of explaining the research and the signing of the consent form created a slight amount of anxiety on the side of the participants. I then just conversed with them in general, usually about our immediate surroundings to make them feel comfortable again.

3.5.2 Beneficence: Confidentiality, anonymity and protection of participants

The principle of beneficence as suggested by Beauchamp and Childress (2001) complements the autonomy principle and requires the researcher to make sure that “no harm befalls research participants as a direct or indirect consequence” of the research (Terreblanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006:67). The beneficence-principle further suggests an obligation on the part of the researcher to maximise the benefits that the research will contribute to the participants. In this case, there were no immediate and tangible benefits to the participants, except for a space to tell their stories. This posed a challenge to approach the participants initially, because there was not something I could offer them in return for the favour they were doing me (the sharing of their stories). This bothered me a great deal throughout the data collection process. Why would they be willing to talk to me? Cohen *et al.* (2011:84) reminds the researcher that “people who agree to help are doing you a favour”. I was very aware of this, sometimes to the extent that I hindered myself and the research process. I think it stemmed from my own career as a teacher and vivid memories of the tough time those first years was. Through discussions with my supervisor I overcame this hurdle and realised that this study *mattered* and should be conducted. I also realised I could conduct it in such a way that it can be beneficial to the participants. I found that once I started conducting the interviews and provide them with the chance to speak freely, they did actually benefit from this process. The majority of participants thanked me profusely for listening to them and indicated that they do not often have a chance to talk without restrictions to an ‘outsider’ but also someone who has been there. At the start of every interview, I assured them that they could share anything they wanted to, that the details discussed were completely confidential and that I *needed* them. I made sure they understood that I have to respect their privacy, not only because I really wanted to, but also because they are important to my study and something that I have to achieve.

3.5.3 Relationship of trust between researcher and participant

Neuman (1997:355) believes that a researcher needs “social skills and personal charm” to build rapport with the participants in a research setting. Neuman (1997) describes the specific characteristics of a field researcher here, however, I found his ideas also applicable to my study and experienced this during interviews. He also introduces “an attitude of strangeness” when he discusses research in a cultural setting different to one’s own (Neuman, 1997:354). Neuman (1997) says field research in familiar surroundings is challenging because of a propensity to be

blinded by that which is known and familiar. I experienced the opposite to be true when conducting sole research in *another* setting than my own. It was almost as if the strangeness overwhelmed me and I struggled to concentrate during the interview because of the constant sense of unfamiliarity. It was in this case that I felt I had to elevate my social skills and drew more on them than usual, firstly to make myself feel more comfortable and secondly to make the participants feel comfortable. I was worried that my emotions of unfamiliarity and strangeness may be portrayed and experienced as disrespect (by participants) in the cultural setting where I found myself at the time. The following extract from my research diary illuminates these conflicting feelings on the day I went to conduct an interview with my Indian participant:

Thought moment 3.10

Today I went to X to meet Vanjaria at her school. I have been nervous for some time about this interview. I know I only have preconceived ideas about Indian people and I'm so sorry about that. I wish I knew more, had more Indian friends. I felt too stupid to read about it. How do you Google: What are Indians like? Like it's some sort of strange snake species?? Somehow, if you grew up 'white', it's always a Black vs White-thing. From my many readings, I remember only one short story about an Indian shopkeeper whose shop was closed down by Blacks. I have never thought about Indians as part of the political struggle in this country. My only memory of Indians is one of an Indian lady (my mom called her Mrs. Bee) who made the most beautiful curtains. Their shops were on the outskirts of the town where I grew up. They were called the 'Cooleys' (I don't even know if that is a word or where it comes from). We liked them. Mrs. Bee always dressed beautifully and her shop was full of the richest fabrics in colours all bright like the sun. My parents also sometimes went to a warehouse with all odds and ends in the same area. There was one Indian man in another town where my dad *always* used to buy his shoes, Grasshoppers. We would drive for hours just to get my dad's shoes and then he and the man would talk for what then felt like hours. I think they were friends. Years later my mom told me Mrs. Bee's husband passed away and mom took her flowers. My mom took flowers to everybody with some heartache or illness.

When I drove through X everything looked simultaneously so much the same and so different than my own neighbourhood. Somehow more colourful though. I was scared, but not the same fear one has when driving in a township. Even my own Black friends are scared of townships, though some of them lived there. I was scared of the unknown-ness, the strangeness and of looking strange and different. I was afraid I would do something wrong. I wore a long purple skirt to show that I want to be respectful to a culture of which I knew nothing. I never wear long skirts.

Research Diary, 2014

Throughout the research process I considered my role as an ethical researcher and being ‘inside’ the world of the participants. I was cognisant of the fact that my asking questions may be intrusive to them. I aimed to establish respectful relationships with them and taking care not to use stereotypical language or allowing my own ideas and possible biases to cloud the process. I was sensitive to the disparate power relations (Creswell, 2013). Table 3.6 shows a summary of the ethical guidelines I included during the research process.

Table 3.4: Ethical guidelines included during the research process (APA, 2010; Creswell, 2012 & 2013; Lincoln, 2009; Mertens & Ginsberg, 2009)

Steps in the research process	Essential elements for ethical consideration during the research process
1. Prior to conducting the study	I obtained approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, University
2. Beginning to conduct the study	- I contacted participants and broadly explained the reason for contact - I inquired about their willingness to take part in the study
3. Collecting data	- I arranged venues and time suitable for participants, where I met them - I explained the content of the consent form and obtained their original signatures on consent forms - I stressed the fact that they could withdraw during any time of the process - I stressed the fact their identities and those they refer to during interviews will at all times be protected
4. Analysing data	- I assigned pseudonyms to the participants and those who they referred to during the interview - I described contrary findings and avoided emphasis of those participants whose views were more similar to my own (Carvalho, 2015)
5. Reporting data	- I avoided plagiarism by citing all authors used in the literature - I reported results honestly and did not falsify any aspect of the research report

3.6 Quality criteria

In April 2015, I attended the AERA conference⁸ in Chicago, an event that broadened my views dramatically in terms of my study. One day I attended a small-group symposium where the line

⁸ AERA: American Educational Research Association, conference held in Chicago, Illinois 16 – 20 April 2015.

of inquiry involved memory work. Participants in the discussion explained how they wrote research papers by sharing memories with their colleagues guided by one broad question. Although I was fascinated by the ‘looseness’ and informality of how they conducted (what seemed like) an exciting study, I was somewhat worried about the quality criteria that seemed somehow non-existent. I questioned them about this: How do they ensure rigour in the data? Which quality criteria did they apply and in what way? I was surprised by their amazement at my question. One lady countered my question with one of her own: “Why do you worry about quality measurements if you claim to work from a post-modern approach? The memory is what it is. Memories and stories qualify themselves.” (direct quote as I remember it). These profound words made me regard quality measurements in a completely different light, but I realise that I wanted to explain how I went about ensuring rigour in the study. Essy (2002:51) writes that rigour within qualitative research designates that the research findings accurately reflect “an external objective world”. I then understood the views of the abovementioned researcher even better. How can my research findings accurately reflect an “objective” outside world, when I do not believe in any “objective” world? Hence, I present the following ‘quality measures’ to include a wider audience, for the sake of all the positivists, purists and those in the ‘objective world’. I followed the outline suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) including four criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of qualitative research, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Fossey *et al.*, 2002), with authenticity being added as a fifth criterion later.

3.6.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness and credibility are used interchangeably by authors such as Shenton (2004) and Morrow (2005). Concepts such as rigour and validity have also been used as synonymous to trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004). However, for the purpose of this study, I suggested trustworthiness to act as an ‘umbrella’ term, *including* the aspects of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity. Trustworthiness implies one fundamental question, namely: To what extent can we trust this study? By including a discussion of the aspects of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity, this question is answered. According to Lietz *et al.* (2006) trustworthiness is ensured in qualitative research when the findings thoroughly mirror the meanings described by the participants. Many positivists question the trustworthiness of qualitative research, mainly because the concepts of validity and reliability (used in quantitative research) differ vastly from qualitative research

and cannot be addressed in the same way, (Shenton, 2004). Shenton (2004:64) poses that qualitative research,

ensuing from a variety of disciplines, paradigms, and epistemologies, embraces multiple standards of quality, known variously as validity, credibility, rigor, or trustworthiness.

In this study, I sided myself with authors such as Lincoln and Guba, who distanced themselves from the positivist paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 2000) by proposing four criteria they believed should be considered by qualitative researchers. Lincoln and Guba (2000) identified these criteria of rigour as parallel criteria”to those employed by positivist researchers. The following table (3.7) illustrates these constructs which correspond to the criteria employed by positivist researchers:

Table 3.5: Lincoln and Guba’s (2000) suggestion of quality constructs as opposed to those employed in quantitative research

<i>Qualitative research</i>	<i>Quantitative research (Positivist approach)</i>
<i>Trustworthiness/Rigour</i>	
Credibility	Internal validity
Transferability	External validity/generalisability
Dependability	Reliability
Confirmability	Objectivity

Lincoln (1995) referred to these as *extrinsic* criteria (having emerged from outside the qualitative genre). These parallel criteria are intended to very loosely achieve the same purposes as internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity in quantitative research. However, these parallel criteria do not achieve exactly the same goals as their comparable counterparts of rigour in quantitative research. Shenton (2004:63) posed that qualitative research leads to “different kinds of knowledge claims than those resulting from the use of quantitative methods”. In the next section, I discussed aspects of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity as explanation of how trustworthiness of this study was ensured.

3.6.2 Credibility

De Vos *et al.* (2011:419) state the goal of credibility to be a demonstration that the inquiry was “conducted in such a manner as to ensure that the subject has been accurately identified and described”. It bothers me that my participants could be referred to as ‘subjects’. They are people with stories. However, I described the actuality of the participants who informed the study in ways that resonate with them. Toma (2006) states that the credibility standard will be satisfied by the reporting of processes and interactions within the boundaries of a case with sufficient depth in order to highlight their complexity. Lincoln and Guba (1999) suggest two strategies (amongst others) to increase the credibility of qualitative research, including member checking and peer debriefing. Shenton (2004:65) wrote that:

Opportunities for scrutiny of the project by colleagues, peers and academics should be welcomed, as should feedback offered to the researcher at any presentations (e.g. at conferences) that are made over the duration of the project. The fresh perspective that such individuals may be able to bring may allow them to challenge assumptions made by the investigator, whose closeness to the project frequently inhibits his or her ability to view it with real detachment.

I frequently engaged in debriefing sessions had with my supervisor regarding the emerging data which I found confusing and contrasting at times. Furthermore, I discussed my thoughts and emotions and the growth I felt was taking place during the study, with two of my colleagues who had just finished their doctorates. The opportunity I had to attend the AERA conference provided me with the space to exchange ideas with other seasoned researchers in the field. I wrote about this in researcher’s diary:

Thought moment 3.11

I am so thankful for this opportunity. I am overwhelmed by the knowledge and insights surrounding me all the time. I am thankful for Wendy, we talk a lot, especially about participant selection with which I still struggle. I attended a roundtable discussion on memory work today. It was very insightful and I had the opportunity to discuss my way of writing with another researcher who has also been doing work with the concept of palimpsest. I was astonished by the 'looseness' with which they regard quality measurements and ethical considerations. I am sure I will be able to refine my own methods. After having listened to so many presentations on research design, I also feel more comfortable with my own choice of research design.

Research Diary, April 2015, AERA conference in Chicago

According to Shenton (2004), added credibility can be achieved by co-analysis. During the AERA conference, Wendy and I discussed possible themes and categories of data analysis at length. Her own process of data analysis was still fresh in her mind and she shared with me the initial feeling of having just too much 'information'. Discussions with her helped to clear my thought processes and enabled me to return to my supervisor with a fairly clear idea of what I should do. Further discussions with my supervisor helped me to refine themes and categories even more. I wanted to present data as accurately as possible and discussing various approaches with both my supervisor and colleagues facilitated me in streamlining the process and clear my mind.

Credibility is also enhanced by a detailed and systematic description of data, a fit between the data and the emerging analysis as well as by "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973). Thick descriptions involved detailed, rich descriptions not only of participants' experiences but also of the contexts in which experiences occur. The "thickness" of descriptions is encapsulated in vivid and comprehensive descriptions of the relevant cultures and contexts in question. The tenets of the life history design which I employed enhanced "thick" descriptions. The use of this method allowed me to acquire 'bird's eye view' of the cultural history of participants in their various contexts.

The last strategy I employed to ensure credibility was member checking. Member checking is a crucial technique for establishing credibility as it involves taking the research data and interpretations back to the participants in a study for them to confirm the credibility of both the information and the life history accounts (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I employed member

checking to ensure accurate portrayal of my interpretations (Creswell & Miller, 2000). I did member checking toward the end of the study so that it would not potentially disrupt the collaborative process. In some cases, I was only able to speak to participants telephonically since I was doing this part of the study during the week prior to school exams. According to Shenton (2004), credibility can further be achieved by sustained involvement with participants. The majority of participants showed a keen interest in the study as well as the process and I stayed in contact with most. I experienced almost a sense of ‘pride’ that they could be part of this study and had the distinct feeling that they thought they were making a difference. The relationship that was established provided me of the opportunity to send them messages when I was not sure about something they had said during the interview. They were always forthcoming with added information and now and again sent messages to ask about my progress.

Cohen *et al.* (2011) posed that the quality of data and findings in qualitative research is challenged by the main issue of representativeness. Cohen *et al.* (2011:200) refers to the criticism of Plummer (1983) namely that “cases are atypical rather than representative”. According to Cohen *et al.* (2011) a researcher should identify the sources of biases and suggests validity checks to reduce them. I have purposively selected participants for this study in such a way to be representative of more than one ethnic group and as well as being representative of gender. I was not only sensitive towards cultural differences but I also drew on the richness of data that was provided by a selection of diverse participants.

3.6.3 Transferability

According to Toma (2006) the findings of a research study should be applicable to other settings or groups. Stake (1994) and Denscombe (1998) presented a contrasting view and suggested that although each case may be unique, it is also an example within a broader group and. Both Nieuwenhuis (2010a) and Seale (1999) agreed with Stake and Denscombe by posing that this is not the aim of qualitative research. Erlandson *et al.* (1993:185) noted that even many positivist researchers believe that “conventional generalisability is never possible as all observations are defined by the specific contexts in which they occur”. Owed to the intricacy of social life, and the emotional nature of experiences and perceptions of individuals, life history and narrative work intend to represent dynamic and active relationships between society and experiences of the individual (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). One way to establish

transferability is to include rich, thick descriptions of the phenomenon being studied, as such descriptions may provide information which will make it possible to both judge and compare the applicability of the findings in relation to other known settings (Seale, 1999). Lincoln and Guba (2005) and Firestone (1993) are of the same opinion, and suggest that it is the obligation of the researcher to ensure that ample contextual information about the participants and research sites is provided to enable the reader to make such a transfer. This study met the criterion of transferability by including rich and detailed descriptions of the experiences beginner teachers with their own significant teachers and thorough descriptions of their unique contexts, (Seale, 1999).

3.6.4 Dependability

Dependability deals with the core issue that “the way in which a study is conducted should be consistent across time, researchers, and analysis techniques”, (Gasson, 2004:94). Lincoln and Guba (2000) highlighted the close link between credibility and dependability, and argued that, in practice, a demonstration of credibility may ensure dependability. A key aspect of warranting dependability is the thorough reporting of the details of the processes in the study. Detailed reporting and a translucent audit trail will enable future researchers to repeat the research process, if not necessarily to gain the same results (Shenton, 2004). The process through which findings are derived should thus be explicit and repeatable.

An external audit requires both the establishment of an audit trail and the carrying out of an audit by a competent external, disinterested auditor (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). According to Shenton (2004), an audit trail is a detailed chronology of research activities and processes; influences on the data collection and analysis; emerging themes and categories. The part of the audit that examines the process ends in a dependability judgment, while the part concerned with the product has a conformability judgment as result (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I included an audit trail to keep an account of all the significant aspects of the research process. Semi-structured interviews were audio-taped and transcribed, I kept a researcher’s diary and made field notes. All these documents were stored electronically and made available together with the study as part of the transparent audit trail.

3.6.5 Confirmability

Confirmable findings reflect the views of the participants in an inquiry and are not influenced by the biases and prejudices of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 2003; Patton, 2002; Toma, 2006). Gasson (2004:93) stated that confirmability is based on the “acknowledgment that research is never objective”. It addresses the core issue “that “findings should represent, as far as is (humanly) possible, the situation being researched rather than the beliefs, pet theories, or biases of the researcher”, (Gasson, 2004:93). Patton (2002) recognised the challenge of ensuring true objectivity since even interview questions are designed by people where the researcher’s bias may be unavoidable. Patton (2002) advised that steps should be taken to help confirm that the work’s findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the participants, rather than the characteristics and inclinations of the researcher. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested that a key criterion for confirmability is the extent to which the researcher admits his or her own dispositions. I acknowledge my own subjectivity and biases throughout the study by including reflective commentary (Shenton, 2004) in my researcher’s diary. I also incorporated ‘thought moments’ within the text to show thought processes which dealt with biases, my own historical background and emotions involving the research process.

3.6.6 Authenticity

Qualitative researchers are concerned with providing a frank and truthful portrayal of social life that is honest to the experiences of the individuals being studied (Neuman, 2006). The goal of my study was to use qualitative methods to describe stories accurately and in such a way that my description correlated with and was a representation of, the participants’ real experiences and views (Denzin & Lincoln, 2006). In order to enhance the authenticity of my research findings, I asked the participants to verify the identified themes for the purposes of authenticity and I ensured that I understood their perceptions correctly and captured and reported them accurately (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). When I listened to the audio recordings of interviews, I realised I often used utterances such as: “Let me just get this straight...” or “Will you please explain to me again...” and “Do I understand you correctly when you say...”. At that point I found it irritating; I found myself thinking: “Why didn’t you get it in the first place?” Later I realised that I was in actual fact ensuring that I do get their actual and ‘most true’ meanings and intentions behind the words. I also ensured that there was a sufficient audit trail

to prove that I did understand the perceptions and words of the participants correctly, and captured and reported them accurately (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the various elements of the research methodology that I utilised to reveal comprehension of the meaning of stories which participants have shared with me in my position as researcher of this study. I reflected on my role as researcher and justified my paradigmatic and other choices made throughout the study. I discussed the different data collection and documentation techniques and I highlighted the advantages and challenges that I faced as a result of these choices throughout. I described the process of data collection, analysis and interpretation and concluded the chapter with discussions of ethical considerations and quality criteria that applied. In the next chapter I describe the results of the study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

“The cranial cavity contains the brain. Its boundaries are formed by the bones of the skull. Let me penetrate you. I am the archaeologist of tombs. I would devote my life to marking your passageways, the entrances and exits of that impressive mausoleum, your body.”

~ Jeanette Winterson (1993) ~

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present the results of my research. It took me a long time to decide on the best way to present the stories of my participants to you, exactly as they had been shared with me. With ‘best’ I mean true. I want you to be able to experience them in the way I did; to feel that you were there, listening to these stories as they unfolded. As the writer of the text, I am omnipresent and the text is interspersed with my thoughts, memories and impressions of the interactions during the interviews, which I took directly from my researcher’s diary and the field notes written during the data-collection process. The direct words used by participants are presented here without reference to the original transcripts, however the original audio-recordings together with the transcriptions are available in appendices. I aimed to write an ‘uncluttered’ text, not only for easier reading, but also to emphasise the focus placed on the experiences related by the participants, and not so much on the ‘science’ of writing. In the previous chapter, I discussed the research methodology and motivated my reasons for my methodological choices and paradigmatic stances. In this chapter, I first introduce the participants to you by presenting their biographical information by way of an intertextual discourse with Salvador Dali’s Paranoiac Critical method and some of his paintings. I then propose a summary of the themes and categories discussed in this chapter. The coding process required continuous engagement with, as well as numerous readings of the interview transcripts. My field notes and research diary aided this process to a great extent. As discussed in Chapter 3, thematic analysis was used to analyse the captured data. By using this method, I was able to identify major themes as they emerged from the data gathered.

4.2 Selection realisation: My impressions of the characters

In the following section, I introduce the characters (participants) by integrating an intertextual discourse with the artworks of Salvador Dalí, and specifically his Paranoiac Critical method. The Paranoiac Critical method was developed by Dalí as a way to perceive reality. It was defined by Dalí himself as "irrational knowledge" based on a "delirium of interpretation" (Dalí & Gascoyne, 1935). This entails a process by which the artists (participants) found original and unique ways to interpret the world around them. What makes this way of interpretation suitable for the presentation of the findings of the study, is the ability "of the artist or the viewer to perceive multiple images within the same configuration." (Dalí & Gascoyne, 1935).

4.2.1 An intertextual discourse with Salvador Dalí's Paranoiac Critical method

"Trust me, I'm telling you stories. ... I can change the story. I am the story."

~ Winterson, J. (1985) ~

All of us have practised the Paranoiac Critical method when gazing skywards and discerning different shapes and forms in the clouds. The Paranoiac Critical method, developed by Dalí in the early 1930s, 'is a Surrealist method used by artists to tap into their subconscious through systematic irrational thought and a self-induced paranoid state. Dalí elevated this uniquely human characteristic into his own art form (Gordon, 1951). By inducing this paranoid state one can rid oneself of any previous notions, concepts and understanding of the world and reality in order to view the world in new, different and more unique ways (Gordon, 1951). Although Dalí was not a true paranoid, he was able to simulate a paranoid state without the use of drugs, and upon his return to a 'normal perspective' he would paint what he had seen and envisioned (Gordon, 1951). Dalí was able to create what he called "hand-painted dream photographs", which were physical, painted representations of the images he had seen while in his paranoid state (Gordon, 1951:54). Being a painter of exceptional skill, he was capable of reproducing a multitude of fantasies as visual illusions on canvas (Gordon, 1951). Dalí believed that when people viewed his work, there was a subjective understanding of his work as the subconscious has a symbolic universal language. By simply viewing his work, the viewers' would enable their minds to experience unconscious acts (Dalí & Gascoyne, 1935). It is the role of the subconscious mind, as seen by Dalí, that I address when introducing the participants in this study. This introduction is by no means a formal or informed academic analysis of Dalí's

work. I merely used some of his paintings and my knowledge of and interest in Dali's work as my own intertext to enrich the introduction of the participants to correlate with my first impressions.

It should be borne in mind that both the participants in the study and the readers of the text have subjective views of the research process and the findings of the study. Dali (Dali & Gascoyne, 1935:54) describes the symbolic language of the subconscious mind by saying:

The subconscious has a symbolic language that is truly a universal language, for it speaks with the vocabulary of the great vital constants, sexual instinct, feeling of death, physical notion of the enigma of space – these vital constants are universally echoed in every human. To understand an aesthetic picture, training in the appreciation is necessary, cultural and intellectual preparation. For Surrealism the only prerequisite is a receptive and intuitive human being.

I am not introducing a new paradigm for interpreting the findings of the study. By including Dali's paintings as an intertext in introducing the participants, I am merely reminding the readers to approach these findings not only with an open mind, but also by allowing themselves to transcend to a heightened state of awareness – to look beyond what is presented in mere words. My aim with this intertextual introduction in Dali's words, taken from his *Conquest of the Irrational* (Gordon, 1951:228) can be explained as follows:

My whole ambition in the pictorial domain [this study] is to materialize the images of my concrete irrationality [my research journey] with the most imperialist fury of precision.

4.2.2 The characters (participants) in this study

In the section that follows, I describe my first and overall impressions of the participants against the backdrop of my personal perceptions of certain elements in a selection of Dali's paintings.

MSIZWE: “I have been in her class for three years, so over time we had a bond.”

Figure 4.1: ‘Enigmatic Elements in a Landscape’ (1934)



Salvador Dalí was known to have been strongly influenced by the Dutch painter Jan Vermeer (1632-1675), (Gordon, 1951). In the above painting, Dalí presents us with a rear view of Jan Vermeer working at his easel. The depiction of the figure as much smaller than the surrounding objects summarised my thoughts about Mziswe, who is a skinny black man. The fact that Mziswe preferred traditional 'White' education in an urban school, which he believed would better equip him for life, created the idea of him being left outside. Msizwe grew up in a township in Gauteng with his parents, two older brothers and a younger sister. He described himself as a “slow” learner during his school years, which in my mind created a picture of a young boy trapped in an unfortunate position. He grew up wanting to “make a difference in South Africa”. He initially wanted to become a lawyer, but when an opportunity arose to study teaching, he realised he would be able to make an even greater contribution as a teacher.

At the time of the interview he had been teaching for one year. He was in a temporary teaching position and worried about whether his contract would be extended. He was teaching at a school with limited resources, which he related to the difference between “White and Black” schools. This idea guided my choice of this specific painting to introduce Msizwe: the small dark figure against a backdrop of some black objects, with the lighter and ‘whiter’ objects still looming large. I experienced some difficulty conducting the interview with him, even though he was excited to share his classroom experiences. He seemed nervous and it was only later that he opened up and shared deeper thoughts and memories.

Two female teachers were of significance as their openness and sensitivity drew Msizwe to them. The major influences on his professional identity were his History teacher, who had made the subject come alive with interesting stories, and his father, who had been involved in the Struggle and told him stories about the history of South Africa.

THABISENG: “I can now see why my teachers were so negative, but I will never be the same.”

Figure 4.2: Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee around a Pomegranate a Second before Awakening (1944)



Salvador Dalí's work was strongly influenced by the theories of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) (Gordon, 1951). The above painting was intended to express Freud's discovery of the dream, typically with a long narrative and the dreamer suddenly waking up. Thabiseng's narrative was overshadowed by the negativity she had experienced from senior teachers and school management teams in the profession. What she perceived as The bullying by different role players on higher levels in school management teams made the threatening wild animals depicted in the painting suitable for introducing Thabiseng. Throughout her life, Thabiseng had to fend for herself, often without much support, and she was therefore rather vulnerable, like the female depicted in the painting.

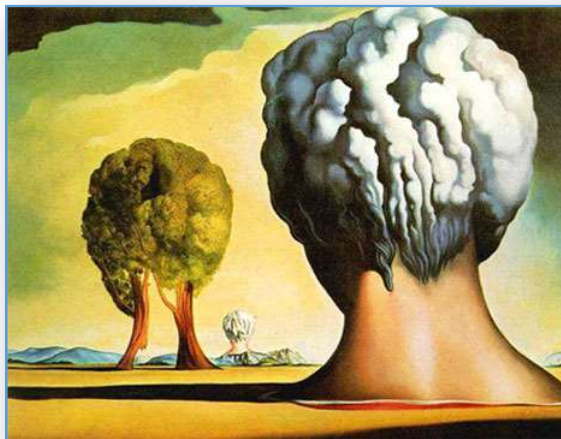
Thabiseng is a feisty young woman with clear brown eyes who grew up in North West and was raised by her great grandmother. She attended a small rural school up to Grade 10, after which her grandmother passed away and she went to live with her mother in Mamelodi. I met

Thabiseng in a crowded restaurant in the centre of the city, an area that is notorious for its high crime rate. She was worried about my safety and the safety of my car and I sensed an current connection between us. The unfolding of the interview confirmed that. She shared my thoughts on social justice and, like me, had experienced challenges as a result of her outspoken nature. She had been teaching for two years and had left her teaching position to take up a post in the Department of Education, where she was to start working a week after the interview.

Thabiseng experienced extremely negative influences while teaching. She did not identify anyone as a specific role model or influential teacher during her school career, but admitted to having been strongly influenced by her familial structure. She seemed to be such a strong and independent individual that an influential own teacher seemed almost ‘above’ her. She liked the idea of teaching from a young age and indicated that her teachers had liked her and had treated her well.

JANTJIES: “I could see myself in him and he would not leave you behind if you did not understand.”

Figure 4.3: The Three Sphinxes of Bikini (1947)



This painting was inspired by the nuclear tests carried out in the Bikini Atolls and is Dalí's comment on the effects of change (Gordon, 1951). Dalí concluded that change not only has external influences, but also has an effect on the minds of all the role players. Jantjies was the participant who had experienced change most frequently during his early years of teaching. He had taught at three different schools and the effects of these changes in his teaching context came to the fore during the interview. During his school years he had also attended a number of different schools while lodging with different family members. He related how these

changes had affected him and how ‘outsiders’ came to be more influential in his life than his primary family members. He also experienced bullying from a young age and believed that it was because of his small frame, but added that he had taken it in his stride and that it had not influenced him negatively.

Jantjies had started his school career at a rural primary school in a small town in the Northern Cape and had lived with family members while his parents were in Pretoria. When I met him at his school to conduct the interview, he was wearing his school’s sports jacket and sporting an earring. Jantjies is soft-spoken and has kind eyes and sensitive hands. He became very emotional when he spoke about his deceased own teacher. I gave him a white tissue with which he toyed as he was staring into a mirror of memories and sharing them with me. For some reason I could not explain, I experienced a wave of tenderness towards this tall, young Coloured man who had only been teaching for four years.

Several significant teachers had stood out during Jantjies’ school career. He distinctly remembered the headmaster of his primary school as a role model and saw himself in this teacher. He also recalled two male teachers in primary school and a mathematics teacher from high school. However, he was influenced most of all by his female English teacher, who tragically passed away in a road accident a few years after he had finished school.

TARRYN: “The way he supported me had filtered into my own teaching style.”

Figure 4.4: Galatea of the Spheres (1952)



This painting is a tribute to Dali's wife Gala and is a reflection of the incoherence and disjointedness of all existing objects. I chose this painting to introduce Tarryn, specifically because it is difficult to determine the race of the female depicted here. The face in the painting seems to change into the shades of all four 'colours' associated with the four races of the participants in this study. Before interviewing Tarryn, I needed only one more Coloured participant and I discussed my embarrassment about having to ask for 'Coloured participants' with her. She laughed and told me how, because of her very light skin, she always had to convince people that she really was a Coloured. She told me that she was often mistakenly regarded as being Indian and that she was used to explaining her ethnic background. This did not seem to bother her. In fact, nothing seemed to bother this girl, who appeared to be completely at peace with who she was.

Tarryn is a bundle of energy, youthful strength and exuberance. At the time of the interview she had been teaching for five years and I sensed that she might have reached an advanced stage in the process of constructing her teacher identity. She had spent her primary school years in Cape Town, where she attended an Afrikaans primary school, and completed her school career in Pretoria. She described the move from an entirely Afrikaans 'White' school to a dual-medium school, which eventually became an English-medium school, as a 'culture shock'.

She mentioned one significant own teacher who had also been her high-jumping coach. She shared how he supported her because she was bullied 'a little' in primary school. She further referred to a lecturer who had made a profound impact on her views of the ideal teacher during her tertiary training. Her father also influenced her professional identity and, to a large extent, the way she viewed education.

RAJESH: ‘I learned how to learn early, so I didn’t have to have a teacher.’

Figure 4.5: The Persistence of Memory (1931)



The persistence of memory is one of Dalí’s most well-known works. It highlights the influence of Albert Einstein on his art and is therefore ideal for introducing Rajesh, who has had a keen interest in science from an early age. The painting also suggests a person who values punctuality and likes to have all the ticks in the right boxes. Rajesh met me in the foyer of the school where he was teaching. He was very neatly dressed and wore a K-Way jacket and a striped tie. He is currently teaching Natural Sciences to Grades 8 to 12 at a relatively small private school in Pretoria. He had almost a business-like manner about him and although young, looked older than his years. He seemed strict and rather formal, but friendly. He appeared to take life ‘in his stride’.

Rajesh grew up in Richards Bay and then moved to Pretoria to further his education. During this time, his parents relocated first to New Zealand and then to Dubai, where they still reside. He holds a master’s degree in Biochemistry and initially intended to do further research in that field. He had some teaching experience as a tutor at a university and after working in a laboratory for three years he decided that teaching was his real passion.

He showed an intense passion for his field of study, the natural sciences, and the two significant teachers he mentioned (both male) were those who had presented this subject in interesting and novel ways. He also remembered his English teacher with a smile, describing her fondly as “eccentric and a bit crazy”.

VANJARIA: ‘I think I was a teacher’s pet at some point’

Figure 4.6: The Metamorphosis of Narcissus (1937)



Although this painting is based on the myth of Narcissus and his decadence, I related it to Vanjaria because of the fluidity of the objects depicted in the painting. Vanjaria reminded me of water, with her easy, bubbly laugh and the way nothing seemed to bother her. She admitted that she did not usually “overthink things” and described herself as not very emotional. She was one of the participants who employed reflective strategies on different levels, which reminded me of the water in Dalí’s painting. She recalled the way she had experienced the transition between tertiary education and her first year of teaching in a calm and reflective manner. She also had very specific plans for the rest of her career as a teacher. Her plans for the future, still far away, but unmistakably present, reminded me of the deeper dimensions of the painting.

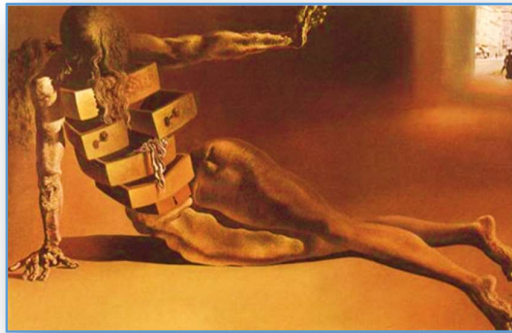
She was the youngest in her family and had lost her father shortly after she had completed her practical teaching and two days before she received a Golden Key award. She grew up in Pretoria and attended Muslim primary and secondary schools. She used to ‘play teacher’ from a young age and always enjoyed explaining homework to her friends.

She recalled three significant teachers from her school career with whom she still had contact. She described the small community in which she lived as one where everyone knew everyone else, which, according to her, explained why she still had contact with some of her teachers. Like Thabiseng, Vanjaria also seemed to be ‘above’ being influenced by others to the extent that it might have changed her professional identity.

influenced his professional identity through the ways in which they had conducted themselves and maintained discipline in the classroom.

CINDY: “When she passed away, it was like losing a parent, like physically losing a part of yourself.”

Figure 4.8: The Anthropomorphic Cabinet (1936)

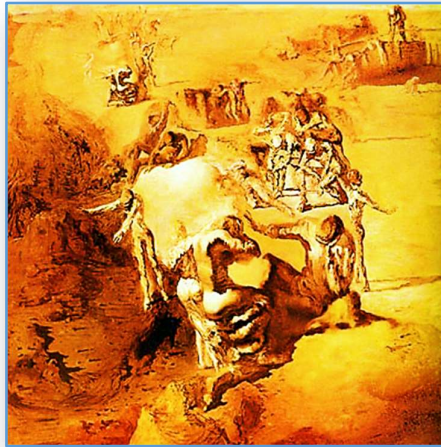


The above painting mirrors exactly how I experienced the interview with Cindy, whose narrative was like a chest of drawers from which the contents spilled out as soon as they were ‘opened’. This artwork, in which Dalí depicts the human body as consisting of drawers that can be opened through psychoanalysis, was also influenced by Sigmund Freud. In a sense, interviewing Cindy was some kind of psychoanalysis, or, at the very least, an intense sharing of very personal information. Cindy appeared to be a complex individual and I felt a strong connection with her. The woman depicted in this painting seems to me to be experiencing some kind of emotional pain. While interviewing Cindy, I felt that this applied to her as well.

Cindy is qualified as a Foundation Phase teacher and was teaching Grades 5 and 6 at the time of the interview. She had grown up as the only child of an English-speaking mother and an Afrikaans-speaking father, which had a marked influence on her upbringing. As a child she did not feel quite at home among people from either language group and described her young self as a “square peg in a round hole”. She had been greatly influenced by one of her own teachers, Mrs M, who passed away during Cindy’s first years as a beginner teacher. The passing of Mrs M had left Cindy with many unresolved emotions and she indicated that she still missed her influence in her professional and personal life. Although Cindy also mentioned other own teachers who had played a role in her developing professional identity, it was evident that Mrs M’s influence overshadowed all other influences.

PIETER: “Even now, I remember him. I will always remember him.”

Figure 4.9: The Great Paranoiac (1936)



The Great Paranoiac depicts a constellation of male and female figures against what seems to be a barren landscape. This painting reminded me of Pieter, who seemed to have experienced playoffs between males and females throughout his life. He had attended a same-gendered school (male), where he later worked as a teaching assistant and was eventually appointed in a teaching post. Although he seemed to have adapted well in a male-dominated teaching environment, Pieter shared that while he had a very close relationship with his mother, his relationship with his father and brothers was strained. He comes from a large family and has four brothers and a sister, as well as eight nephews and nieces. He exuded youthful excitement and energy. He coached different sports at the school and memories of his own sporting career seemed important, as well as the fact that he had been in leadership positions at both the primary and secondary school levels.

Pieter had been influenced to a large extent by different teachers who had taught him throughout his school career. During the interview he revealed that during his early years as a teacher he had consciously tried to emulate the behaviour of people who he perceived as ‘good’ teachers. He recalled one very negative experience with a male teacher during high school which, in his opinion, had changed the course of his professional path. He fondly recalled several female teachers as very positive influences throughout his school years and as a beginner teacher.

ELSA: “He said we had a connection, but the sad thing is, I can never be him.”

Figure 4.10: Visions of Eternity (1936/37)



Elsa, who is one of two children in a fairly stereotypical White, Afrikaans-speaking family, is a blonde girl with light blue eyes which seem to penetrate one's thoughts. She came across as a deep thinker, a person who considered life carefully. She had attended three different primary schools and had finished her school career at an Afrikaans secondary school in Pretoria. She studied part time while working as a teaching assistant at the school where she had matriculated and was eventually appointed as a beginner teacher at the same school. She conversed easily and comfortably and I sensed that the topic of my research resonated with questions in her own mind. Elsa and Cindy were the participants in this study who had been influenced the most by their own teachers. Elsa recalled several primary school teachers with vague fondness, but the teacher who stood out in her school career was the male teacher who had taught her Geography and was in charge of the school choir, of which she had been a member. What makes Elsa's narrative especially interesting is that after completing her schooling, she became a teaching assistant and eventually a beginner teacher at the same school. The role of her own teacher can thus be viewed as a linear pattern spanning over almost thirteen years.

It was evident that she had been disappointed and angry when her favourite teacher resigned from his post while she was a beginner teacher. I thought of Elsa and her own teacher after I had read James Davies's reflective entry on his blog after his visit to The Art Institute of Chicago. He described his impression of *Visions of Eternity* as follows: 'Over and over again, generation causes new generation. Rinse and repeat' (Davies, 2013). After having read this

entry, I thought of Elsa and the way her own teacher had ‘begotten’ a new generation. She also described a ‘rinsing’ process to explain how her mind had been freed of the stereotypical idea of a teacher as role model.

This concludes the introduction of the ten participants in the study, presented against the backdrop of Salvador Dalí’s Paranoic Critical method. The paintings included were employed according to my own interpretation of the applicable elements I perceived in each, which correlated with my overall impression of my research participants.

4.3 Explanation of the order of themes and categories

In the previous section, I introduced participants by describing my overall personal impressions of each, according to specific elements in selected paintings by Salvador Dalí. In this section, I will expand on the idea of a palimpsest by presenting findings in three clusters of themes and categories that should again be regarded as layers ‘on top of each other’, with findings being continuously played off against one another.

The first cluster is an extension of the introduction as it involves findings regarding the unique internal influences exerted on participants pertaining to their professional identities, such as the role of family and intertextual influences. In this section, the influence of teacher-like figures, which include family members, is revealed while the influence of own teachers is initially only marginally visible. Findings dealing with the broader aspects of the participants’ personal circumstances, such as socio-political issues during the early years of teaching and influences within the professional South African context are also presented in this cluster of themes. Other findings that will be presented relate to the participants’ development of a professional identity in their current teaching environments.

The findings presented in the second cluster of themes focus on the initial professional identities of participants and are based on their memories and experiences during their early years of teaching. Their teachers’ selves are presented according to three ‘tenses’ of the self, namely as past, present and future selves. The influence of own teachers on the professional identity in all three ‘tenses’ of the self comes to the fore very strongly in this section. The third cluster of findings concentrates on the awareness and significance of own teachers in the professional identity of beginner teachers.

These themes and categories are presented in a funnel-like order, moving from participants' unique external circumstances to the influence of own teachers on their emerging identities during their early years of teaching and culminating in a presentation of findings regarding the significance of own teachers as partners on their journeys towards a 'young' professional identity. The influence of own teachers on the professional identity of participants is integrated throughout the presentation of all findings.

Figure 4.11: Palimpsest of clustered themes

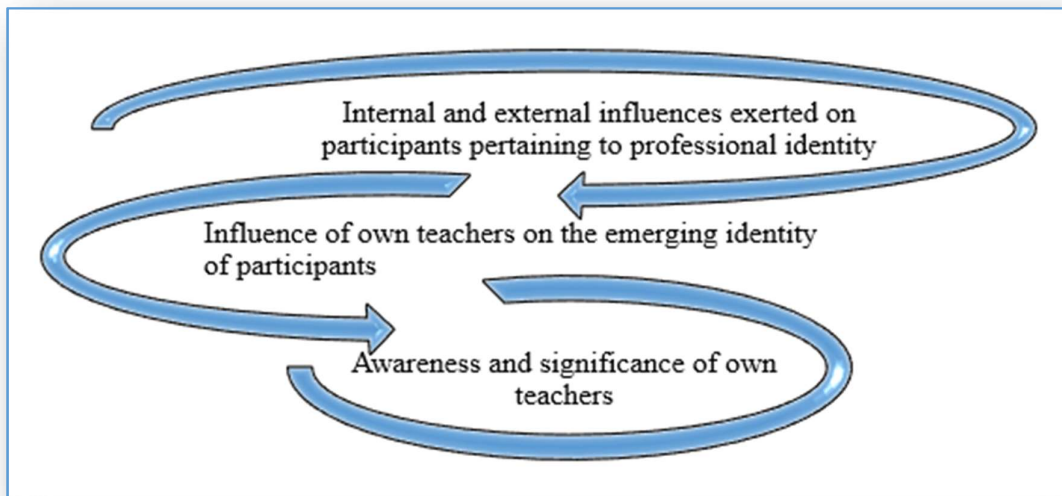


Table 4.1 below provides a summary of the emerging themes and categories presented.

Table 4.1: Emerging themes and categories

Themes	Categories
Theme cluster 1: Beginner teachers in contextual spaces	
4.4 Internal influences exerted on the beginner teacher	4.4.1 Overview of the role of family 4.4.2 Exchanging places I: The substitutive nature of family members and own teachers 4.4.3 Exchanging places II: Intertextual influences substituting own teachers
4.5 Contemporary external influences exerted on beginner teachers	4.5.1 The navigation of socio-political issues 4.5.2 Own teachers guiding beginner teachers in the South African schooling context
4.6 Developing a professional identity in the current teaching context	4.6.1 The teaching environment as a contextual influence 4.6.2 Classroom discipline defining the emerging professional self 4.6.3 Reflection as a tool for disentanglement
Theme cluster 2: Navigating professional identities according to Possible Selves	
4.7 Negotiating a professional identity through Possible Selves: The Present Self	4.7.1 Self-knowledge and perceptions of personality 4.7.2 The cautiously emerging self 4.7.3 The core personality in survival mode
4.8 The Past Self: Developing a professional identity by remembering the past	4.8.1 Memories of the early years 4.8.2 Remembering resilience during periods of hardship
4.9 Towards a Future Self through emulating the ‘ideal’ teacher	4.9.1 The ideal teachers: A moral and balanced person 4.9.2 Optimistic beginner teachers: Progress towards the horizon
Theme cluster 3: Own teachers as primary influence on beginner teachers’ professional identity	
4.10 Experiences with own teachers	4.10.1 Negative experiences involving own teachers 4.10.2 Positive experiences involving own teachers
4.11 Realisation of own teachers	4.11.1 Communicative behaviour of own teachers 4.11.2 Awareness and significance of own teachers

THEME CLUSTER ONE: Beginner teachers in contextual spaces

4.4 Internal influences exerted on beginner teachers

In this and the next two themes (i.e. 4.5 and 4.6) I will provide some background on other influences that had been exerted on the participants and had contributed to the development of their professional identities. The role of own teachers soon becomes evident in these themes and the scene is set for the presentation of findings regarding the role of own teachers in the development of the professional identities of participants during their early years of teaching, which is the focus of the study. In the next theme, I will report on findings regarding familial influences on participants, specifically pertaining to their professional identities. Finally, I will present findings on how the influence of teachers was substituted for that of family members. Findings regarding instances where intertextual influences were substituted for the influence of own teachers will also be discussed.

4.4.1 Overview of the role of family

In this category, I report on findings regarding the role of participants' families, where it pertained to their professional identities. Family played a significant role in the lives of all participants.

Elsa and Thabiseng described how their choice of a career in teaching was rejected by their respective families. Elsa's decision to become a teacher was met with trepidation from both her parents. However, she made it clear that a teaching career was her choice: "I told them teaching is what I felt I should do." She described how she had tried to convince them to accept her decision, but eventually had made peace with the fact that they did not support her career choice. Thabiseng also experienced pressure from her family and friends not to pursue a teaching career. Initially she did not tell her family for which field of study she had enrolled and explained her decision as follows: "Even though I had to lie about what I was studying, the fact remained that I am going to do my teaching degree and I am going to complete it."

Thabiseng was raised by her great-grandmother and only moved to live with her mother after her great-grandmother had passed away when she was in Grade 10. She related how difficulty it had been for her to process the death of her great-grandmother: "It was because I knew her as my mother." Her great-grandmother had suffered from a mental illness that was detected only later in Thabiseng's life. At the time, Thabiseng thought her great- grandmother's

behaviour was normal and that she was simply very strict. She recalled incidents when her great grandmother had been extremely rude to visitors and had attempted to choose her friends for her: “She didn’t want people, you know if she hates you, she hates you and then she chose friends for me, I thought it was normal. I got used to it.”

Growing up with her great-grandmother as her primary caretaker damaged Thabiseng’s early social relationships. She explained how she had been unable to make friends, even later in her life, by saying: “I think it was already too late for me to, because I didn’t know how to.” This might explain the independent nature she displayed as a beginner teacher. Unlike most of the other participants, she did not seek support from her colleagues. She also did not recall any own teachers who had had a salient influence on her professional identity.

Cindy and Pieter had experienced similar familial influences; both regarded their mother as their primary role model and stated that their relationship with their father had been complex. Pieter described his mother as “always there for me” and recalled how she had attended all his school events. She also supported his career choice and motivated him to obtain his teaching degree. Cindy’s father was a paraplegic as a result of an accident that had occurred one month before her birth. She remembered how her mother had taken care of both of them and she looked up to her in many ways: “Mom has this endurance and courage and strength of character that just overwhelms you, but she is also very strict.”

Two participants had formed strong bonds with female own teachers and highlighted the significance of those teachers in their professional becoming. Pieter described the influence of one of his female teachers by saying: “The way she is helping you had a lot of influence.” These participants used similar words and phrases when they talked about their mothers and their female own teachers, such as “supportive”, “honest with me” and “always there for me”. Cindy also specifically stated that her own teacher “... did not force authority on me, not like my dad”.

The parents of two participants had assisted them in the development of their professional identities. Tarryn found strength in her mother, whom she described as the one who had “earthed” (grounded) her during her first years of teaching. Her mother had been a prison warden for 30 years and knew “how to ground people”. Tarryn’s mother was one of the people who contributed greatly to her personal and professional identity: “I should thank Mom for grounding me in my first year of teaching. I was a bit of a crazy teacher, in a sense that you

just shout at everything and everyone, which is not the way. So there was a lot of grounding from my Mom with how I interact with the children.”

Msizwe’s father instilled in him a love of history from a young age. He recalled how his father used to emphasise the importance of education, saying that “education is how we can make a difference in the world”. His father had been active in the struggle against the Apartheid-regime and shared numerous stories from that time with him. Msizwe said: “I think it was when he told me these stories that I started to develop a passion for my subject History. The more I listened to him, the more I wanted to know and also teach it.”

Rajesh recalled how his parents had laid an academic foundation during his early school years: his father would make him write out timetables and test him on them twice a day and his mother helped him with English. Steven described how parents as “always making sure I get the best education”, and Tarryn’s father was “very adamant” about sending her to a Model C school despite the fact that she had been bullied in traditionally White schools. When she had asked her father about his reasons for this decision, he had replied: “Because the opportunities weren’t there before. Now they are made available, so we’re going to exploit it.” The result was that Tarryn only ever had ‘White’ education.

Although Vanjaria’s memories of family were overshadowed by her father’s passing. She described her family, in particular her father, as supportive. She had had a close bond with her father, who “was always supportive with anything I wanted to do. He said you don’t study to earn a lot; you study to enjoy what you’re doing”.

It was clear from the participants’ narratives that their families or specific family members had had a considerable influence on their personal and professional identity formation. In all cases, family had played a role in their journey towards a professional identity, not only through the education they had received, but also in respect of how family members had influenced their career choices, regardless of whether the influences had been positive or negative. It is also worth noting that the parents of all the participants considered good education as an imperative. Elsa and Thabiseng reported negative experiences involving family members, which had a bearing on their professional identities. Cindy and Pieter demonstrated close links with a supportive parent and their own teachers. All the other participants were supported by both their parents on their roads toward becoming teachers, as well as during their early years of teaching.

4.4.2 Exchanging places I: The substitutive nature of family and own teachers

In the next category, I report on findings revealed by participants who seemed to substitute family members for own teachers or teacher-like figures. It is important to note that these findings indicate a similarity between the ‘closeness’ between learners and own teachers and the traditional bond between family members; it is thus not a substitution in the full and literal sense of the word.

Cindy was an only child and shared that her own teacher “only had one child as well”. She thought that the teacher could understand her “better than most people because she could relate to being an only child”. She said that her own teacher “could see the way I am and she could compare it to her son”. She described children who grow up without siblings as “a breed upon our own”. Cindy linked memories of her own teacher to those of her own mother and use similar ‘mother-like’ terms to describe them both. She described Mrs M as the one who “nurtured me through a lot of things still, she was just utterly amazing”. It was Cindy’s mother who helped her to navigate her identity as a bilingual child with a preference for people from one language group and a dislike for the other: “Mom said the way I’m treating Afrikaans people and by the way I perceive them, I am being a racist because I believe I’m better than they are, because I’m English. She said celebrate the difference, don’t create a thing from I’m better than you are because I’m English and you’re not.”

Cindy described how her own teacher complemented her mother’s approach to her identity as a bilingual child. She said Mrs M displayed “female intuition, maybe it comes down to that”. She described how her own teacher “knew what I needed” and described it as “motherly instincts”. Cindy compared her own teacher to her mother and regarded both as “very strong women”: “They both made me who I am today, the teacher and the person I am.” She further equated the close relationship between her and Mrs M to a relationship between close family members: “It’s like a relationship between family members. You’re not in love with your brother, but you love him deeply. I think in many ways I would compare it to a relationship between families.”

When Tarryn recalled memories of her own teacher and his support during a time when she was being bullied at school, she referred to his approach as “his own manner” and said that she felt safe with him and that “he was more like a father figure in certain aspects”. She recalled how some male teachers came across as “hitting on a learner” and stated specifically that this

was not the case with her own teacher. Elsa's own teacher was supportive during her school years and was also the one with whom she could discuss her own family's negative attitude regarding her career choice. While Elsa experienced disapproval from her family, Msizwe relied on his father's political views to provide him with professional 'direction' throughout his career as a beginner teacher. Msizwe wanted to "carry out his dreams" by inspiring more Black people to become educated. Since Jantjies' parents had to live where they found good employment opportunities so that they could afford the best possible education for their children, he had lived with other family members for long periods. Although his parents' financial sacrifices had contributed largely to Jantjies' education, it was evident that he gradually became very independent from them. He mentioned that he was "thankful for everything they did for me", but recalled another teacher-like figure who, according to him, had influenced his professional identity. He further shared how he never experienced 'affirmation' from his parents. He remembered one own teacher from high school who had supported him at an emotional level and described how she took on the role of his parents: "I think it might have been because my parents never offered affirmation, so she also took over that role and she always said well done, that was good and I never received that at home."

In the following section I will report on findings that relate to instances where intertextual influences were substituted for the role of the own teacher.

4.4.3 Exchanging places II: Intertextual influences substituting own teachers

As explained in Chapter 1, intertexts usually include influences of a textual nature and are often found in media or multimedia. Intertexts are 'unnamed, unseen' things that influence participants – things that do not include 'real' or known people in their lives, but characters from a fictional space. In some cases, these 'characters' took on the role of own teachers in the sense that they influenced the professional identity of beginner teachers at various stages of their professional journey. I included intertexts as an influential aspect solely because they came to the fore during the interviews when I asked direct questions about the specific influence of own teachers. Three participants revealed influences of this nature.

Steven and Thabiseng are both keen readers and were influenced (on different levels) by literature. Thabiseng's familial situation did not allow spending time with friends, therefore she turned to reading. When I asked her about specific influences on her professional identity she mentioned reading: "I think reading, I just read a lot." She explained how she had

sometimes drawn on the actions of characters in the books she had read to navigate her identity. To explain how she had learnt from characters in literature to guide her own actions, she said: “You know you see good things happening to people in those books and you see, oh that is how people are doing it.”

Steven’s academic background in philosophy influenced his teaching to a significant extent. He spoke about “the one or two people I don’t personally know, but that still are sort of role models”. The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, whose work he had studied thoroughly, had had a profound influence on the development of his professional identity. He explained this influence by saying: “What I learnt from him and what I tried to get into my teaching as far as I can, is that you can’t really teach someone anything. You can just help them to learn it themselves.”

He described how he approached teaching by trying to get “that autonomy and get them to accept their own responsibility”. He described his approach as “much more effective than trying to just hammer ideas into them and them battling to remember it”. He further talked about how this intertextual influence was not always easy to handle in his current teaching position: “It might not always be a good influence because it is a very different kind of teaching style in terms of the content you come across. So when I tried to teach the English too much like philosophy, it did not work.” Although Steven experienced tension between an intertextual influence and the school context, he described it as a substantial influence on his professional identity: “It definitely has influenced my teaching style a great deal, in that I really try and encourage this critical thinking and participation in my class.”

Rajesh initially seemed embarrassed to admit that his professional identity had been profoundly influenced by a character in a television show: “It’s going to sound really silly, but as a kid I always watched Bill Nye, the science guy.” He recalled how he had started watching this show as a young child and had continued to do so throughout his early years of teaching. This influence resonates strongly with Rajesh’s inclination towards creating interesting learning opportunities and the memories he shared of becoming easily bored when he was not challenged in a thought-provoking way. He described this influence as follows: “Watching the way he went about doing science, like jokes, when he did experiments, he tried to make it interesting and he did pretty weird things. I think that he himself influenced my teaching. I wanted to teach like that.”

This category showed that the abovementioned three participants had been influenced by things other than ‘real’ people or circumstances. Throughout the interviews, I had not linked a specific own teacher as a prominent influence in the lives of any one of these participants. All three had shared memories about certain teachers, but none had displayed a very strong bond with, or had been influenced significantly by any own teachers. I therefore concluded that the intertextual influences about which they were all passionate, had, to a large extent, replaced the influence of own teachers. It further transpired that one cannot ‘regulate’ influences on professional identity; professional identity is susceptible to all influences in the lives of beginner teachers.

An analysis of the narratives relating to the different categories in Theme 4.4 highlighted some important findings. First, in the case of all the participants, family members exerted a strong influence during the early development of their professional identities, specifically through their negative or positive attitudes towards the participants’ career choices and the education they received. Second, all the parents involved felt that a good education was important. Third, close links between supportive parents and participants’ own (supportive) teachers were demonstrated. Fourth, some participants illustrated an iterative substitution between family members and own teachers or teacher-like figures, and in some cases compared own teachers with a mother or father. Fifth, a minority of the participants who did not demonstrate any close bonds with own teachers, indicated that they had been influenced by intertextual characters or events. It is therefore evident that influences on professional identity cannot be controlled.

4.5 Contemporary external influences exerted on the beginner teacher

Under this theme, I will discuss influences from the wider contexts of the participants’ lives. Contemporary external influences include socio-political issues and matters unique to the South African school system. Participants talked specifically about their experiences during their early years of teaching after their first appointments. Where applicable, the roles played by own teachers are highlighted, and the cases in which own teachers’ influence was not as evident are also discussed.

4.5.1 The navigation of socio-political issues

In this category I present findings regarding several socio-political issues that were raised by the participants. Interviews were randomly dispersed with comments relating to the specific

socio-political environments in which participants found themselves at different stages of their lives. In this section, I report only on issues that directly influenced their professional identities.

The emerging professional identities of four participants were influenced by socio-political issues. Four participants (of colour) were directly influenced by the political situation in South Africa, and two (White) participants recalled the presence of political undercurrents. These memories sensitised Elsa to the extent that she displayed sensitivity towards issues regarding social justice in her classroom practice, although it did not have a direct bearing on her professional identity or the development of a professional identity. Issues regarding political undercurrents came to the fore very early in the interview conducted with Elsa. She recalled the time her family moved to another house, which had coincided with the first democratic elections in South Africa. She remembered the fear experienced by many Whites at the time and said that she had realised that “everybody was scared of Black people” and that there “might be coming a war”. She had disliked having to teach at a time when “people were scared of each other” and explained how she had tried to create awareness of social justice in her classroom and to teach learners to be tolerant of each other.

Elsa shared how a close relationship with her own teacher had assisted her in dealing with socio-political issues arising in her classroom. She described how they had shared a “personal, close relationship” and said that “some sort of connection” had existed between them. She recalled how he had told her that he “could look at me in class and knew I understood currently”. It was this teacher who became an integral part of her support structure during her early years of teaching. She further shared how she could talk to him about her parents’ political views and their initial resistance to her choice of a teaching career, because “he was there, he supported me”. Steven experienced racism in a unique way. He had attended a same-gender school and remembered it as the school “where the very staunch conservative Afrikaans people send their children”. Although he was not a direct victim of racism, he experienced taunting because he did not join in in making fun of the few Black fellow-learners.

Msizwe found himself on the other side of the continuum by being part of the ‘Black people’ – the group that Elsa had feared when they (Elsa and Msizwe) were about the same age. Msizwe was influenced vastly by his father’s political views, which created an acute awareness of the educational situation of Black learners in South Africa. During my interview with Msizwe, he frequently voiced his opinion on the issue of so-called Black education. He recalled how the

knowledge imparted by his father had driven him to become a teacher: “One thing I’ve learnt is that education was not really taken seriously for Black people. I chose teaching because it’s one thing I can do to influence more Black people to get into school.”

Msiwe shared his views on the differences between urban and township schools by saying that he would have preferred to complete his schooling in an urban school. He recalled how passing a subject is “enough” in a township school and mentioned the “lack of motivation to become your best”. While attending a township school, Msizwe started believing that Black education was not regarded as a serious matter. Msizwe believed that if a higher standard of education for Black people had been maintained, many of “our problems in this country would not even exist”. He further expressed the opinion that people are “ignorant” about Black education. His father not only influenced his career choice, but also his attitude towards his profession: “I believe even now South Africa is really suffering because most Blacks aren’t really educated.” He shed light on the cultural notion, which occurs mostly in townships, that a Black child is ostracised when attending a traditionally ‘White’ school: “In a township, we have this mentality that once you go to a White school you’ll end up as a ‘coconut’, which means you’re Black on the outside, but White on the inside. And then they must get out of the Black society.”

This attitude held by people in the township had led to his decision against attending a ‘White’ school as he did not want to be labelled “a coconut”. Msizwe felt that his professional identity had been influenced both negatively and positively by his cultural environment, and that he would have been a “better teacher” had he been born into another cultural (White) environment: “I think I would have been more equipped if I had been educated in a White school from a young age. I would have had that mentality of working harder, which would have made a difference in my life for years.”

Despite this view, he acknowledged the positive effect of having been educated in a township school as it enabled him “understand my learners better, because I was there”. He was teaching in a school similar to the one he had attended and shared how he motivated his learners to optimise their potential and not to “only pass subjects”. He further commented on the difficulties he had faced at the school where he was a beginner teacher because of the lack of motivation that he saw in his colleagues at the school: “It becomes difficult because only one or two teachers are actually interested in doing things and the others are just there to just fill the gap.”

Whereas Msizwe indicated that his decision to become a teacher had been influenced by socio-political factors, Tarryn had experienced the effects of a previously segregated society on a more personal level. As her physical appearance differs slightly from what is generally regarded as distinctly ‘Coloured’, she has had to answer questions about her race throughout her life. The fact that she had attended ‘White’ schools also led to friends from the same (Coloured) racial group suggesting that she thought that she was “better than” them. Even her learners had asked questions about her race when she started teaching. As time passed, being ‘different’ became easier and she described how she used humour to deal with questions asked in the classroom about her race: “They ask, ‘So what are you?’ I’ve become comfortable with it now, and I’ve told them I will be whatever you want me to be. So if you want me to be a flipping Egyptian, I will be that. Don’t be confused by my dark skin. God just left me in the sun just a little bit too long, but I am actually White.” Rajesh, who grew up in an Indian area in Durban, spoke about how he had been subjected to racism in a White school by “kids just being dumb and calling you names”. He had also been excluded from social groups because of his race: “He can’t be friends with you because you are not white”. Although Rajesh was troubled by the children’s behaviour, he did not blame them, but held their parents responsible: “You can’t really blame them, it is their parents who told them that you can’t do it, can’t play with them. It did upset me. I mean, you know when you are not good enough to be friends with someone, it is not really nice.”

Thabiseng raised the issue of the unjust treatment of immigrant learners at one of the schools where she had taught. She recalled an incident when she had disagreed with the deputy principal, who had insisted on immigrant learners taking a South African language as their home language and had failed those who did not meet the requirements. After Thabiseng had pointed out to the management team that this was not in line with policy regarding immigrant learners, the deputy principal became hostile: “She made me suffer, like she was there first and she was so negative towards me. She said her experience is what counted.”

In this category, participants shared how their professional identities unfolded in accordance with their unique socio-political circumstances. In this regard, participants of colour seem to have been influenced to a greater extent than their White counterparts, which is in line with the broader socio-political situation in South Africa during the past two decades.

4.5.2 Own teachers guiding beginner teachers in the South African school context

In the next category, I will discuss findings funnelled from the socio-political environment to the South African teaching context. Three participants shared experiences within their unique contexts which pertained to the situation in South African schools. They shared how their memories of own teachers had guided their perceptions and actions throughout this process in their new professional environments.

Msizwe highlighted the discrepancy between what is taught at university and its practical application in the classroom. He mentioned, for example, that tertiary education prepared students to use multimedia in classrooms, but that there was only limited access to such facilities in the township school where he had started teaching: “At university we’re taught about using multimedia in the classroom, but when you get to the school, they don’t have a projector there. It’s only one projector for the whole school, or it’s not working.” At times he had prepared lessons that required the use of multimedia and had found that despite having made the necessary arrangements beforehand, the equipment needed was either not available or out of order. He related how, when faced with new and difficult situations, he sometimes drew on memories of himself as a first-year student at university. He described how he had initially perceived one influential university lecturer as “like the devil”, and how he was so scared that he “saw some ghosts because I wasn’t really prepared for varsity”. He further explained how his lecturer (own teacher) had incorporated career psychology into her lectures, which ‘played a role in teaching us to think further of what to do’. The same lecturer had taught him to ‘deal with sources. What I know about dealing with sources comes from her’. Msizwe revealed how he had learned from this teacher that you ‘have to analyse everything’, and how this way of thinking assisted him in dealing with the challenges faced in his own classroom.

He further recalled incidents from his own school years where teacher absenteeism had been endemic and had influenced his learning. He mentioned a specific instance during his final school year when his Geography teacher was absent for two weeks and described that as “very detrimental for our learning”. It was then that Msizwe “decided not to be like that; learners need their teacher”. Referring to his own teacher again, he said: “Most of the time it comes back to how she said you should approach it”. Interestingly, Msizwe ascribed the good relationship with, and the strong influence of his own teacher to the fact that she was younger than most of his other lecturers. He perceived older lecturers to “not really get along with

students, but with her it was different”. Msizwe was the only participant who mentioned the age of the own teacher.

Cindy had experienced difficulties regarding the South African school context at two levels: first, her struggle with the transition from a public to a private school during her years as a learner, and second, as a beginner teacher. In both cases, she had relied on the support of own teachers to help her navigate her changing circumstances. In the first instance, as a young learner, Cindy had been challenged by what she perceived as cultural difficulties between the Afrikaans and English language groups as she changed schools: “there is such a big difference between Afrikaans and English schools”. Cindy recalled how own teachers assisted her in the process of transition between the different mediums of instruction in the different schools. She described her spelling as “atrocious because it was not the language that I had written in all the time”. She remembered the first few months at her new school as “rocky, because it’s a new language culture”, but said that her teachers “never lost patience” with her. She mentioned one teacher in particular who had helped her with adapting to being taught in another language. She explained how he had helped her by saying: “Mr P, my Geography teacher, was amazing with me. He said the next time we do this, why don’t I type it out from the computer and let the spell check pick it up and then I can just rewrite it into my book and learn spelling like that.”

She remembered “awesome little things he did” and that he “went out of his way to just help me and did not think I was stupid”. She also commented on the discrepancies between public and private schools and described the difficulties she had faced with the transition from a private to a public school, for instance when, after being used to be in a class of 18 learners, she had to adapt to classes consisting of 35-40 learners in a public school. The private school had also been much better equipped: “We had everything and did not struggle at all”, whereas at the public school “everything was a struggle”.

Second, when Cindy started teaching at a private school, she encountered a situation that was vastly different from her own experience as a learner in a private school. She described her own private school as “relatively exclusive” and described the private school where had been appointed as follows: “They had pushed thirty-three learners into a classroom that was built to accommodate twenty. So we’re not just talking physical space issues, but also four grand a month for thirty-three kids in a class. Thirty-three to one.”

She talked about how she had expressed concern about the bathroom facilities, which were inadequate for the number of learners at the school, and how, “it got me into a lot of trouble” with the management team. At this point, Cindy’s own teacher, Mrs M, had already passed away. Cindy left this school due to what she perceived as unresolvable issues between herself and the school management team. She recalled how she especially “missed Mrs M during that time”, and mentioned the questions she would have asked her. She described her state of mind without her own teacher as follows: “I was ready to leave teaching after all this, I was ready to go study something else, marketing, whatever, just every blinking nothing to do with teaching. And that was hard, in a sense that, you know, she passed away and she’s a 99% reason why I became a teacher, was to emulate.”

Like Cindy, Thabiseng left a teaching position because of the difficult circumstances at the school where she had been teaching up to 60 learners in a mobile classroom⁹. The classes had been “overcrowded with learners sitting on the floor” and that undesirable situation had affected the discipline in her own classroom and throughout the school. She described the discipline at the school as “terrible, it was terrible”. She had also been under pressure to act unethically in order to satisfy the requirements of the new curriculum¹⁰. She explained this situation as follows: “So the teachers said, you need to at least give these learners 10 marks each. For free. And I said I don’t do that. Take me wherever, I am not going to do that.”

Thabiseng had realised that unless she moved away from those circumstances, she would risk losing her passion for the profession. She recalled numerous other forms of unethical behaviour that were condoned in an attempt to adhere to curriculum requirements. One specific incident stood out: “They took an old management plan or an old timetable and changed the date whenever the officials¹¹ are coming. Then I said I don’t do that. I am not going to allow you to forge things and involve me.” I realised that Thabiseng had not had a strong support structure during her early years of teaching and there had been no own teachers guiding her through this process. In my research diary I reflected on this as follows:

⁹ Mobile classroom: A portable building installed at a school to temporarily provide more classroom space.

¹⁰ New curriculum: CAPS (Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements) is a revision of the former National Curriculum Statement (NCS) – final date of implementation 2014.

¹¹ Officials: Employees of the Department of Basic Education whose main function entails the monitoring of policies in South African schools.

Thought moment 4.1

Thabiseng was one of the participants who had not shared a particularly close bond with her own teachers, nor did she seem to have been influenced to a large extent by any own teacher. I wondered if this ‘lack’ of an own teacher influenced the way she had been dealing with the difficulties she faced during her early teaching years. I reflected on whether she would have stayed in her position if she had had the advice or influence of an own teacher to ‘fall back on’.

Research diary, 2015

In Cindy’s case, although her professional development had been influenced by an own teacher, that teacher’s voice had become silent by the time she experienced her deepest struggle. In a sense, both Cindy and Thabiseng were without the guidance of own teachers during challenging times as beginner teachers. They were the only two participants who had left their teaching positions as a result of those challenges.

Finally, I observed an interesting phenomenon that seemed to have occurred only in traditionally ‘White’ schools. Pieter and Elsa shared similar teaching contexts in that they both started as beginner teachers at the schools they had attended as learners. They were offered posts by school management as teaching assistants after they had finished school and studied part time until they qualified and therefore became their *own* teachers’ colleagues. They were also exposed to actual teaching while they were only in their second or third years of study and were both appointed in teaching positions once they had successfully completed their studies. Their experiences differed from those of other participants in that they displayed ‘travelling identities’: first as high school learners, then teaching assistants and finally as beginner teachers. Both participants reported mostly positive experiences with own teachers, initially as learners and later as colleagues.

I found it interesting that the professional teaching careers of both White participants had worked out this way. Both of them had heard about assistant teaching posts from friends in similar situations and were acquainted with other beginner teachers who had followed this career path. I reflected on this in my research diary:

Thought moment 4.2

I found it strange that both White participants had never had teaching experience at any other schools than the ones they had attended as learners. It seemed to be a trend in White schools, where learners who performed well academically are being asked to study teaching while holding a teaching assistant's position at the school. Both of them had heard about assistant teaching posts from friends who were in the same situation. I did not encounter or learn about this in any way from any of the other participants from different racial groups. I found myself wondering if this was just a new way of segregation, of 'keeping White schools White'. I am not sure why this troubled me.

Research diary, 2015

In this theme, I reported on own teachers as guiding role-players in the external influences from the eclectic environments of the lives of the participants, including socio-political and issues that are peculiar to the South African school system. In terms of socio-political matters and the South African school system, five significant findings emerged: first, participants of colour had experienced influences of the socio-political climate on a more direct level, where they had to take action to deal with them. White participants seemed to have experiences these influences on an indirect level where they had caused emotional discomfort, including fear, but it had been less likely that they would be confronted with direct social issues, such as racism. Second, despite these influences, the Black and Coloured participants illustrated hopeful and positive attitudes. Third, in the majority of cases, participants relied to some extent on the support of own teachers to help them deal with the socio-political influences on their emerging identities. Fourth, participants shared numerous challenges in South African school, specifically challenges relating to corrupt management, lack of resources, lack of a culture of discipline and a vast discrepancy between educator programmes on the tertiary level and the situation and facilities in schools. Fifth, I noticed a trend where traditionally 'White' schools seemed to ' earmark' academically strong learners and provide them with part-time opportunities as teaching assistants while studying with the prospect of eventually being appointed in teaching positions at the same schools.

4.6 Developing a professional identity in the current teaching context

'I do not paint a portrait to look like the subject, rather does the person grow to look like his portrait.'

~ Salvador Dali (1935) ~

All the participants revealed details about their current teaching situations at an early stage of the interviews. In this theme, I report on three aspects of the current teaching context that had influenced their professional identities as they emerged during the interviews, namely the teaching environment as a contextual influence, classroom discipline defining the emerging professional self, and reflection as a tool for disentanglement. It became evident that participants had been overwhelmed by their new surroundings, and that the role of the own teacher had strongly surfaced when they *thought* about their emerging professional identities. In the first two categories, I describe the teaching environment and classroom discipline as the backdrop against which the own teachers' influence appeared. In the last category, I focus on reflection and highlight the own teachers' voices and their roles as reflective partners.

4.6.1 The teaching environment as a contextual influence

In this category, I report on findings involving the unique teaching environments in which the participants had found themselves as beginner teachers. Participants shared how their current professional environments had influenced their emerging professional identities. It was clear that a variety of aspects in their current teaching environments had influenced their professional identities, their perceptions of their professional identities and behavioural choices in the classroom. The 'voices' of own teachers are less evident in this theme, which deals mainly with physical surroundings. The teaching environment was expressed as a function of subject knowledge, specific subjects taught, learners' age levels, and classroom diversity and size.

All the participants agreed that thorough knowledge of the subject taught is imperative for the development of a professional identity. They also linked it to one of the reasons for their success in their classes. Msizwe and Pieter described how knowledge of their respective subjects was an integral part of the development of their professional identities, Msizwe said: "My knowledge for one is important". Both participants commented on the effects of subject knowledge on the learners and regarded such knowledge as an important contributor to

ensuring success in the classroom. Msizwe linked the perceptions of learners of himself as a professional to how well he knows his subject and expressed the opinion that disciplinary problems may arise if a teacher does not display good subject knowledge, "... especially when those kids undermine teachers because they have this perception that teaching is the last resort job when teachers don't know their work". There seemed to be a positive correlation between the development of a professional identity and participants' perceptions of the strength of their subject knowledge. Pieter described how furthering his studies to enhance his knowledge of his subject had contributed to his professional identity development: "It doesn't help you giving a lesson and you don't understand what you are giving. So with my studies now I can understand it better. And then also explain it better to the children."

Tarryn mentioned that her subject field influenced the way she taught: "Considering the subject that I teach, I think I'm liberal, because we can talk about anything and everything in Life Orientation."

She described herself as approachable in the classroom and said that she encouraged her learners to voice their opinions: "... my approach in the classroom allows the children to open up". Tarryn regards her professional identity in a positive light as a result of how she approaches her specific subject: "So there is a level of professionalism in teaching, I'm hoping. My learners know that. I've got an open-door policy with them: if it's something that I have said in class that has offended you, come and speak to me."

Although Msizwe, Pieter and Tarryn indicated good subject knowledge as a positive influence in the teaching environment and felt that it had contributed to their establishment of a professional identity, aspects of the teaching environment that stifled the development of a professional identity also came to the fore. Rajesh is in the process of developing a professional identity specifically suited to the younger learners he is teaching at the moment. He struggled with the transition of working in a laboratory to teaching in the same subject field, but at an entirely different level. He currently teaches Grade 8 learners¹² and said: "I find it hard to actually talk to their level."

Vanjaria's opinion regarding the specific context of each class resonates with Rajesh's struggle to adapt to a different age group. In addition to the fact that all classes are different, she said,

¹² Grade 8 learners: Approximately 14–15 years of age.

the different ages of learners also play a role: “Especially with the Grade 6s, they’ve reached a stage where they think they’re grown-up and you have to deal with that.” She said that the unique context of each class had an influence on her professional approach: “The way I teach, it’s different, every time I go into a class, I create a different environment”. By discussing the context of each class with Vanjaria, I realised that the development of the professional identity of beginner teachers stretches much further than I had initially thought. They are in a continuous process of developing their professional identities, not only on a daily basis, but also several times per day. Vanjaria echoed my thoughts by saying: “You adjust your behaviour according to their level in every class”.

Two participants pointed out another significant aspect in the teaching environment that influences professional identity development, namely the size of the class. Participants agreed that it is necessary to adapt their teaching behaviour according to the size of their classes. In her first year of teaching, Thabiseng had to accommodate 60 learners in a mobile classroom that had been erected to accommodate more learners and had found that that specific structure affected her teaching experience: “The floor is making noise and then there is 60 in this class and they could not hear me at all.” She had been concerned about the fact the shortage of desks, as a result of which some learners had to sit on the floor: “... they are sitting on the side and it was just too much. It was a farm school that was too overcrowded.” Steven agreed that class size plays a role in the development of the professional identity of the beginner teacher. Unlike Thabiseng, Steven was in a teaching position where he taught small classes, as a result of which he was (unfortunately, according to him) unable to imitate the behaviour of his own teachers. He indicated that he would probably have imitated his own teachers to a far greater extent if he had been teaching in a context more like the one in which he had been taught: “I think I could, probably would much more draw on my own teachers if I was also teaching in a similar environment that I was myself educated in.”

He mentioned that he was completely unprepared for his current teaching context, although the conditions were good: “[E]verything is completely new to me, like nothing has really prepared me for this system”. Steven agreed with Msizwe that a “trial and error” approach was the most effective and summarised the feelings of all the participants about their different teaching contexts when he said: “I’m very much sort of learning as I go along and adapting my current approach based on my previous approaches. But I don’t really have other people’s approaches that I can fall back on.”

Like other participants, Steven alluded to the role of the own teacher and school background as influences that affect their professional identity. After a careful analysis of participants' contributions regarding their unique teaching environments, I realised that the concept of diversity in South African classrooms stretched much further than had I initially thought. I have always thought about diversity in terms of 'people being different', but these interviews revealed that the physical environment, school structure and management, together with many other diverse aspects, also play a role in the emergence of the professional identities of beginner teachers.

4.6.2 Classroom discipline defining the emerging professional self

All the participants in this study regarded the extent to which they were successful in their handling of discipline as indicative of professional identity development. They also talked about the many difficulties faced in their efforts to maintain classroom discipline as beginner teachers. The majority of participants indicated that they constantly reflected about different disciplinary strategies and continuously experimented with alternative strategies. In this section, I share participants' experiences of the role of classroom discipline in defining their emerging professional selves.

Msizwe's description of the matter of discipline as "a system of trial and error" was echoed by all the other participants. With the exception of Thabiseng, who chose to leave a situation where poor discipline was rife, all the participants had implemented various strategies in their attempts to maintain discipline. The following statement by Msizwe reflects the view shared by all the participants: "You have to see will it work. If it doesn't then you have to revert and find another way of doing it."

Thabiseng described the overall discipline at one school as "... terrible, there it was terrible". She had left her position after only six months as a result of disciplinary problems and expressed strong feelings about the effect of poor discipline on her professional identity development by saying: "I thought if I stay here I am going to hate this profession." While Thabiseng removed herself from an environment where disciplinary issues seemed to be a result of poor management, which affected the whole school, Msizwe focused on his efforts to maintain discipline in his own classroom: "I'm still struggling to get discipline in the classroom". This is indicative of the fact that his ability to maintain classroom discipline is still

developing and is challenged daily. Vanjaria echoed his experience by saying: “I think I’m still finding my feet, seeing what I need to improve.”

Tarryn referred to the issue of discipline as part of her developing ‘teaching self’: “However, I do try to be as firm in correcting to the best of my ability, and then I would, obviously, if it’s a continuous thing, then I’m going to be a bit firmer.” Msizwe described an incident where he removed a disruptive learner from the class. I sensed that he was unsure about whether this had been the best course of action, and he rationalised his decision by saying that the other learners in the class suffered from the disruptive behaviour of the girl in question and that he “had to do something”. I purposefully suggested another ‘negative’ intervention strategy (shouting at the learner) and it was clear that he had thought about different options before. In response to my suggestion, he said: “It would be wrong to shout at her.” He clearly was in the process of finding his own self in his classroom by ‘testing’ different disciplinary strategies.

Whereas Msizwe and Tarryn seemed to follow a ‘cautious’ disciplinary approach and were still finding their feet in these uncharted waters, Rajesh and Elsa seemed to follow a more rigid course of action. Both Rajesh and Elsa had experienced difficulties with regard to discipline, mainly as a result of their specific teaching situations. Rajesh experienced difficulty with maintaining discipline because of the age group he was teaching and explained it as follows: “Like with the foundation phase I don’t really know how to teach to their level”, and added that it is “difficult as new teachers”. Elsa called maintaining discipline a “tricky thing” since she started working as a teaching assistant at the same school she had previously attended as a learner (cf. Though moment 4.2). In her position as teaching assistant, she sometimes had to stand in for teachers by taking some of their classes. She described how she had to be very stern from the beginning as many of the learners still remembered her as a former fellow learner: “... it was then more difficult to control learners than now”. When she was appointed as a beginner teacher, the small age gap between her and learners forced her to set very clear boundaries: “I realised from the first moment I had to be very strict and I couldn’t be friends with learners, absolute discipline must be there, because I am almost their age.”

Rajesh followed the same strict approach: “So you just address it currently and I’m also very strict with them.” Pieter followed the same kind of strict approach as Rajesh and Elsa and added two additional elements, namely consistency and treating the learners with the necessary respect. He emphasised that “... you must always stay constant” and explained the importance

of initially creating a respectful atmosphere by making relevant rules beforehand: “You show respect and if I walk in they know they have to stand behind their desks until Sir has greeted and the tablets must be put away.”

All the participants agreed that discipline not only contributed to ensuring a successful teaching environment, but also contributed positively to their evolving professional identities. The majority of the participants’ approaches could be considered on different ‘levels of cautiousness’: they were in the process of testing their own limits, setting boundaries and trying out different strategies. Their levels of cautiousness differed: Rajesh and Elsa came across as more forceful in their approaches, whereas Tarryn, Pieter and Vanjaria displayed insecurity and more cautious approaches. It was significant that the responses of all the participants related to this continuum of cautiousness. Furthermore, it was evident that beginner teachers measured their progress in terms of their ability to successfully manage difficult classes.

4.6.3 Reflection as tool of disentanglement

“Mistakes are almost always of a sacred nature. Never try to correct them. On the contrary: rationalize them, understand them thoroughly. After that, it will be possible for you to sublimate them.”

~ Salvador Dali (1935) ~

Most of the participants in this study employed reflection as a navigation strategy to give birth to their embryonic teaching selves. It became evident that reflection is an integral part of professional identity development. In the section that follows, findings based on participant narratives that dealt specifically with how they use reflective strategies to develop their professional identities will be presented and the role of own teachers as reflective partners will be discussed.

Tarryn demonstrated reflection as a tool for navigating her own professional identity by thinking about her personality at home and at school: “What I definitely try to do, is that how I am at home, is how I am at school, so I’m not two different people. Obviously there is a line of professionalism.”

This comment illustrates the disguised nature of reflection in most of the participants’ responses. Reflection as a way of moving towards a professional identity, although sometimes

unintentional, was evident in all the participants' narratives. Vanjaria said: "It's unintentional, it's not done intentionally, because you asked me the question now, I know it happens."

The probing nature of the interview questions made participants aware of their own thinking about their methods and behaviour in the classroom, and also about the extent to which they emulate their own teachers. In contrast to Tarryn and Vanjaria, Cindy demonstrated that she was aware of reflecting about her own teacher and her intentional and conscious reflection was evident when she shared her reflective nature as a teacher and how she deliberately tried to emulate the behaviour of her own teacher, saying: "I constantly think about her while I am in the act of teaching." The 'product' of her reflective nature comes across in her own teaching: "When I teach, I remember the type of person she was and I try very hard to put that through in my teaching."

Elsa, Jantjies and Msizwe employed reflective strategies to enhance their classroom practices in the process of developing their professional identities. In Msizwe's case, reflection on a subconscious level and as a tool for negotiating his self-concept was evident, but it was only during the interview that he became aware of this. When I asked about his awareness of the influence of his own teachers he answered: "Although I don't really think about it, they do influence me because I always try to make sure that I don't try to separate myself too much from the learners. I should always be understanding of their situations like they (own teachers) were."

Jantjies also referred to his reflection on the influence of own teachers when he said that although he did not think about a specific teacher while teaching, he sometimes thought about their methods afterwards and considered how they could be employed to improve his own teaching practice. This is an example of conscious reflection, even though it only occurred after a classroom activity. The fact that Jantjies thought about the methods of his own teachers clearly indicated a conscious and intentional reflective process. Msizwe was the only participant who used the term reflection when he discussed it as a coping strategy applied to improve his teaching practice: "I am able to also make my own reflections and improve as a teacher."

Like Msizwe and Jantjies, Elsa also employed reflective strategies to improve her classroom practice and assist her development of a professional identity. She was strongly influenced by an own significant teacher and reflections on their relationship recurred throughout her

narrative. She also had another significant teacher whom she liked, but whose classroom practice she did not want to adopt. She was very conscious of her thoughts surrounding her desire to emulate one particular teacher and avoiding emulating the behaviour or personality traits of the other. She spoke about *thinking* about both these influences: “I think about them you know; it is one of those things that have always been like there in your mind. I thought I wanted to be like him and not like her.”

Another aspect of reflection came to the fore during discussions of this concept with participants, namely that of *reflective partners*. In the traditional sense, reflection is regarded as an individual action involving deep introspection of a personal nature. Some of the participants in this study revealed the use of reflection as part of a close relationship with a colleague or own teacher. In some cases, it seemed that participants needed another ‘voice’ as a sounding board to aid their own processes of reflection. Participants frequently alluded to conversations with reflective partners, but were in most cases unaware of the fact that they had subsequently adopted the opinions and followed the advice of those individuals. It was only when I asked them they directly about the influence of others on their thoughts and decision-making processes that they seemed to realise that their processes of reflection were aided by someone else. The reflective partners are significant in that in some cases their input had changed the participants’ course of action. Changes in the course of action brought about changes in classroom behaviour, attitudes and emotions experienced by participants and their perceptions of themselves as professionals, hence altering their professional identities.

Cindy had a very close relationship with her own teacher, Mrs M, and her sadness about her passing was evident throughout her narrative. At one point in her career when she had been extremely unhappy, she had employed reflection as a coping and navigating strategy. During this period, she “thought a lot about doing introspection and doing my own thing for a while”. She shared how much she missed talking to Mrs M and how she visited her garden of remembrance: “I spent a lot of time thinking there, and I think about what she would say.” It was evident that Cindy relied to a great extent on her own teacher to provide her with direction and advice: “I would like her to tell me what to do, you know, what I should become.” Cindy seemed lost without her reflective partner who had previously guided her decision making.

Jantjies and Elsa each mentioned one person with whom they shared thoughts about their developing careers. Jantjies said that he had a colleague who shared his strong religious beliefs

with whom he discussed his thoughts about his progress and life decisions: “This person was the one with whom I talked and when I started; she just told me to hold on, it will get better.” Elsa shared how “angry” she had been with her own teacher when he resigned from his post while they were teachers at the same school. She said: “Yes I am angry, because how could he just leave? We always talked about my stuff.”

Through a cautious analysis of participants’ comments, it became clear that reflection plays a significant role in the quest towards a professional identity. Participants who showed a more reflective nature, seemed to initially experience more emotional discomfort than those who spend less time reflecting on their professional identity development, but seemed to establish a professional identity sooner than their less reflective counterparts.

In Theme 4.6, I reported on findings regarding the influence of participants’ current teaching environment. Their comments illustrated the role their current environments played with regard to their professional identities. The exclusivity of each teaching environment and its unique influence on professional identity also became evident in this section, as did the prominent role of establishing and maintaining discipline in the classroom. Finally, participants demonstrated reflection as a method of navigating a professional identity, with reflection occurring on different levels of awareness. In some cases, own teachers and other teacher-like figures were shown to act as ‘partners’ in the process of reflection.

THEME CLUSTER TWO:

Navigating professional identities according to Possible Selves

4.7 Negotiating a professional identity through Possible Selves: The Present Self

“We have to dare to be ourselves, however frightening or strange that self may prove to be.”

~ May Sarton, (1938) ~

The next cluster of themes (4.7 – 4.9) involves participants’ teachers’ selves according to three ‘tenses’ of the self, namely past, present and future selves. Theme (4.7) deals with participants’ thoughts on their current professional selves, as shared during the interviews. Self-concept, which has been defined for the purpose of this study as the ‘core self’, the ‘now self’ or the ‘current view of the self’ (cf. Chapter 1) is the focus of this theme. Participants presented their

current professional identities (or self-concepts) as an iteration between how they currently regard themselves (present selves) and their past and future selves. In this section, the emphasis is on the role own teachers in respect of the current self of participants, which I present according to categories of self-knowledge and perceptions of personality, the cautiously emerging self and the core personality in survival mode. The complexity of ‘disentangling’ the movement between participants’ perceptions of their selves is illustrated in the following thought moment.

Thought moment 4.3

I found it extremely difficult to untangle the different selves of each participant. Each one demonstrated a unique way of how they viewed their ‘selves’ and the interplay between present and past experiences. I found constant, reiterative movement between the selves. Eventually, I relaxed about this. I know this is directly in line with the literature, that selves are dynamic and fluid. After a lot of mental discomfort and hours of thought I accepted that I should not want to ‘box’ the selves into neat headings in this text. It was never supposed to be that way.

Research Diary, 2015

4.7.1 Self-knowledge and perceptions of personality

In this category, I present findings based on interviews with participants regarding their self-knowledge and perceptions of their personalities. I focus on how the extent of their self-knowledge and current perceptions of their personalities influenced their evolving professional identities.

Like most participants, Thabiseng showed a strong sense of self-awareness. She has a strong personality and was the only participant who had left two teaching positions because of what she had perceived as poor management styles and unfair treatment of learners. Her strong views were evident in comments such as the following: “I am going to do what I know is best for the learner and that is it. I hate it when people do things the wrong way where it involves the kids.” She emphasised that she “did not fight” with anybody and gave this as her reason for leaving two teaching positions. While Thabiseng’s personality contributed to her leaving teaching positions, the nature of Jantjies’ personality was the reason for him *staying* in a teaching position where he was unhappy. He said: “I am not a person who quits easily. I have to finish what I started, no matter how it influences me. It is important for me to complete things.”

Two participants shared how perceptions of their personalities had influenced their professional identities. Msizwe, who seemed to understand his own nature well, explained that he navigated his initial teacher identity by developing a definite and positive view of himself. Although cautious about possible errors, a strong sense of self-knowledge was displayed, especially when I asked him how he dealt with conflict in the classroom. He described himself as a person who “does not react in anger” and said that he believed that reacting in anger usually compounds the problem. He further described himself as non-judgmental: “Like for me, I’m not really a person who likes to criticize and judge other people. If there’s a problem, I’ll find my own way around it.”

It was evident that Msizwe’s view of his personality and the self-awareness he displayed had contributed to his ‘survival’ during his early years of teaching. His approach to aspects such as discipline was also based on perceptions of his personality traits. Tarryn also commented on her personality being an important aspect of her self-concept. She specifically referred to how her personality influenced her teaching style and shared that she adopted an “open-door policy” with her learners because that is the “kind of person” she is.

Rajesh, Elsa and Vanjaria also indicated that self-knowledge had an important influence on their professional identities and illustrated how self-knowledge had played a role in the shaping of their professional identities in terms of their teaching styles. Rajesh remarked that he “does not really copy someone else’s style” and shared that it was important for him to “be my own person in class”. Elsa described herself as an “introvert”, but said she “can still work with people and children”. She had completed several personality tests during her years of teacher training and had learned a lot about herself through this process. Vanjaria described herself as “the boss when I am in the class” and talked about how she had adapted certain personality traits to create a different atmosphere in each of her classes: “I adjust my behaviour according to their level.” She shared that she was not a very emotional person and illustrated the influence of this personality trait on her classroom behaviour: “I am not an overly emotional person. So things don’t bother me much and I can keep them calm most of the time.” A careful analysis of sections of the interviews dealing with self-concept and personality clearly showed that the way participants currently view themselves played a role, not only in their classroom behaviour, but also in how they regard their developing professional identities. The majority of participants already held strong views about their own selves at this early point in their careers. The existing self-knowledge and perceptions of their personalities had influenced the

professional identities of Thabiseng and Jantjies to the extent that it led to changes in their career paths. With regard to Msizwe, Rajesh, Vanjaria, Tarryn and Elsa the influence of self-concept and personality manifested in classroom behaviour. The effect of possessing less self-knowledge was portrayed in stories shared by Pieter, Cindy and Steven, who seemed to either ‘hear’ the voices of own teachers more clearly (Pieter and Cindy), or displayed a more tangible ‘need’ for those voices (Steven). I will elaborate on participants’ cautiously emerging selves in the next category.

4.7.2 The cautiously emerging self

It was evident from all the data captured that participants initially had ‘emerging’ professional identities. They were aware of the fact that they were new to the system of education and were in the process of building their professional identities. In this section, I report on findings regarding participants’ initial selves in the process of ‘cautious emergence’. Interwoven into this category are the voices of own teachers as they resonated in the minds of participants in the process of the emergent self. I first present relevant sections of narratives from three participants who displayed less self-knowledge (than the other participants) and who seemed to rely more strongly on their own teachers’ voices or the absence thereof. Second, I present findings on the way feedback featured as strengthening the cautiously emerging self, and conclude by presenting one unique case.

The effect of less self-knowledge was evident in stories shared by Pieter, Steven and Cindy, who showed cautiously emerging selves. Pieter and Cindy seemed to be at an earlier point on the road towards establishing a professional identity than the other participants. They also seemed to possess less self-knowledge and displayed more ‘cautious’ present selves than the rest. Both viewed their current selves in the light of the views of others – in both cases memories of own teachers or the absence of such role models. Cindy emphasised the influence of her own teacher by describing how she had been an introvert and a realist, and how her own teacher had been able to “bring out the sunshine in me, to show me that every cloud had a silver lining”. Cindy further recalled how her own teacher had contributed to her professional and personal identity by “breaking through to me”. She described this as an “instantaneous moment”, which had happened without her knowing exactly where or when. She remembered herself being “different” before the connection with her own teacher had been established and described the reason for Mrs M’s influence on her emerging identity as follows: “I was different

back then. I think it was her persistence in my life in the fact that she was just a constant presence. She was a constant, always there. I can't tell you that a day would go by that I wouldn't see her or have spoken to her or she would have come and find me."

At one point in her career Cindy had experienced a breakdown of her personal and professional identity when she faced difficulties and could no longer rely on the support of her own teacher, who had passed by then: "... it broke down my self-esteem and that broke down my character and that broke down my love for teaching to such a point where I didn't think I was a good teacher." The influence of Pieter's own teachers was evident in his view of himself as a beginner teacher. Whenever I asked him about how he viewed himself at the moment, he reverted to comments about his own teachers and the feedback he had received from colleagues (and former own teachers): "They ask me to do a lot of things and when will I be back [when on study leave]. So I get good responses all the time."

Steven's professional identity was also perceived as being cautiously emerging. He commented on how he had learned as time progressed and said that he constantly adapted his "current approach based on my previous approaches". Although he recalled support received through a mentoring system at the school where he taught during his early years of teaching, he elaborated on how "nothing really prepared me for this system" and "everything was completely new to me". He also mentioned more than once how he had not been able to draw on examples of his own teachers because of a rather differed teaching system: "I wouldn't say I have really had much to draw on." It was evident that the 'absence' of own teachers' voices was an aspect that bothered Steven: "I didn't have the luxury of falling back on examples of teachers from my own life". Steven shared the difficulty he was facing ("I think that is also my problem right now") in trying to establish a balance between firmness and leniency by saying that he was "feeling more resistance from them when I am stricter" as the learners had become used to him not being very strict and allowing them too much freedom. He also said he "needed to shift my approach a bit" and that becoming firmer "would be the ideal for me". He explained the strain of establishing a balance as follows: "I don't have an issue making the classes fun, but I do have an issue getting them to actually do all the work. So they really enjoy the class, but then they don't hand in their homework the next day because they know it will be okay."

Msizwe voiced his feelings of insecurity about making the correct decisions in a classroom situation by saying that "sometimes I'm not sure if the methods I'm using are beneficial". He

dealt with this insecurity by asking for feedback from his learners. Vanjaria highlighted the unfamiliar space between tertiary teacher training and authentic situations arising in the classroom: “Sometimes they ask questions and I’m thinking they didn’t teach me this at university and I haven’t found my exact way of teaching yet.’

Like Msizwe, Vanjaria also employed feedback as a way of establishing her developing professional identity. She requested feedback from her learners to track her progress as a beginner teacher and received positive feedback, although she was worried that “they might be lying to me”. Jantjies had also relied on feedback from colleagues when “trying to find his feet” as a beginner teacher. He remembered support from a specific colleague “... who took me under her wing, told me to stay and normally the first year at any school is difficult but I will find my feet.

Rajesh’s emerging professional identity was unique. He was in the process of alter his existing professional identity and developing a ‘new’ professional self that would be better suited to his current teaching context, in which he had to teach learners who were much younger than those in his previous classes. He spoke about the challenges he faced because of the difference between his former and current teaching positions and showed the typical signs of discomfort that occur when growth of the professional identity takes place in a changed environment.

An analysis of the data revealed that all the participants were aware of the fact that their professional identities were in a state of growth. None of the participants showed any certainty about any aspect of their current teaching selves, although some seemed to be further along the road towards establishing a definite professional identity and displayed ‘less cautious selves’. Evidence of the ‘cautiousness’ of the emerging professional identities of participants was also present in the language they used to answer questions about their present selves. Linguistic cues did not include strong verbs, but were a mixture of hesitant phrases such as: “I am trying to ...” (Rajesh); “I think my students enjoy my lessons” (Vanjaria); “I think I am still finding my way” (Elsa); “I am still sort of learning” (Steven); “I grappled ...” (Cindy); and “I think it works ...” (Pieter). It was evident that the development of the emerging self relied heavily on feedback from colleagues and learners. Most of the participants requested feedback from learners or colleagues, but some received support from colleagues or mentors without requesting it. Both Cindy and Thabiseng had left their first teaching positions because their emerging selves could not thrive in their situations. Their professional identities were stifled in

their specific positions to such an extent that they felt that they had to change their circumstances by resigning from their teaching positions. This matter will be discussed in the next category, which will focus on the true self ‘trying to survive’ in a new environment.

4.7.3 The core self in survival mode

“There are selves too big for one person to contain. You cannot call them selfish. There is nothing-ish about (such) selves. They are the self, as it were, itself.”

~ P.J. O’Rourke ~

During interviews with participants it became evident that it is essential for the core self to be ‘free’ to grow towards a stable professional identity. It was shown that in situations where the core self was unable to exist in its natural state, participants experienced emotional and mental discomfort, and in most cases attempted to change their situations. Numerous factors cause core selves to be in a state of discomfort and to experience boredom, a lack of job satisfaction, unresolvable conflicts with school management teams or colleagues and general feelings of discontent in specific professional environments. In the next category, I will discuss the core personality (or self) in an attempt to find equilibrium in a completely new situation. A variety of factors influenced the participants’ attempts to ‘free’ their core selves. I will present only my findings relating to those participants who had *left* their teaching positions in an attempt to free their core selves.

Rajesh, who holds a master’s degree in Microbiology, described how he had not felt content while working in a laboratory and tutoring university students: “I sat in a lab for three years and I couldn’t do that anymore, I could not see myself doing this the rest of my life. So teaching was something I liked, so I figured why not.” Rajesh and Thabiseng’s decisions to change their careers were not influenced by own teachers. Thabiseng was uncomfortable and unhappy in an environment where she could not be her true self by ensuring that her learners were treated fairly. She felt stifled by a system with which she did not agree and which she perceived as unfair. She finally left her teaching position and was only able to grow as a professional in a situation where she felt comfortable and the process of developing a personal professional identity was unthreatened. Her contentment and the development of her professional identity in her new position were confirmed by the following comment: “I am really happy there,

because I don't have anybody criticising me and being unfair. It is much easier; I can be myself now. I don't fight anybody all the time."

Jantjies had to make tough decisions in his quest for equilibrium for his true self. While he was teaching in another city, he had "wanted to come home" because he had experienced the "shock of a lifetime" at this school. However, he decided to complete the year because he was a person who did "not quit easily". The core self's search for equilibrium came to the fore very strongly in Jantjies's narrative. He had held various teaching positions and had "hopped between different schools", trying to free his core self and finding a suitable environment where his true self could thrive. He recalled how (at the next school) he had also "just wanted to leave in the middle of the year, because I could not handle it". Finally, a mentor teacher had taken on the role of the teacher's voice and had motivated Jantjies to stay on and assisted him in handling aspects with which he was struggling.

Cindy was the participant who showed the most discomfort in attempting to 'free' her true self. A variety of factors influenced her path towards a content, true self. The passing of Cindy's own teacher and her negative feelings about the Afrikaans educational environment in which she found herself significantly increased her emotional discomfort and stifled the emergence of her true self. She repeatedly questioned her reasons for teaching: "I had to decide ... am I teaching because of Mrs M, or am I teaching because I love it?" She shared how experiences at one particular school had shattered her self-esteem to the point where she no longer believed that she was able to teach: "I thought I was useless." She described many experiences during her time as a beginner teacher which had led to self-doubt and uncertainty about her ability to teach: "I didn't have the capacity to teach. I have this degree that enabled me to teach, but as a human being I didn't have that capacity." Eventually Cindy reached a point where she realised that she was "happy about teaching", but, like Thabiseng, she was unable to deal with the effect of the school management on her personal and professional identity. The effect of the constant battle to free her own self while dealing with the restrictions placed on her by the school management and her eventual decision to leave was evident when she said: "They didn't like it if I said I had a problem, and then I left."

It was apparent from interviews that ensuring that the true self was in equilibrium is a prerequisite for forming a professional identity. While some of the participants had resigned from positions in which their core selves could not develop freely, others had chosen to stay

on despite some emotional discomfort, which had clearly resulted from having to cope in a new professional environment. Deep emotional discomfort was illustrated by all participants in situations where their core selves were stifled by diverse circumstances. Significantly, in most cases the oppression of core selves had been caused by educational management systems.

4.8 The past self: Towards forming a professional identity by remembering the past

In this theme, I present the narratives of those participants who shared significant memories related specifically to professional identity. The theme is divided into two sections: in the first I present the memories of participants' 'young' selves who had wanted to become teachers, and memories about the influence of own teachers on the 'young' selves. The second section deals with memories of the 'older' selves and highlights the supportive roles of own teachers or teacher-like figures during hardships faced by the participants during the development of their own emerging professional identities.

4.8.1 Memories of the early years

In the following category, I report on findings regarding early childhood memories related to a desire to become teachers, as well as significant memories about own teachers during the early school years. During this stage, participants still found themselves in the developmental phases of childhood. Since the participants were very young at this stage, it is debatable whether professional identity could have developed during the pre-adolescent years, before a personal identity had been established. However, the fact that participants shared vivid memories of own teachers during this phase begs the question of whether an interest in a specific career, thus a possible professional identity, might be heightened or stifled at this young age.

Vanjaria recalled how she had always liked teaching activities from a young age: "I would always explain my friends' work." She said she had always known that she would be a teacher and described how she had realised this at an early stage in her life: "I think eventually something happened when I played teacher and that's what led to me becoming a teacher." Vanjaria was not sure exactly *what* had led to her decision to become a teacher – it was "just something that happened" while she was play-acting the role of a teacher. Thabiseng had also been determined to become a teacher from an early age: "I liked teaching from a young age and knew I would be one." She recalled how she "got a chance to play teacher sometimes", since she attended a school where classes were small and learners seem were given some

freedom to express themselves through play-acting. It further seemed that a closeness existed between learners and teachers, as Thabiseng explained in the following words: “Teachers knew all of us, where you stayed, what was happening at home. They knew everything, it was quite nice.” Although Thabiseng did not indicate a preference for one particular teacher (“I can’t say I had a role model of a teacher”), it was evident that she had felt comfortable in the teaching environment and had close relationships with all her teachers when she said: “I liked all of them, because I used to make tea for them and that was what I liked. They would be all at lunch and they were all so nice.”

Several participants recalled memories of their teachers in the early schooling phases. Msizwe remembered Mrs Khumalo, a teacher who had allowed her learners to address her only as ‘Khumalo’. Msizwe said this more informal way of addressing a teacher had contributed to learners regarding her as “someone you can create a bond with”. He remembered her as “different from other teachers” because “although there was a strictness, you could talk to her about anything”. The majority of participants had positive memories of own teachers during their early school years. Most of their own teachers during that time were remembered fondly, evident in recollections such as: “She had an influence on me because she was like a grandmother, a really sweet person” (Elsa). “He was the one teacher that was always there and made sure you feel comfortable” (Pieter); and “Although I was young, I could see he had a good personality and I even saw myself in him and I thought that I could maybe be like him one day when I am older” (Jantjies).

4.8.2 Remembering resilience during times of hardship

“When you are alone and brooding deeply, do all your teachers and loved ones desert you?”

~ Chris Mann ~

In this category, I report on findings relating to adversities faced by participants during their school years which later influenced their professional identities. Participants were faced with a variety of challenging situations, including negative attitudes from family members and friends (Thabiseng and Elsa), teaching in an unsafe environment (Jantjies), transition between languages (Cindy), academic struggle (Msizwe) and bullying (Tarryn, Rajesh and Steven). In all the cases, own teachers appeared to be present in participants’ lives, although sometimes on

the periphery. In many cases, it was the own teachers who provided direction and support, albeit in subtle ways.

Thabiseng had lost many of her friends because of her career choice: “You know, I just lost most of them.” However, she seemed proud of the fact that when she eventually had contact with them again and was progressing in her career, many of them were still unemployed: “And they are like oh you are working, I am still looking for a job and I just say, I have a job.” Thabiseng described her Life Orientation teacher as a “very positive and motivating person” who motivated learners to “do what you want to do, as long as you are going to be happy with it, do it”. Despite experiencing periods of uncertainty later, her initial decision in favour of a career in teaching was strengthened by the positive attitude of her teacher, which she illustrated by saying: “So I listened to her and thought I am going to do the teaching, but when it was time to go to university, then I struggled, because nobody wanted me to do the teaching so I kept it secret.”

Like Thabiseng, Elsa experienced strong opposition from her parents when she decided on a career in education. Her mother had also been a teacher earlier, but she “was an introvert, so she did not really cope with it”. Elsa recalled how her parents had threatened to disown her if she continued in this field of study. Despite their disapproval, she enrolled for a teaching degree and started working as a teaching assistant at her former secondary school. Elsa was motivated by the example of her own teacher, who became her colleague when she was a beginner teacher. She described how supportive he had been and how she had looked up to him: “He was just always there for me”. She further described the peace she had felt after she had made her decision: “I don’t know if it was a calling, but I found peace and I was so calm when I realised this is where I am going, this is what I must do.”

Jantjies was awarded study bursary, but the conditions stipulated that, after completing his studies, he would not be allowed to choose where he wanted to teach. He was informed that he had been placed at a school in his home environment, close to the one he had attended as a learner. Earlier in the interview he had mentioned that discipline was a serious problem in those schools. He was familiar with the surroundings, where crime, poverty and gangs were prevalent, and said he was “actually scared to go teach there”. Since he had no choice in the matter, he had remained at the school and, as he had expected, it was not a pleasant experience: “It was so bad there, it was impossible to stay there.” Despite these circumstances and his initial

fears, he “took up the challenge and I worked, although it was very hard”. Jantjies’ case was unique in the sense that the motivation to stay on had come from colleagues (not own teachers) who had left because of the problems experienced at the school, and that he had persevered because he did not want to be like them: “I wanted to resign, but I knew teachers in the past came and went and I did not want to follow in their footsteps, because I knew children need stability.”

Cindy and Msizwe shared difficulties of the same kind. Msizwe remembered himself as a “slow learner” who usually needed extra time to complete activities: “I was actually slow in everything”. He recalled how some of his teachers had assisted him by allowing him extra time and had motivated him to try harder, even though this was rather the exception than the rule at the school he attended. Cindy frequently referred to several unpleasant incidents during her early school years. She had grown up as a bilingual child and described her initial attitude towards Afrikaans-speaking people as follows: “For a very long time I had a very negative perception of Afrikaans people and I would be difficult about it. I would actually be rude to them.”

Cindy recalled how supportive teachers had assisted her in this process of adapting to attending an Afrikaans school and how she had thought that she “wanted to be like them one day”. Tarryn, Rajesh and Steven experienced bullying during their early school years. In the case of Tarryn and Rajesh, it was mainly on account of their race. Tarryn is a Coloured female, but does not have the typical physical features of Coloured people. Her light skin and straight black hair, which distinguished her from other learners and did not fit the stereotype, caused her to be bullied. She remembered how she was “actually teased a lot in school”. She said: “I don’t look Coloured, and I don’t sound Coloured, but I know I’m Coloured. I’ve been asked a million times ‘What are you?’ ‘Are you Coloured?’ ‘Are you sure?’ I’ve been given all other nationalities other than South African.”

Tarryn recalled how her own teacher and high-jumping coach had supported her through the trying times in a new school. She described how he “could see when I was going through a patch, because I was so bullied”. She further described his reassuring behaviour as follows: “He could pick up when I was down, and he would approach the situation in his manner, finding out what’s wrong. I obviously opened up to him, and then he would advise me where he can.”

My interviews with the participants revealed that the majority had faced difficulties at some point during their school years and had employed many different strategies to deal with those challenges. In all the cases, hardships had contributed to their eventual professional identities. Thabiseng's memories of her past self had strengthened her present self in that it had enabled her to make the right decision under difficult circumstances. She could then move towards her present self with the knowledge that she could trust herself to make the right decision once she had given it the necessary thought. She said: "Now I know what I did was the right thing, a good thing". Rajesh also relied on his inner strength when dealing with bullying: "You toughen up, because it wasn't everyone, so I just kind of ignored it."

Jantjies and Tarryn learnt how to draw strength from supportive colleagues. Jantjies' past self had infused his present self with mental images of himself conquering difficult situations. It was evident that Jantjies had learnt from his past self that he was able to finish something he had started and was able to overcome adversity and disappointment.

In Theme 4.8, I first reported on the 'young' selves of participants by discussing findings regarding their memories of wanting to become teachers from a young age, which was followed by memories of own teachers who had encouraged the 'young' selves. Second, I reported on past challenges faced by the 'older selves' of participants and illustrated how they had been supported by own teachers or teacher-like figures. Memories of overcoming hardships had contributed to the emergence of the professional identity of participants. The majority of the participants showed resilience in their pursuit of a professional identity. In most cases, they had received support in their endeavours to overcome hardships. They revealed how they had navigated their professional identities by building on memories of their reactions to past experiences. The following comment by Msizwe encapsulated the findings of this theme: "Who I am in class now, was influenced while I was growing up because my personality right now is made from what I've experienced before."

4.9 Towards a future self through emulating the ‘ideal’ teacher

“What is a television apparatus to man, who has only to shut his eyes to see the most inaccessible regions of the seen and the never seen, who has only to imagine in order to pierce through walls and cause all the planetary Baghdads of his dreams to rise from the dust.”

~ Salvador Dali (1935) ~

It was evident from the narratives that all the participants were in the process of developing a professional identity with a ‘future professional self’ in mind. In this category, I first report on how participants revealed their future professional identities through descriptions of their understanding of a ‘good’ or ‘ideal’ teacher, i.e. a balanced and moral person who holds universal values in high regard and possesses significant teaching skills. Second, I report on participants’ perceptions of their future professional identities, which manifested in their current progress and what they hoped to become in the future.

4.9.1 Ideal teacher: A moral and balanced person

The ideal teacher was described by all the participants in this study as a “good” person whose main priority is the best interests of the learners. Jantjies said: “You must be certain that at the end of the day you reach that child.” He further explained that the ideal teacher “mustn’t break the children off and he must stay in control of what he is doing”. Pieter agreed and stated that to be an ideal teacher, you should be “friendly and shouldn’t neglect your children in a lesson”. The ideal teacher was further described as an individual with several moral characteristics who make their learners their top priority. Vanjaria said: “I don’t want to go to class and my learners are scared stiff of me.” In Jantjies’ view, the ideal teacher is someone who, among other things, keeps “all the aspects of the child in mind when teaching”.

Elsa used a strong term (“total embodiment of a teacher”) to describe her view of an ideal teacher, also based on her primary influence, Mr M. Interestingly, she mentioned that he was not married and did not have a family, and later stated that she thought “teachers without children are better teachers”. Her view of the “total embodiment of a teacher” included that “all children are on his side, he is popular and also very strict, but not a bad kind of strict and you laugh constantly. He has you in the palm of his hand. He will shout at you and he will use a foul word now and again when he was really angry. But then next time you laugh again.”

The majority of participants mentioned balance as a key characteristic of the ideal teacher. Elsa described her own teacher (and role model) as someone who “knew the correct timing for everything, when to be strict and when to make it fun and enjoy it with the learners”. Vanjaria and Steven shared the same view of the ideal teacher. Steven described a balanced teacher as “someone who can find that very difficult and delicate balance between making subjects enjoyable by cultivating that interest and passion, but also being disciplined enough to make the kids get through the necessary work”.

Both Vanjaria and Steven shared how they were in the process of finding the balance they associated with an ideal teacher. Vanjaria’s progress towards becoming a balanced teacher was evident from the following words: “I’m more balanced now, I’ve found the balance and there’s time to have fun and there’s time learn. So I know now when I need to have that bit of fun and when to cut down and be serious.” Steven, however, was still in the process of finding that balance: “I think that is also my problem right now. I don’t have an issue making the classes fun, but I do have an issue getting them to actually do all the work.” He also elaborated on how he was striving to become closer to his perception of the ideal teacher: “I think I just need to shift that a bit and that would be the ideal for me. I must become a teacher who can find that balance very, very well.”

Cindy’s view of the ideal teacher was strongly based on her experiences with her own teacher. She mentioned the honesty she had experienced in her relationship with Mrs M and said “that is how I want to treat my learners”. Pieter provided a ‘traditional’ view of an ideal teacher by emphasising aspects such as punctuality and respect as core characteristics: “A good teacher is on time, in his place, respectable and faithful.” It became clear during the interview that he tried to incorporate these traits in his own professional identity when he said: “I want to be like that, a respectable teacher.” Pieter’s view of an ideal teacher differed vastly from those of all other participants. At the time of the interview, Pieter was a beginner teacher at a technological secondary school¹³ where the majority of learners were male. In this school of about 900 learners there were only about 40 girls. This is also the school where he had completed his own secondary schooling career. The school is located in a dominantly White, Afrikaans community

¹³ Technological secondary school: Schools following curricula designed to add technical and/or technological training to the academic curriculum by providing a range of technological subjects such as Electronics, Mechanics, etc.

where patriarchy still reigns. It crossed my mind that his situational context may have influenced his view of an ideal teacher.

Participants commented briefly on certain teaching skills that are generally identified with a good teacher. Jantjies shared his belief that a good teacher should “market his subject” in order to encourage the interest of learners and another participant said that learners tend to lose interest when teachers revert to the “talk and chalk” method. All the participants strongly agreed that subject content should be presented in interesting and stimulating ways, and that it is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure that this is done. Two participants felt that a good teacher should also be involved in extracurricular activities.

4.9.2 Optimistic beginner teachers: Towards the horizon

With the exception of Thabiseng (who left her teaching position shortly after the interview), all the participants were positive about their expectations for their teaching careers and spoke about how they were either in the process of *becoming* ‘better’ teachers, or how they *had already become* ‘better’ teachers during the early stages of their careers. Participants drew on previous experiences in the process of *becoming better*. Msizwe compared his future self (the teacher he *wanted* to become) with how he viewed his past self and his previous perception of himself as a “slow learner”. He shared the following view: “If learners do not finish in time, I always remember that I used to suffer the same problem. So I try and give them extra time and become a better teacher that way.” Vanjaria shared thoughts about progress during her first year of teaching: “When I started teaching at the beginning of the year learners were so ... they just never used to respond. Now they answer me and we have conversations and they feel comfortable. I enjoy that.”

While all the participants were cautiously hopeful about their future as beginner teachers, some shared stronger views of their future selves. Steven said that he “found teaching very fulfilling as a job” and “although the pay check never gets that big, I would still be really, really happy doing it”. All participants were also optimistic about the *changes* they are able to bring about in learners’ lives through their teaching. Steven shared that he “felt like I’m making a genuine, tangible contribution to the world, which is like a nice feeling to have”. Vanjaria explicitly spoke about how she saw herself in the future and again referred to the balanced persona of the ideal teacher: “I will hopefully be much more experienced in my field, so I can go into class

and feel more confident. So I hope in a few years' time I'll be so good that I make a difference in their lives and be a balanced teacher.”

Participants also mentioned growth as an aspect of their future selves and believed what they learned had made them ‘better’ teachers. Steven described his early teaching years as a “very steep learning curve” and said he felt as if he was “being educated in the process of teaching, which has been really great”. Elsa shared important insights gained during her early years as beginner teacher, especially after her own teacher had left his teaching position. “The sad thing”, she said, “was that you can never be like that teacher, I can’t be him.” She explained how she finally understood that she “would never be able to exactly fill his shoes”. Despite her sadness and emotional discomfort about his departure, she expressed a desire to “one day be a teacher like that”.

An analysis of the interview slices relating to participants’ future selves revealed that in all cases perceptions of the ‘ideal’ teacher were based on participants’ positive experiences with own teachers. The ‘ideal’ teacher was portrayed as a persona with specific ‘moral’ characteristics, such as honesty, punctuality and respect for learners, accompanied by attentiveness, kindness and caring. Other more skills-based features were also associated with ‘ideal’ teachers, such as stimulating presentation expertise and the skilful marketing of their subjects. All the participants mentioned the significance of the ability to establish and maintain a professional balance with regard to discipline (or classroom behaviour).

Participants further shared optimism about their future careers as teachers and demonstrated growth towards becoming ‘better’ teachers. The majority also alluded to their desire to make a difference in learners’ lives. Once more, linguistic clues in participants’ narratives made it clear that they had strong ideas about what a good teacher ‘should’ do or be. The majority used phrases such as “You must be certain of yourself” (Jantjies), “You need to find balance” (Steven), “You must have them in the palm of your hand” (Elsa) and “You must be respectful and faithful” (Pieter). Although it was clear that they realised that they were still in a process of development, they all expressed solid ideas about what *should be done* to be or become a good teacher.

THEME CLUSTER THREE:

Own teachers as primary influence on beginner teachers' professional identity

4.10 Own teachers as primary influence on the professional identity of beginner teachers

“The moment you are influenced you are corrupt[ed].”

~ Tolstoi ~

The final ‘cluster’ of themes presented contains a discussion of findings regarding own teachers as the primary influence on beginner teachers’ establishment of a professional identity. This theme consists of four categories, the first of which deals with participants’ positive and negative experiences with own teachers. These experiences lead to the second category, where findings on the communicative behaviour of own teachers are presented to show which communicative traits are associated with teachers being perceived as ‘good’ or ‘bad’, and to illustrate the influence of teachers’ communicative behaviour on the professional identity of participants. Third, I present findings regarding participants’ awareness of own teachers as influential role-players on their path towards establishing a professional identity. In the last category, I provide a summary of the awareness and significance of the professional identities of own teachers.

4.10.1 Negative experiences involving own teachers

In this category, I report on negative experiences with own teachers recalled by the participants. In all cases, the *way* in which own teachers spoke to participants and *what* they said (communicative behaviour) influenced participants’ perceptions of own teachers and consequently *how* they judged teachers as being ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Their negative experiences also had bearing on their own classroom behaviour, and therefore on their professional identities.

The ten participants all recalled negative experiences involving teachers during their school years or tertiary education, but the effects of some of those experiences had been more serious than others. Msizwe mentioned a teacher who “liked to throw insults at us on a personal level”. He had eventually dropped the subject she taught, “because of her behaviour”. He felt he “could not really match up to her standards because she expected you to do everything in a perfect manner”. He also shared how she would tell learners that they would “never make it” and would “just end up in the streets”. Cindy said that she had “never had good experiences with Maths teachers”. She was very emotional and used strong language when she described the

following incident: “I really, really battled with Maths, the teacher insulted me again and I didn’t fuck¹⁴ up, I really didn’t fuck up that day. I just thought if you want to fuck up someone, find someone else.”

Steven remembered that he had “never felt comfortable stopping the class to ask questions” during Mathematics lessons. He described his teacher’s attitude as “there is all this work and we have to get through this work now”. Vanjaria also spoke about her Mathematics teacher who was “a bit sarcastic” and described how he behaved when asking a question: “He would ask a question and look at us and stare and stare and stare, stare a hole into the board and wait for an answer to pop out, he was really sarcastic.”

As reported earlier (4.9.1), participants agreed that it was the responsibility of the ‘ideal’ teacher to ‘make’ learning interesting. Rajesh and Vanjaria measured their negative experiences with own teachers against teachers with the ability to create interesting learning opportunities. Vanjaria said her Afrikaans teacher was “so boring he would sit and read but you’d think he’s reading to himself and not to you”. Rajesh admitted that he “never really paid a lot of attention in class, because I learned to learn early”, but that he could see “some teachers were better than others”. He ascribed this to the teachers’ intrinsic motivation: “You can see if they want to be there, they made it more interesting.” Elsa mentioned classroom organisation as something at which her own teacher did not excel. Although she “liked and respected” that particular teacher, she did not want to “be like her, so disorganised”. She admitted that she had realised early during her teaching career that she had in fact been emulating that teacher’s behaviour, but then made a conscious effort to change her own classroom behaviour: “I thought, no, I refuse to be like her. So it was a struggle of this is who I am, I am like her, but that was not who I wanted be.”

Steven and Cindy shared negative experiences regarding the concepts of authority and respect, also linking them with classroom discipline. Steven recalled how he “was never fond of the principals [of two schools he had attended], they were just not nice people”. He described them as “very authoritarian” and said that they practised “very much that sort of old-school Afrikaans, conservative way of teaching, like they hated the fact that they could no longer beat kids. They just had this strong kind of aggressive, sour attitude”. Steven recalled negative

¹⁴ Crude language: In some cases, I included language usage of this kind, for the purpose of authenticity and the reporting of incidents where participants showed strong emotion.

experiences with an “unexperienced” own teacher who could not maintain discipline and who he eventually thought “just didn’t like him”. Later he had another own teacher who also struggled to maintain discipline and even though he had not regarded her as a “bad teacher, she was just completely incapable of maintaining discipline in class”. He recalled how “children were comfortable every time she turned her back, literally throwing sandwiches at her”. She had to rely on other colleagues to “help her with discipline, but that made it even worse”. The influence of this teacher’s classroom behaviour came strongly to the fore in Steven’s narrative: “I think of her in terms of how that affected my teaching approach now. I feel like I need to get more discipline going in my classroom. It is still a long shot from there, but I never wanted to end up like that.”

Interestingly, both Steven and Cindy had had negative experiences with regard to authority involving Afrikaans teachers and both were outspoken about this. Cindy described the culture “in Afrikaans schools” where it was a case of “I’m older than you and you have to respect me”, and said she did not “deal well with it when you force authority on me and I battled with that a lot at school”. She had found it difficult to respect teachers simply because it was expected: “I had to respect certain teachers although I didn’t like the way they treated us or spoke to me and that made it difficult. You need to earn my respect.”

The most unpleasant incident involving a teacher, and which affected the course of his career, was related by Pieter. His Mathematics teacher had initially been his role model as well as his cricket coach. Pieter performed well in both rugby and cricket, and when he eventually chose to focus on rugby, this teacher was not happy with his decision. From then on, Mr S ignored Pieter in his classroom and ended their former good relationship. Mr S also refused to talk about the situation. This incident had such a profound influence on Pieter that his marks started dropping dramatically. He said: “For me it was actually very bad, because I wanted to do architecture and needed his subject.” Pieter eventually failed Mathematics and had to take Maths Literacy, which meant that he would not be able to study architecture. He explained: “I started drawing house plans since grade four. It was a passion for me, but then I had to make another plan to go forward. That was the most important subject I needed to go and do architecture.” Pieter revealed that he often wondered about the course his career would have taken had it not been for the negative experience with Mr S: “I think about sometimes, what would have happened if I were able to study architecture. I am happy, but I always wonder

what would have happened. That is the one thing I would always remember of Mr S, how he changed my career.”

In some cases, participants’ negative experiences with teachers (as learners) and with colleagues (as beginner teachers) had led not only to negative feelings about themselves, but also to a negative disposition towards the teaching profession. Thabiseng remembered the majority of her own teachers during secondary school as being “just negative”. She mentioned one own teacher’s view on learners wanting to become teachers: “She would always say if one of you became a teacher, I don’t ever want to see you again.” It was interesting to note that participants attempted to explain the negativity they had experienced from former own teachers or colleagues. Thabiseng ascribed their negativity to “their own bad experiences as teachers”. Although she showed understanding of those teachers’ attitude, she was determined to avoid transferring the same negativity to her own learners: “Now that I am teaching, I can see why they were that negative, but I will never take it out on a kid and say don’t be this or don’t be that.”

Jantjies described his mentor teacher as “I won’t say a witch, but she was a bit difficult”. While he “did not know what the reason for that was”, he tried to explain her behaviour: “Maybe it was my colour, but I cannot say that. She was retiring that year and moving to the corporate world. Maybe that made her feel she did not have time to mentor a beginner teacher.”

Steven mentioned an important aspect regarding ‘bad’ teachers. He was of the opinion that “some of the bad teachers I had was because they lump those teachers in with any subject”, in other words, teachers were sometimes asked to teach subjects for which they lacked the necessary training. Steven recalled how “they just sort of shunted them in”, which “definitely negatively affected the teaching environment”.

My analysis of sections from interviews during which participants had shared negative experiences with own teachers led to several findings. It became evident that participants experienced own teachers unfavourably on four levels, namely on the direct and indirect psychological levels (intrinsic emotions), and on the direct and indirect physical levels (own teachers’ classroom behaviour). Physical levels of discomfort include aspects that are external to the participants. First, the participants experienced teachers adversely on a direct psychological level when confronted with insults or negativity directed towards *learners*. Second, own teachers were experienced negatively on an indirect psychological level when

participants felt that they were not matching teachers' standards, experienced feelings of "being dumb", perceived disappointment on the side of own teachers, or felt that the own teachers' expectations were not aligned with learners' expectations of themselves or their perceived performance. Third, own teachers were experienced negatively on a direct physical level when participants perceived own teachers to be disorganised and unable to establish and maintain discipline. Fourth, unfavourable experiences surfaced on indirect physical levels when own teachers appeared unqualified for the subject they were teaching, were perceived as "boring", or influenced the classroom environment through negative comments about the teaching profession.

4.10.2 Positive experiences involving own teachers

Positive experiences with own teachers also came to the fore during the interviews. All the participants shared memories of positive influences at different times during their school or tertiary careers. Positive experiences were based mainly on perceptions of the own teacher as a 'holistic individual' who displayed certain core values and attitudes, but also on the 'professional', displaying strengths as a teacher.

Participants commented on a wide range of qualities of own teachers that characterised them as holistic individuals who displayed certain personality traits, interests, values and attitudes. Their perceptions of own teachers were not limited to actual communicative behaviour and own teachers as unique human beings had an influence on their professional identity. Participants commented more on these aspects than on aspects such as teaching style or subject knowledge, although the latter also came to the fore.

Participants were influenced by values demonstrated by own teachers' communicative behaviour. Honesty surfaced as an important characteristic and was experienced positively by most participants. Pieter mentioned honesty as a positive characteristic of his own teacher by saying: "She was honest; she would tell you straight if she had a problem with you." Cindy also mentioned the honesty she experienced in her relationship with her own teacher: "She was someone who is brutally honest with you, but in a way you could handle it." She further described how Mrs M had never been forceful in giving her advice: "It's not like she forced her authority on me, but she would come from a perspective of experience. But she could be honest with me and I wouldn't be offended."

All the participants felt that support was central to positive experiences. Pieter described his own teacher as “being by your side and she will be the one to take you further”. He described her most valuable characteristic as “helping you being the most important one”. Vanjaria described one own teacher as “one of those fine teachers who was our caring teacher and if you had a problem you would know who to go to”. Jantjies recalled how his own teacher “believed in me and helped me to get a post” when she recommended him for a teaching position. Pieter commented on physical closeness and individual attention, which he had experienced as positive: “If you struggle she will come and stand by you and show you, explaining nice individually. She was always friendly and helpful.”

Participants relied to a great extent on ‘positive’ own teachers to provide them with direction and advice, not only on establishing a professional identity, but also on a personal level. Cindy seemed ‘lost’ without her own teacher providing direction with regard to her future as a teacher and said: “The fact that she still nurtured me through a lot of things was just utterly amazing.” It was evident that Cindy trusted her own teacher to give her direction and advice: “I would like her to tell me what to, what I should become or do.” Pieter recalled how his own teacher, Mrs O, “built me up again” after an extremely negative experience (cf. 4.10.1) with his former own teacher, who had left him feeling vulnerable and insecure about a specific subject. His new teacher helped him to gain “interest in that subject again”. Tarryn related how her own teacher “saw the tension in me, so he would groom and pull that out of me” and explained how this had influenced her own teaching: “I think that has maybe filtered into my own teaching style, the way I interact with my learners. It definitely comes through in my teaching. He had an influence on my mannerisms in class, how I speak to the children. I try to be fair, but I try to be firm at the same time, like him.”

Participants connected positive experiences with own teachers with own teachers’ attitudes towards the teaching profession and the perceived self-motivation displayed by own teachers. Rajesh commented on the attitude of own teachers: “With some you know they are there because they need the pay cheque, not because they really want to do it.” Thabiseng spoke about an own teacher who was “always talking about positive things, career wise”, compared her attitude to that of “most other teachers who would say, I don’t want my kids to be teachers”. She recalled how this teacher started support groups to create awareness of different issues and she “kept us busy with good, positive things”. She held this teacher in high regard and

remembered her telling learners: “Do what you want to do, as long as you are going to be happy with it, do it. She was positive and motivating.”

The majority of participants considered the ability to create a bond with own teachers as essential to positive experiences with teachers, but also emphasised the importance of good discipline. Most participants described their own teachers as “approachable” or “open” when they felt comfortable with a teacher and it was possible to form a deeper connection. Vanjaria’s own teacher was “very intuitive to people’s emotions and if something was wrong, she’d know”. Msizwe described one teacher as “different, because though she was a teacher, she could create a bond”. Cindy defined this safe ‘bonding space’ as “... that space for the two of us, a secure space and a safe space and it was a space where you could say and do whatever.”

Participants agreed that the affability of own teachers helped them to feel secure and to want to become closer to those teachers. In all cases where own teachers were experienced as providing a “safe space to bond”, the ability to establish and maintain good discipline was also evident. Msizwe said that his own teacher “didn’t take excuses for not doing homework, but if you struggled, it was still easy to talk to her”, and Pieter described his own teacher as someone with whom “you can’t get away with anything”. One of Vanjaria own teachers was “quite soft, and not very strict, but children respected her because she was approachable”.

Aspects of the teaching style of own teachers, such as their subject knowledge, ways of presenting subject content and the use of humour were also connected to positive experiences with own teachers. Msizwe shared how one teacher “discussed the topic instead of just standing there and explaining the whole thing”, which was a style that he had experienced positively. He also expressed appreciation for this teacher’s use of humour in the classroom: “He would share jokes in the classroom, which made the learning easier and interesting.” Rajesh described how his own teacher’s way of “getting us to learn Science was to not actually lecture us” and shared how the teacher had created opportunities for learners to learn through discovery and had “activated the learning process in such a different way to what we are used to”. Msizwe described positive experiences with teachers who “... try to make sure they put it in a manner that you would easily understand, not just go and do what the textbook said you must do and then leave you like that”.

Vanjaria commented on the innovative teaching style of her own teacher and recalled how she used to teach learners outside the classroom. She described her style of teaching as “very different from other teachers and her lessons were unlike any others”.

The majority of participants shared more positive than negative experiences with own teachers. A careful analysis of linguistic cues showed that participants used more adjectives and adverbs when describing positive experiences and their speech turns were also longer. They also repeated adjectives and adverbs more frequently than when describing negative experiences with own teachers. I included field notes on the facial expressions of participants during this section of the interviews and it transpired that they talked more animatedly, used more gestures and held eye contact for longer periods. Their communicative behaviour when talking about positive experiences was also distinctly different from when they related negative experiences. The majority of participants described their positive teachers as “different” and “not just talking”. An analysis of the findings revealed that the levels on which participants experienced own teachers positively corresponded with those on which they were experienced negatively. First, they experienced teachers positively on a direct psychological level when teachers were perceived as approachable, open, friendly and helpful. Second, own teachers were experienced favourably on an indirect psychological level when participants perceived a safe space to bond with own teachers, when own teachers were perceived as honest and direct without being insulting, and when own teachers displayed self-motivation and a positive attitude towards the teaching profession. Third, positive experiences with own teachers occurred on a direct physical level when subject matter was presented in innovative and interesting ways. Fourth, favourable experiences occurred on indirect physical levels when discipline and strictness were applied in a balanced way when required.

4.11 Realisation of own teachers

4.11.1 Communicative behaviour of own teachers

In the previous category, findings regarding positive and negative experiences with own teachers were presented with the focus on the *experiences of participants*. In this section the focus will be on the *communicative behaviour of own teachers*. It was evident that the communicative behaviour of own teachers played a significant role in participants’ perception of those teachers. Communicative behaviour in the classroom revealed a number of distinct and unique personality traits of own teachers.

Participants commented on the physical appearances of their own teachers as a function of communicative behaviour and dress code transpired as a significant aspect of the own teacher's professional identity. Cindy described her own teacher as "a very elegant lady who dressed uniquely in her own way". She related her teacher's physical appearance to her approachability: "Maybe because she looked warm, her personality and the way she made people feel when they were around her; it was easy to approach her." Cindy wanted to be an approachable teacher, just like her own teacher, Mrs M, whom she described as "a teacher who treats you fairly, a teacher you can trust, the one you can go to and not be frowned upon", and someone "you could approach, you could speak to". Like Cindy, Pieter also commented on the physical appearance and dress code of his own teachers and himself as a part of his professional identity. He "tried to dress like the other male teachers" and described the influence of physical appearance on his own professional identity as follows: "If you dress fancy children respect you. Then they will also realize I am an example and they will never dress untidily, so that definitely adds to me as a teacher."

Thabiseng and Vanjaria also noticed the way their own teachers dressed. Vanjaria's own teacher "dressed a bit different with longer tops and she had heels on all the time", which deviated from the customary dress code at the Islamic school where she was employed. She perceived this difference as positive, tying in with her positive experience of the own teacher whom she described as "fun". Thabiseng referred to her own teacher's appearance, saying that she could "still remember how she dressed, because she was so unique" and "she always looks on point with her make-up and she was always in heels". This had contributed to Thabiseng's perception of the teacher looking "on top of her game".

A second aspect of own teachers' professional identity in terms of their communicative behaviour was the unique personality traits of each own teacher. Numerous distinctive personality traits were described by all participants. Own teachers who stood out in the memories of participants and were also perceived in a positive light were frequently described as "different", "weird" and "crazy". Vanjaria said about one teacher: "Her style of teaching was very different from everyone else, just different to a nice extent." Most of the participants struggled to find adequate vocabulary to explain precisely why they remembered some own teachers better than others. Cindy summarised this by saying: "I don't think there's a word to explain her, eccentric, eclectic, someone like you've never met before." Rajesh described an own teacher's way of teaching as "just the way he approached teaching was just something

different, I can't explain it". Both Rajesh and Steven mentioned the "craziness of all English teachers". Vanjaria described her own teacher as "animated, she'd change her voice, she'd jump around, she was part of us, that's what made it fun. She was a bit crazy", and said that her Afrikaans teacher was "a bit weird and he used to bang his head on the wall when he was angry and we laughed".

The use of humour coupled with a balanced approach with regard to discipline transpired as a communicative behavioural trait that made a favourable impression on the participants, as illustrated by the following comment made by Tarryn about her own teacher: "The way she was so funny in her class and her funny mannerisms, but also the discipline part. It was hard to be disrespectful to her."

Cindy, Elsa and Pieter shared how their own teachers' use of humour contributed to creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom. Cindy described her own teacher as one who "would crack a joke and we all would relax", while Elsa related how her own teacher "had everyone in the palm of his hand, because you laugh constantly". She recalled how he was also strict, but "not the bad kind of strict", and how, after he had scolded them, "next time you laugh again". Pieter described his own teacher as "my favourite teacher, but with her you can't get away with anything". He said "funny sarcasm is her strong point", but explained that she knew "where to stop". He was of the opinion that "if a teacher has a good sense of humour, then classes are nice", but felt strongly about how teachers should use humour: "They must know where to stop; humour can be lengthy and become nasty. So if you know when to stop then it is nice to have humour in the classroom."

All the participants mentioned approachability as central to the own teachers' communicative behaviour. Levels of approachability varied from "friendly, open and warm" to "unapproachable, aloof and cold". Vanjaria recalled one of her own teachers as "soft, motherly and the teacher that you would fight to be in her class". She also emphasised the openness of her teacher and said she wanted to be like her: "You could approach her, she was kind and she was friendly and comfortable, it's not someone you're afraid to be with, it's someone you enjoyed. And I want to be that teacher."

Participants frequently mentioned that approachable teachers were perceived as safe in the school system. They seemed to exude openness and friendliness, both inside and outside the classroom. Cindy explained: "She was safe, she was a safe person in the faculty as well", and

Thabiseng described her Life Orientation teacher as follows: “She understood how teenagers’ minds work and she would never embarrass you. She was more of a life coach, who will tell a girl how to dress. She was a serious but respectable woman.”

Non-verbal communicative traits were also revealed as part of own teachers’ communicative behaviour, such as their attitudes towards teaching, their positive personal natures and a ‘wholesomeness’ regarding balanced interests. Steven recalled a teacher whom he “respected for the sheer craziness of the extent of his knowledge”, while Cindy recalled her teacher as someone with “whom you could talk about cultural things, but also rugby matches” and Pieter remembered a teacher for his “amazing knowledge about everything”. Participants further described teachers’ positive attitudes as follows: “she had this aura of I want to teach” (Cindy); “he had a love for what he did” (Elsa); and “he showed a sense of pride for the school and his job” (Tarryn).

Findings showed that participants held a holistic view of own teachers as the quintessence of professional identity. Aspects of communicative behaviour that were revealed included dress code, the ability to maintain a balance between humour and discipline, approachability, a positive attitude and a positive approach to teaching as a career. It was also evident that subjective perceptions of and experiences with own teachers had a bearing on the participants’ emergent professional identities in the sense that in some cases they compared their behaviour to the behaviour of teachers with whom they had had positive or negative experiences.

4.11.2 Awareness and significance own teachers

Here I will first report on the extent to which participants were aware of the influence of own teachers on their professional identities, after which I will focus on the discussion of those cases in which own teachers had a profound influence on the lives of participants. Findings ranged from participants being completely unaware of own teachers’ influence to being intensely aware of the ‘voices’ of own teachers.

Thabiseng related how she had watched “what my teachers were doing” from a young age. She described this awareness of teachers’ behaviour as being “simple, I don’t know why, I was just aware of how they do things”. She also recalled how, the first time she had actually entered her classroom “it was as if I knew what to do”, and ascribed this to the fact that she “had been watching them and I wanted to know how and why they did this or that”. Cindy indicated that

even though their teaching styles differed, she consciously thought about her own teacher while teaching: “I think about her constantly, also when I am busy teaching”. She consciously tried to emulate the behaviour of her own teacher: “When I teach, I remember the type of person she was and how she came across and I try very hard to put that through in my teaching.”

Elsa recalled the confusion she had experienced as a beginner teacher: “Those first years you are a little confused and overwhelmed and suddenly you stand in a class.” During her first years of teaching she had, to a large extent, emulated her own teacher’s behaviour. She remembered how she currently reverted to memories of her own teacher to navigate her professional identity during this time: “The moment I walked into my class and I had to teach, then I kind of based it on that role model of him, you know, my own teacher.”

Elsa’s initial professional identity was based on the examples of her own and other teachers. She mentioned explicitly that she knew she had “wanted to be like that one, but not like the other one”. Elsa further revealed how thoughts regarding her own teachers had always been present in her mind: “I think about it, it is one of those things that have always been there in your mind, you know you want to be like that person and that you must act in the same way. I knew I wanted to be like him.”

Pieter also admitted that he consciously thought about his own teachers while teaching: “I most definitely think about how they would do it”. He tried to emulate their behaviour because “I knew it worked”. Rajesh came across as a strong individual who relied on his own thinking. Although he was aware of own teachers’ potential influence, he was not inclined to apply their teaching styles and commented: “I haven’t really copied someone else’s methods. I knew what they did, but I wanted to make it more interesting.”

Msizwe said that although he never consciously thought about his own teachers while teaching, memories of his (specific) own teacher “sometimes just pop up”. Whenever this happened, he thought about what his teacher would have done with the same learning opportunity, and those memories then sparked an awareness of the influence of his own teacher’s behaviour.

Two cases where own teachers had a truly profound influence on the professional identities of participants were also revealed during interviews. Both Cindy and Elsa had had established very close relationships with own teachers and seemed to have built their entire professional identities on the influences of those teachers. Elsa had been very upset when her own teacher

resigned from his teaching post right at the beginning of her own career as a teacher at the same school, and during the interview she realised that she still resented what he had done: “And I was angry at him, and if I think about it now, you know I’m still angry at him, even right now.”

When I asked her to explain this anger, she replied: “Because I feel he is really a brilliant teacher and he still has so much to give and he is not even old yet. To me it was just a bit impulsive, like everything wasn’t going smoothly, and he was tired of that so he just left.” Elsa admitted that she had “put him on a pedestal, but to me he was the perfect model of a teacher”. Even though her entry into the teaching profession had been a period of uncertainty and emotional discomfort caused by feelings of anger, Elsa did make a valuable discovery after her teacher had left, namely that “one only eventually realised he has flaws”. She said that “it was a lesson in the sense that you always have this perfect image of your teacher in mind”, but that the image was not always a true reflection of the person, and “you never get to know your teachers for the people they really are. So you always only see the side they present to you, like almost perfect”.

Eventually, as a result of her awareness of her own teacher, Elsa made a profound discovery that brought her closer to her own professional identity: “Somewhere during the past years I became aware that you cannot be like someone else, you have to be yourself. You can’t be the perfect simulation of that person, you can’t.”

Cindy was the participant who had shared the most intense relationship with her own teacher. The only negative experience in this relationship was the passing of the own teacher when Cindy was already teaching, which to her was like “losing a parent”. When I saw Cindy again about six months after our interview, she told me that she had decided to resign from her teaching position and take a year off. She confirmed that this decision had been influenced largely by Mrs M’s passing and her consequent absence from her professional teaching career. While analysing Cindy’s data, I frequently reflected in my research diary because my experience with my own teacher was so similar to what she had shared. However, I guarded against being influenced by my own memories. The following is one example of a reflection in my research diary after an interview with Cindy:

Thought moment 4.4

I felt emotionally drained after the interview with Cindy. She cried a lot about Mrs M's passing during the interview and that she wasn't there anymore to ask her questions. What she said resonated in my mind. The only difference is that my own teacher is still alive. I only lost her to life. Afterwards, I wondered what was more sad, to lose someone to death, or to lose someone to life. Especially when it is your teacher, and like Cindy said, when you had "our own special bubble".

Research diary, 2015

Mrs M's influence had been a determining factor in Cindy's career choice and once she had passed away Cindy was unsure about whether she should remain in the profession as "my reason for teaching was now gone". She recalled how hard it had been to carry on teaching: "I was ready to go study again, whatever, just every blinking nothing to do with teaching. And that was hard, she passed away and she's 99% the reason why I became a teacher, to emulate her."

The interview with Cindy was dispersed with comments revealing her longing for her own teacher's approval, which came to the fore in comments such as the following: "I hope she would have been proud. I think she would have been proud. I think she would have enjoyed what I am doing now."

An analysis of findings presented in this category showed first, different levels of awareness of the role of own teachers and second, diverse reactions to the awareness of the role of own teachers. Findings revealed that with regard to their awareness of the role of own teachers, participants could be divided into three groups: those who were acutely aware of the influence of their own teachers and wanted to emulate them in their own teaching practice, those who were aware of their own teachers but did not want to extend this awareness in their own practice, and finally those who were *becoming* aware of the role of their own teachers through probing or post-reflective thoughts. The two most unique cases demonstrating the significance of own teachers were also presented in this section.

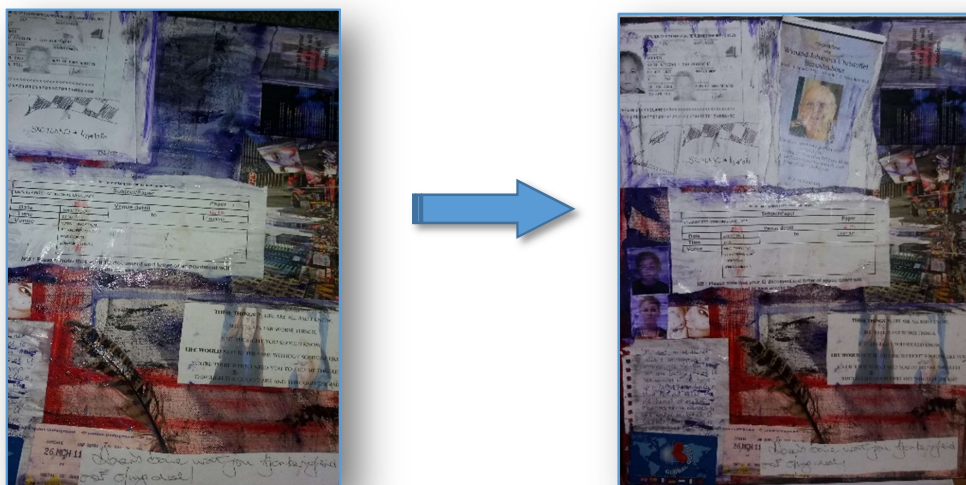
More inscriptions on my own palimpsest

Thought moment 4.5

After writing this chapter, I added more layers of inscription to my own palimpsest. I not only realised the importance of my participants in this study, but also the significant influences of my own teachers and teacher-like figures on my professional journey. I added layers of my own developing identity; identity and visa documentations with pictures of myself looking different in each, my first appointment letter as marker for national grade 12 examinations, letters written by colleagues during the time I left teaching and relevant quotations which marked that time as well as notes from the Voice. At that point she was still the driving force behind my professional decisions. I added more layers of glue, as the layers of the palimpsest grew.

Research diary, 2015

Figure 4.12: Own palimpsest III (2015)



4.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the findings of the study as they pertained to the research questions. I introduced the characters according to Salvador Dali's (1930) Paranoid Critical method and provided the rationale for choosing this form for the of introduction. I described the order in which themes and categories would be presented in three main clusters and explained my decision to present findings according to the metaphor of a palimpsest on which this study is based. The first cluster of themes focused on findings regarding internal and contemporary influences exerted on beginner teachers and the development of a professional identity in the

current teaching context. Categories relating to these themes, included an overview of the role of family in the lives of participants, the substitutive nature of family, teacher-like figures, intertextual influences and own teachers, own teachers' influences in the navigation of socio-political issues and the South African schooling context, the teaching environment as contextual influence, classroom discipline defining the emerging professional self and reflection as a tool for disentanglement.

The second cluster of themes dealt with participants' navigation towards a professional identity by considering their present, past and future selves. The present self was presented according to categories of self-knowledge and perceptions of personality, the cautiously emerging self and the core personality in survival mode. Findings relating to participants' views regarding their past selves were based on categories of memories of the early years and remembering resilience through hardships. Aspects of the future self-manifested in the emulation of the 'ideal teacher' and were discussed in the categories that dealt with the ideal teacher as a moral and balanced person and the progress of participants who were hopeful and optimistic about their careers in teaching.

The third cluster of themes evolved around own teachers as individuals who had exerted a primary influence on the professional identities of beginner teachers. The findings in this theme were categorised according to negative and positive experiences with own teachers, communicative behaviour of own teachers and awareness of the significance own teachers. In the next chapter, findings will be analysed and interpreted.

Thought moment 4.6

'One day, a lovely woman brought the emperor a revolving circus operated by midgets. The midgets acted all of the tragedies and many of the comedies. They acted them all at once, and the emperor, walking around his theatre, could see them all at once, if he wished. Round and round he walked, and so learned a very valuable thing: that no emotion is the final one.' Jeanette Winterson, (1985)

Research diary, 2015

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

“I don’t know how to answer. I know what I think, but words in the head are like voices under water. They are distorted. Hearing the words as they hit the surface is sensitive work.”

~ Jeanette Winterson (1985) ~

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, I introduced the ten beginner teachers who had participated in this study and presented the themes and categories as they emerged from the findings. In this chapter the findings of this study will be analysed against the backdrop of the relevant existing literature. I first describe the interrelatedness of the similarities and differences between the findings of this study and those discussed in the literature. I then engage with findings from my study that echo those discovered in the literature on the influence of own teachers on the professional identity of beginner teachers. Next, I highlight slight differences between my own findings and those encountered in the literature. Subsequently, I address two kinds of ‘silences’: first, findings in the literature that did not surface in my study and findings that emerged in my study, but not in the literature. The second ‘silence’ leads to the subsequent section, which is devoted to the generation of new knowledge as it came to the fore through the findings of this study. Finally, I consider the conceptual palimpsest upon which this study was grounded. I reflect on significant tenets of the conceptual framework and align this with the data that was interpreted.

5.2 A description of the complexity of this chapter

Chapter 5 contains an analysis of findings at multiple levels and in integrated ways. The first aspect to be discussed, i.e. interrelatedness, relates to the similarities and differences between findings of this study and existing literature that were uncovered in the course of this study and are divided into two broad categories. The fact that the influence of own teachers was integrated in all findings makes it problematic in terms of systematically arranging themes and categories into ‘blocks’ of similarities and differences. The three theme clusters are therefore discussed under the headings: findings echoing the literature; differences; and areas of silences. It should, however be noted that different categories of theme clusters are included in the different sections as *integrated* discussions.

The second aspect regarding interrelatedness in this chapter pertains to the analysis of findings as reflected in the conceptual framework of this study. The palimpsest conceptual framework consists of three sections (cf. Chapter 2, 2.7), which link to the findings analysed in the three theme clusters. McCroskey's (2001) Communi-biological paradigm accounts mainly for the genetic communicative traits and behaviour of beginner and own teachers – those inborn aspects that cannot be 'unlearned'. The inherent communicative traits of both beginner and own teachers influenced the dynamic associations they formed in relation to each other. While the Communi-biological paradigm deals with the question 'Who are they (physically)?', the Possible Selves theory (Marcus & Nurius, 1986) is concerned with the question: 'Who are they (psychologically)?' and focuses specifically on the participants as beginner teachers, since it is their professional identities that are being explored. The last layer of the palimpsest conceptual framework deals with the 'togetherness' of beginner teachers (participants) and their own teachers. The inclusion of McCroskey's model of instructional communication accounts for the question 'Who are they together?' and involves the specific dynamics inside the classroom, which is where the actual influence on participants occurred.

Throughout this chapter, findings are analysed against the conceptual framework designed for this study. Each section of the conceptual framework connects loosely to each cluster of themes, but tenets of all the sections of the conceptual framework are evident in all the themes. This 'loose link' between theme clusters and sections of the conceptual framework surprised me, and I reflected on this in my researcher's diary. The following Thought moment describes my thoughts and provides a description of this 'loose link' between sections of the conceptual framework and the theme clusters:

Thought moment 5.1

I was astonished to realise how closely the conceptual framework related to the themes I had grouped together as theme clusters in Chapter 4. I did not plan it this way, nor had I designed the conceptual framework to ‘fit’ the findings. I could not have done it, since I did not *have* any findings when I wrote Chapter 2. Somehow, the Communi-biological paradigm accounted for the majority of findings in the first cluster of themes, the Possible Selves theory for the second cluster and McCroskey’s model of instructional communication for the third cluster. Even the order of the tenets of the conceptual framework as presented in Chapter 2 correlated with the order of the presentation of findings in Chapter 4 and the analysis thereof in Chapter 5. I am not sure of how this could have happened ‘by accident’, but I definitely did not plan it this way.

Research Diary, 2016

5.3 Findings echoing the literature

Findings of this study that were consistent with the findings in relevant literature related to all three theme clusters presented in Chapter 4 (4.3), namely beginner teachers in contextual spaces; navigation of possible professional selves; and own teachers as the primary influence on beginner teachers’ professional identities. In this section, I align the findings of each theme cluster in this study with similar findings in the literature and also indicate how findings of this study connect to the tenets of the conceptual framework, as proposed in Chapter 2 (cf. 2.7).

5.3.1 Beginner teachers in contextual spaces

In the first theme cluster, the findings that were presented related to the unique ‘contextual spaces’ in which participants found themselves during their early teaching careers. Findings in this theme cluster also relate to the first secondary research question, namely: What are the influences on the emerging professional identities of beginner teachers throughout their educational careers? Findings consistent with this cluster included the themes Internal influences exerted on the beginner teacher; Contemporary external influences exerted on beginner teachers; and Developing a professional identity in the current teaching context. Five of the categories that emerged from these themes correlate with those found in the literature, namely: the role of family; the navigation of socio-political issues; the teaching environment as a contextual influence; classroom discipline defining the emerging professional self; and reflection as tool of disentanglement.

5.3.1.1 Contemporary external and internal influences exerted on beginner teachers

The role of family

In this study, the findings in the category contemporary external influences exerted on beginner teachers were consistent with the findings reported on in the literature, thus revealing that professional identities are shaped by individuals' membership of various communities, such as schools, friends and family structures (Tsui, 2007; Gu, 2011; Schultz & Ravitch, 2012). All the participants shared memories of their involvement in different social groupings and the effects of those groups on their professional development. Jantjies described how his emotional state had changed from being unhappy among his colleagues at one school to being content at another school where he had supportive colleagues. He further explained how a supportive colleague had helped him to see teaching in a new perspective and to remain positive during challenging times. This finding resonates with the findings of Lamote and Engels (2010:12), who maintain that “the social interaction with members of the future professional group” results in beginner teachers' further exploration of their perceptions of the profession “to adjust it based on new information”.

The finding that the families of the participants had played a significant role, specifically during the earlier years of their careers in education, resonates with the findings reported by Tsui (2007) and Gu (2011). Thabiseng shared how her primary caretaker (her great- grandmother) had influenced her social identity as a young child by limiting her opportunities for establishing friendships. She admitted that she later held the belief that she was “used to being on my own” and did not need to socialise – not even with colleagues at school. Thabiseng showed signs of isolation during her early teaching years, which may have contributed to her voicing negative feelings directly to management teams. This may have been avoided had she been able to form a substantial support peer network (Lamote & Engels, 2010). The development of the professional identities of all the participants was influenced in various ways by their families and social backgrounds (Rogers, 2002; Rogers & Fuller, 2007; Swennen, *et al.*, 2008; Ticknor, 2010).

The navigation of socio-political influences

The findings of this study correlate with Gee's (2001) view of identity, i.e. that individuals have a 'core identity', but display multiple forms of this 'core' in different social and

professional contexts. Tarryn explicitly described how she was “professional at school, but I was myself at home”. The process of developing a professional identity was described by all the participants as a complex socialisation process involving numerous role players. These findings resonate with those of studies conducted by several other researchers (Beijaard *et al.*, 2004; Klecka *et al.*, 2008; Timmerman, 2009; Swennen *et al.*, 2010). Correlating findings on the influence exerted by the socio-political environment on the professional identities of participants also came to the fore. The majority of participants were influenced by the current socio-political environment in South Africa. Cindy talked about the emotional discomfort she experienced in a teaching position at a private school, saying “it was not at all how it was supposed to be”. I noted a strong discrepancy between participants’ experiences at private, public and township schools. All the participants related stories about how their varying circumstances had influenced their professional identities. These findings are also reflected in South African and international literature (Moore *et al.*, 2002; Miller, 2003; Lasky, 2005; Gu, 2012). The restriction placed on professional identity development by school management structures described in literature (Jansen, 2001; Moore, 2002; Moore *et al.*, 2002; Miller, 2003) was particularly evident in the narratives of two participants, Cindy and Thabiseng, who both left teaching positions as a result of mismanagement and corruption in managerial structures.

5.3.1.2 Developing a professional identity in the current teaching context

The teaching environment as a contextual influence

Findings in this study revealed that the physical environment, school structure and management, together with many other diverse aspects, play a role in the emergence of the professional identities of beginner teachers. Participants also mentioned the strength of their own subject knowledge as a component of the teaching environment influencing their professional identity. The findings of this study are consistent with findings of other research indicating that professional identities are influenced by policies, institutional management and political, professional and social contexts (Miller, 2003; Lasky, 2005; Gu, 2012). The findings about constraints placed on teachers’ development by policies and institutions are also consistent with the findings of this study (Miller, 2003). Hellsten and Prytula (2010) state that beginner teachers are often anxious to adhere to the requirements of a specific school culture. However, findings from this study extended the suggestion by Hellsten and Prytula (2010) that even when participants showed an initial willingness to comply with the requirements of the

school culture, they were also set on doing things the right way. In some cases, participants showed an adverse reaction to how policies were being implemented when they perceived it as being corrupt and unfair. Thabiseng's experiences contributed to the findings of this study in this regard. In some cases, pressure to conform to a particular school culture at times separates beginner teachers from the wider social setting of the specific school, which may impede their development of stable and balanced professional identities. Thabiseng eventually became isolated from colleagues and was unable to secure a support system at school as a result of her unwillingness to conform to the implementation of the curriculum in corrupt ways, as enforced by school management. The same findings resonated in the narratives of Cindy and Jantjies, who both left teaching positions as a result of restrictions imposed by school management teams.

Classroom discipline defining the emerging professional self

As early as in 1970, themes of discipline and authority were dominant in discussions regarding beginner teachers' concerns (Ryan, 1970; Hoy & Rees, 1977). In the 1980s, classroom discipline was identified as the biggest problem faced by beginner teachers (Veenman, 1984). Interviews conducted with participants in this study revealed that challenges posed by discipline and authority still remain an issue for beginner teachers. Comments by participants echoed the view of Achinstein and Barrett (2004), who found that, in most cases, classroom control and discipline are measures applied by school administrators to determine the success of beginner teachers. Participants associated good classroom discipline with 'good teachers' and these views were also extended to their perceptions of ideal teachers. The majority of the participants mentioned the balance between 'strictness' and 'friendliness' in discussions surrounding their views of the ideal teacher. Additionally, the majority of participants commented on their own handling of discipline and related their success to their opinions of themselves as 'good' teachers. Findings further showed that the understanding, establishing and maintaining of classroom discipline changed over time. Several participants confirmed that, as time passed, they had become more relaxed in their classrooms and had found that they had a firmer grip on discipline. This concurred with the findings of Oruç (2013), who concluded that beginner teachers' focus on classroom discipline changed slightly over time.

Reflection as a tool of disentanglement

Research regarding reflection and identity development is repeatedly discussed in literature from various angles (Brown, 2002; Korthagen, 2004; Walkington, 2005; Freese, 2006). Findings based on this study also showed a strong link between professional identity development and reflection, which resonates with those of Heller, Wood and Shawgo (2007), who found that effective teachers are meta-cognitive about their teaching practice. The participants in this study who demonstrated a reflective approach to their teaching practice detected possible weaknesses earlier and employed deliberate cognitive strategies to improve their teaching. These participants also showed a stronger sense of self and seemed to be closer to establishing a balanced professional identity.

The findings based on the first cluster of themes further correlate with literature in terms of the tenets of the conceptual framework proposed in Chapter 2 (cf. 2.7), and specifically with those of McCroskey's (2001) Communi-biological paradigm. Findings further correlate with the Possible Selves theory, suggested as the 'second layer' of the conceptual framework. The following two questions underpin research into Possible Selves: "What social and personal factors give rise to different possible selves?" and "In what ways do possible selves influence the regulation of behaviour?" (Hamman *et al.*, 2010). Findings of the first theme cluster speak to the first question in the sense that influences of a social and personal nature were explored. The influence of the socio-political climate and aspects of the teaching environment came to the fore as aspects affecting the social lives of beginner teacher, whereas the role of family and reflection transpired as influences of a personal nature. It was evident from the unique ways in which participants dealt with their exclusive circumstances that they navigated their own situations through different manifestations of their possible selves.

The Communi-biological paradigm (McCroskey, 2001) accounts mainly for the genetic communicative traits of individuals. McCroskey introduced a paradigm shift that supported a "new paradigm based on biological factors" (McCroskey, 2010:322). The empirical evidence that behaviour is largely governed by genetic traits that remain stable across a variety of communication contexts, as provided by Beatty and McCroskey (2001), was mirrored in the findings of this study.

Three tenets of the Communi-biological paradigm (McCroskey, 2001) were employed to account for some of the findings of this study (cf. Chapter 2, 2.7.1). First, individuals differ

with regard to the biological and genetic origin of communicative aspects and how they recollect past events and attach meaning to events, experiences and memories (McCroskey, 2001; Zull, 2011). Second, human behaviour is determined by innate, inherited traits that remain consistent across a variety of communication contexts and are different for each individual (Beatty & McCroskey, 2001). Third, nature determines several human communication orientations. The communication orientations focused on in this study included assertiveness (Cole & McCroskey, 2000), responsiveness (Wahba & McCroskey, 2005), argumentativeness (Wahba & McCroskey, 2005), humour (Wrench & McCroskey, 2001), willingness to communicate (McCroskey, *et al.*, 2004) and perception of one's own communication competence (Teven *et al.*, 2010).

Findings showed that the participants had individualised experiences 'in their contextual spaces' and reacted in unique ways to their personal circumstances. This may be ascribed to their varying, inherent communicative traits, as suggested by McCroskey (2001). Together with the meta-theoretical paradigms employed in this study (constructivism, interpretivism, feminism and postmodernism (cf. chapter 3, 3.3.1), the Communi-biological paradigm accounts for individualised experiences (Cohen *et al.*, 2007; Creswell, 2007; De Vos *et al.*, 2007), compounded with a biological perspective (McCroskey, 2001). According to McCroskey (2001), individuals possess innately different communicative traits and therefore respond differently to various situations. In terms of the contextual spaces in which the participants (beginner teachers) found themselves, all situations contain elements of communication. It can therefore be argued that participants not only display different communicative traits, but that these traits also influence the perceptions of the receivers of messages communicated by participants. In effect, the individual, inherent communicative traits of *both* parties in the various communicative situations ('contextual spaces') influence the entire process of communication, which in turn influences the 'outcome' of each situation and, indirectly, the process of forming professional identities. This was evident in the cases of all the participants.

Beatty and McCroskey (2001) further found that the inherited communicative traits of individuals remain consistent in various communication contexts, which was also confirmed by the findings of the study. Interviews conducted with participants clearly showed that their ways of navigating their professional identities remained consistent in varying circumstances and were related to their personalities and inherent communicative traits. Participants'

‘instinctive’ communicative reactions seemed remain consistent during the course of their early years of teaching, *even though* their professional identities did develop. In the majority of cases, communicative traits displayed during interviews were similar to those that were evident in participants’ negotiation of their identities during their early years of teaching. Participants who showed assertiveness in their navigation of a professional identity, also came across as being more assertive (than others) during interviews. Thabiseng showed the same assertiveness (Cole & McCroskey, 2000) in a new educational position, even after having experienced difficulties as a result of this particular communicative trait. The reactions of participants who had experienced challenges in the form of family members’ negative attitudes towards the teaching profession were in line with their approach towards negative experiences during their early years of teaching. Similarly, participants who had appreciated humour (Wrench & McCroskey, 2001) during their own schooling mentioned it as an important aspect of their own teaching, whereas those who had not particularly enjoyed humour during their own schooling did not view it as significant for an ideal teacher, even if they had mentioned it as a trait of their own teachers.

One participant explicitly shared his perception of his own communicative competence: Msizwe related an incident involving an own teacher which he had experienced as negative, thinking that “her standards were too high” and added that “by now you know my English is not so good”. His perception of his own communicative competence (Teven *et al.*, 2010) affected him to the extent that during the interview he more than once referred to himself as “a slow learner” who “can’t talk well”. It also transpired that he carried this perception into his own classroom when he mentioned how he tried “to help the slow learners by giving them more time”. He frequently referred to this perception throughout the interview and it was evident that it had not changed, even after he had been teaching for some time.

In conclusion, the first cluster of themes responded to the first research question: “What are the influences on the emerging professional identities of beginner teachers throughout their educational careers?” Several of the influences found in this study concurred with those reported on in the existing literature. Furthermore, the Communi-biological paradigm provided a framework to account for innate, communicative traits that did not seem to change in a variety of circumstances where participants were faced with these ‘influences’. The majority of participants’ communicative behaviour remained consistent in various circumstances, but their reactions were unique in each context. In the next section, I will discuss findings of this study

that resonate with findings reported on in literature that involve instances in which the professional selves of participants *did* change in the course of their early years of teaching, despite their inherent communicative traits.

5.3.2 Navigation of possible professional selves

The second cluster of themes dealt with the professional identity of beginner teachers and was explored against the backdrop of their possible (professional) selves. Possible (professional) selves included “Negotiating a professional identity through Possible Selves: The present self”, “The past self: Towards professional identity by remembering the past” and “Towards a future self through emulation of the ‘ideal’ teacher”. This theme cluster relates directly to the second secondary research question. Several findings of this study were similar to those reported in existing literature.

Self-knowledge and perceptions of personality

Several of the findings of this study in the category of self-knowledge and perceptions of personality concur with findings in the relevant literature. First, this study found that participants do not start teaching with a ‘clean slate’, which is confirmed by finding reported in the literature that was studied (Rogers, 2002; Britzman, 2003; Rogers & Fuller; 2007, Ticknor, 2010). In all the cases participants held specific views regarding teaching and learning and shared how those views had been informed by past experiences in the school environment. They already knew themselves to some extent and understood that the way they viewed their own personalities influenced their behaviour in the classroom. Additionally, they drew on previous experiences with own teachers and past events from their own education backgrounds. Beauchamp and Thomas (2011) found that the beginner teacher’s identity is constructed through previous school experiences and that beginner teachers experience identity shifts once they start teaching. This study led to similar findings as participants elaborated on how they had ‘changed’ once they started teaching. Several participants commented on how they had progressed, particularly in terms of classroom discipline and “the kind of teachers they were in the beginning”. Vanjaria shared how she could not believe how she had changed from the kind of student teacher she had been during her in-service training to the “real teacher” she had become during her first year.

The cautiously emerging self

Findings in this study confirmed the actuality of a present self, as described in earlier literature (Gecas, 1982; Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984). This study further concurs with literature in that the present self was found to be in need of motivation to prompt behaviour and that motivational stimuli have a direct influence on the beginner teacher's behaviour (Suls, 1982; Epstein, 1984; Hamman *et al.*, 2010). All the participants mentioned events that had prompted them to take action or change their course of action, from which their present selves seemed to have 'grown'. According to them, their present selves were distinctly different from their selves before they took action. In some cases, decisions were made to not respond to specific stimuli, which also resulted in the growth of the present self. Another finding that is consistent with findings discussed in the literature relates to the interconnectedness of the possible selves within social parameters (Marcus & Nurius, 1986) and linked to the representations of the present self (Hamman *et al.*, 2010). Participants in this study viewed their representations of their past selves and their future views of themselves in terms of where they were at *that point* in time. Furthermore, their representations of all their 'selves' were set within specific social groupings. During discussions, participants iterated between representations of their different selves to the extent that, at times, I found it difficult to follow the thread of conversation and had to ask them to clarify the time about which they were talking.

Memories of the early years

Findings from existing literature confirmed the findings of this study regarding participants' memories of their past selves. This study showed that as young children some of the participants had identified with adults who had encouraged them to follow a certain career path or had supported their inclination towards or interest in the teaching profession. This is in line with literature involving the concept of memory. Howe and Courage (1997) and McAdams (2001) found that after the second year a child is able to personalise and organise "episodic memories" (McAdams, 2001:104), as "things that happened to me". McAdams (2001:104) poses that henceforth the "me" or self also involves "autobiographical recollections, recalled as little stories about what has happened in 'my life'". Furthermore, consistent with findings from my study, research shows that autobiographical memory materialises and advances to include social contexts (Spivak, 1988; Welch-Ross, 1995). This was also evident in my study

as participants' memories included several other role players on the journey towards a 'young' professional identity.

Participants also shared significant memories of their years at school, with a specific focus on the role of their own teachers. This study found that memories were recalled and reconstructed in different ways – a finding for which the literature accounts by suggesting a “distorting effect” (Marcus & Nurius, 1986; McAdams, 2001). Literature further describes the ages of 15 to 25 years as a period during which many autobiographical details are formed to be recalled later (Ruben *et al.*, 1986; Fitzgerald, 1988; Thorne, 2000). The life history research design allowed me to specifically explore the memories formed by participants during this period, which were shown to be particularly vivid and rich in emotional and motivational content (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000; Thorne, 2000) as it is the time when individuals are most engrossed in the process of identity formation (Erikson, 1963). Participants in this study seemed to vividly relive the emotions experienced during significant events when they shared their memories during interviews. Memories about how they dealt with hardships were accompanied by particularly strong emotions. Three of the ten participants were overcome with emotion when they shared details about experiences involving their own teachers during their school years.

Optimistic beginner teachers: Progress towards the horizon

The findings of this study showed that participants were optimistic about their future in the teaching profession. They seemed unperturbed by the so-called educational crisis in South Africa and seemed to handle difficulties such as frequent curriculum changes, overcrowded classrooms and disciplinary problems in their stride. International literature refers to this phenomenon as “idealism” (Shkedi & Laron, 2004; Wilson & Deaney, 2010; Cuddapah & Stanford, 2015). Other literature describes teaching as “charged with positive emotion” (Hargreaves, 1998:835; Nieto, 2003), which strongly resonates with the findings of this study as participants showed strong emotions during different parts of the interviews, but always displayed positive emotions, optimism and enthusiastic attitudes whenever they spoke about their future in the teaching profession.

The ideal teacher: A moral and balanced persona

The findings in the literature that was studied agree with the findings of this study that beginner teachers enter the teaching profession with fixed ideas about ideal teachers, which are based

on their past experiences (Britzman, 2003; Sandefur & Moore, 2004; Rogers & Fuller; 2007, Ticknor, 2010). This study found that beginner teachers' idea of the "ideal" teacher includes the presence of specific values or attitudes and skills. Moral characteristics mentioned by participants in this study were honesty, punctuality, respect for learners, attentiveness, kindness and care for learners. The majority of these characteristics, although described in different terms (e.g. caring and student-centeredness, knowledgeable, flexibility and inspirational) have also been identified in recent literature (Cuddapah & Stanford, 2015). Literature shows that teaching has further been associated with moral-ethical aspects (Ponte, 2005) and teachers' strong personal commitment towards the teaching profession (Nias, 1986; Zembylas, 2003). Teaching is referred to in research as a "caring" profession, rather than a "high-status" job (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996:9). Participants in this study showed the same attitude towards teaching, which was summarised by Rajesh when he said: "I am not here for the pay cheque".

The findings presented in the second cluster of themes are positioned within the Possible Selves theory (Marcus & Nurius, 1986). The Possible Selves theory proposed by Marcus and Nurius (1986) was included in the conceptual framework of this study on account of its "ability to integrate cognitive and motivational views of self and regulation" (Hamman *et al.*, 2010). The second cluster of themes specifically involved the possible professional selves of beginner teachers. Research confirms that the identities of beginner teachers are in a state of vulnerability (Danielewicz, 2001) and constantly fluctuate in the process of establishing a professional identity (Hamman *et al.*, 2010; Day *et al.*, 2006; Beijaard *et al.*, 2004).

Research into Possible Selves is underpinned by the following two questions: "Which social and personal factors give rise to different possible selves?" and "In what ways do possible selves influence the regulation of behaviour?" (Hamman *et al.*, 2010). This study was particularly concerned with the latter question, specifically in relation to the professional identity of beginner teachers.

First, according to Markus and Nurius (1986), the term possible selves refers to the type of knowledge demonstrated by individuals when they refer to their ideas about what they might become, would like to become and are afraid of becoming. Second, possible selves are linked to motivation, distortion and change. Third, possible selves derive from representations of the past self and include accounts of the future self. Fourth, the past and future selves are different from the current or now selves and finally, the different selves are closely connected.

For the purpose of this study, possible selves were represented by participants' consideration of the three 'tenses' of their selves, namely the present, past and future selves. Findings in this study showed a strong link with the interrelatedness described in the literature (Marcus & Nurius, 1986; Hamman *et al.*, 2010). Hamman *et al.* (2010) propose that the formation of "various possible selves could include an unlimited array of future self-projections". This view is strongly supported by the findings of this study. Participants shared numerous views regarding their future selves, ranging from attempts to improve classroom discipline, strengthening subject knowledge and mastering the new system, to becoming heads of department. With the exception of one, participants' views of their future selves were framed against overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards their futures as teachers. Despite several hardships they had had to overcome on the journey towards 'becoming' teachers and during their early years of practice, they were still cautiously excited about their futures as teachers. The majority of participants viewed teaching as a rewarding and satisfying profession.

Participants' views of their future selves were powerfully connected to how they regarded their past and present selves. In most cases past experiences, specifically those with own teachers, had influenced the way in which they currently view themselves as teachers and continued to influence their classroom decision-making processes and actions. Although participants were influenced by numerous internal and external factors, it was significant that they measured their own current behaviour and the kind of teachers they hoped to become against their experiences with own teachers.

5.3.3 Own teachers as primary influence on beginner teachers' professional identity

This study focused on an exploration of the influence of own teachers on the professional identity of beginner teachers. The last cluster of findings responds to the third secondary research question, ("How do the communicative behaviour of own teachers alter the professional identities of beginner teachers?") and the crux of the study comes to the fore in this cluster of findings. The findings based on this section are a culmination of the participants' response to all the secondary research questions and an 'answer' to the primary research question. The main findings in this cluster relate to the influence of own teachers on beginner teachers' professional identities. The categories of findings pertain to experiences with own teachers and the realisation of own teachers. In the course of this study it became clear that the influences of own teachers had a significant impact on the professional identities of beginner

teachers. This finding concurs with findings reported on in literature in the field, but extensive research in this specific area seemed to be lacking. Two broad findings in existing literature correlated with findings from this category: first, that beginner teachers learn to become teachers within relationships and form various relationships within multiple contexts (Samuel & Stephens, 2000; Smagorinsky *et al.*, 2004; Rogers & Scott, 2008; Ticknor, 2010) and second, that beginner teacher identities are constructed within beginner teachers' lived experiences with teachers (Britzman, 2003; Rogers & Fuller, 2007, Ticknor, 2010;).

In terms of the realisation of own teachers' influence, several findings correlate with those discussed the relevant literature. Interaction with a mentor provides inspiration to beginner teachers (Wolhuter *et al.*, 2012). This was evident in the narratives of Pieter and Jantjies, who not only drew on memories of own teachers, but also found support in colleagues who acted as mentors. Furthermore, literature indicates that beginner teachers form various bonded relationships with different role players, such as educational mentors, learners and individuals outside the realm of education, which nurture fruitful professional identity construction and strengthens professional confidence in terms of classroom behaviour (Ticknor, 2012). The majority of participants had shared a bond with own teachers at some point in their teaching careers. Two participants demonstrated bonded relationships that were so intense that the influence of the own teacher profoundly influenced their professional identities in various ways.

Furthermore, some participants in this study expressed the need for a teacher to provide inspiration, a finding that correlates with the findings based on studies conducted by Beauchamp and Thomas (2010). Participants in this study also revealed that they emulate certain own teachers, which correlated with findings in the related literature (Lortie, 1975; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2010; Schultz & Ravitch, 2012). In addition to the emulation of own teachers, participants also shared that they did not simply draw on what they had been taught during their teacher training, but had undergone different processes for taking on a teacher identity and differed with regard to how they made meaning of influences according to their own value systems. These findings confirmed those of Lortie & Clement (1975); Beauchamp and Thomas (2010); Schultz and Ravitch (2012), Schepens *et al.*, (2009) and Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004).

Further correlations between the existing literature and the findings of this study were found by positioning the findings of this study in the framework of McCroskey's model of instructional communication (2004). McCroskey's model was valuable in the sense that it accounted for the space in which own teachers' influence on beginner teachers' professional identities occurred. This study focused on own teachers' influences on beginner teachers during their school and tertiary careers. Therefore, participants (as young learners) and own teachers met each other in an instructional environment where learning is intended to take place. Four of the six components of McCroskey's model of instructional communication were significantly related to the findings of this study.

With regard to the first of the abovementioned components, instructional environments differ in terms of the nature of the classroom, the sociocultural background and history of the specific institution, the physical and social climate and the political environment (McCroskey, 2004). Findings based on this study clearly testified to the unique nature of the instructional environment and its influence on the dynamic interplay between participants (as learners) and own teachers and participants as beginner teachers in their own classrooms throughout all the narratives. Participants shared a variety of dissimilar stories regarding the influence of their instructional environments as learners and beginner teachers. The differences between the cultures of private, public and township schools were frequently mentioned by the majority of the participants. They also commented on aspects such as bullying, academic struggling, and 'insulting' teachers, which are all elements that form part of the instructional environment and influence their learning and eventual emerging professional identities. Participants' own classrooms also brought variety to the instructional space. In the majority of cases the influences of school managements, policies, lack of facilities and resources were noted as having an effect on the instructional environment. Participants related these factors to their own growth as professionals and did not suggest that they had any effect on their interaction with their learners.

Second, (own) teachers bring variety into the instructional context, mainly in terms of pedagogical knowledge, levels of intelligence, content knowledge, communication competence and experience (McCroskey, 2004). In this regard, the influence of own teachers frequently surfaced as crucial to the classroom atmosphere and, to an even greater extent, to the perceptions of participants in terms of how they view teaching. Participants shared several negative experiences with teachers whose general behaviour had influenced their career

choices and their perceptions of teaching. Teachers who had been positive role models were shown to be emulated and held in high regard by all the participants. They further shared a number of incidents where the support of own teachers guided them through challenges faced during their school years. They also relied on memories of their own teachers' conduct during their early years of teaching. These findings are supported by the relevant literature. Ticknor (2010) suggests that beginner teachers learn to become teachers within relationships, and Gergen (2009) found that "bonding through narration occurs when the use of 'we' is used to describe a relationship that has developed over time to create a 'we'".

Third, (own) teachers' verbal and non-verbal behaviours were also explored in this study and surfaced as being inconsistent in the instructional communication environment. Their communicative behaviour and what they "do nonverbally constitutes a continuous stream of messages which impact the meanings which are stimulated in students' minds" (McCroskey, 2004:199). The relationship formed through both verbal and non-verbal messages is essential to professional identity, since to have an identity one must be recognised as a particular 'kind of person' by others (Rogers & Scott, 2008). Participants mentioned numerous instances of being influenced by specific communitive traits of own teachers. Communicative characteristics of own teachers that stood out in the narratives included mainly dress code, the ability to maintain a balance between humour and discipline, approachability, a positive attitude and a positive approach to teaching as a career. They further commented on the way teachers spoke to them, which they related to the concept of approachability.

Fourth, beginner teachers' perceptions (while they are learners) of own teachers are generated "primarily on the basis of the teachers' verbal and nonverbal communication behaviours" (McCroskey, 2004:199). This element in the instructional communication context is the perceptions of teachers with which learners approach them. None of the participants in this study mentioned any prior perceptions they might have had of own teachers. While this could have been because the interview questions did not allow for it, it should be noted that participants generally did share numerous incidents and described experiences in detail even when no specific questions were asked. McCroskey (2004) maintains that learners will start developing perceptions of the teacher as soon as exposure takes place, which was confirmed during this study. It was also evident that subjective perceptions of and experiences with own teachers had a bearing on the participants' emergent professional identities in the sense that in

some cases they compared themselves (and their behaviour in specific instances) to teachers with whom they had had either positive or negative experiences.

5.4 Differences

In the next section, the differences between findings discussed in the literature and the findings of this study will be discussed. Although some aspects are alluded to in the existing literature, slight differences will be noted in this section, in particular differences between the way these aspects are evident in literature and how they manifested in this study. I describe these differences under the headings: Nuanced resemblances: Language and emotion; Freeing the professional self; and Past teacher role models.

Nuanced resemblances: language and emotions

An analysis of the findings of this study and those reported on in the literature revealed similarities or ‘nuanced resemblances’, as I prefer to call them. These include aspects that frame both the findings of studies in the related literature and findings of this study which, although not discussed as explicit findings, are to some extent similar to those in the literature. Two such nuanced resemblances were revealed: first, language as a concept that is integral to all professional identity-related findings, and second, the role of emotions, embedded in findings involving relationships, and the influence of emotions on professional identity.

With regard to the first, the findings of this study demonstrated the significance of language as the primary medium of navigation towards a balanced professional identity. During the interviews, all the participants’ use of language changed frequently as they discussed different aspects of their emerging professional identities. Language is described by many researchers in the field of education as the primary way through which an individual’s varying selves communicate with each other and make meaning of events outside the self (Mead, 1934; Bakhtin, 1990; Wittingstein, 1991; Rorty, 1992), and as a core element in the construction of an identity (Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Gee, 2005; Olsen, 2008; Ticknor, 2010). Olsen (2008) describes language as a “window into” the identity of individuals (cf. Chapter 2) – a view that was evident throughout all the interviews. When participants spoke about their socio-political experiences, they tended to speak faster, lowered their voices and seemed to speak more ‘cautiously’. This was evident during Rajesh and Tarryn’s discussion of the bullying they had experienced (Chapter 4, 4.5), the part of Cindy’s narrative when she spoke about her “fear of

Black people” (Chapter 4, 4.5) and Steven’s account of the indirect bullying he had experienced because of his tolerant attitude towards learners of colour (Chapter 4, 4.5). Ticknor (2010) writes about how language and discourse are used to build identities and representations of the self to others (cf. Chapter 2), something that became clearly evident during the course of interviews.

The participants also seemed to become more reflective while talking about reflection, using phrases such as “Sometimes I think ...” (Elsa), “I just wonder ...” (Msizwe), and “I still remember ...” (Cindy). When discussing the emergence of their professional identities, they used tentative expressions such as “I am trying to ...” (Rajesh), “I think my students enjoy my lessons” (Vanjaria), “I think I am still finding my way” (Elsa), “I am still sort of learning” (Steven), “I grappled ...” (Cindy), and “I think it works ...” (Pieter) (cf. Chapter 4, 4.6). However, when they spoke about their views of what the ideal teacher should be like, linguistic cues revealed a greater certainty and they used phrases such as “You must be ...” (Jantjies & Msizwe), “You need to ...” (Steven), and “You must have ...” (Elsa) (cf. Chapter 4, 4.9). I further noticed a distinct difference between the language used when they described positive experiences and when they described negative experiences with own teachers. While relating positive experiences, they repeated adjectives and adverbs more frequently in longer speech turns, expressed themselves more vivaciously, showed a variety of facial expressions and maintained eye contact for longer periods (cf. Chapter 4, 4.10). When they described negative experiences with own teachers, they tended to give single-syllable answers, their facial expressions included frowning and they avoided eye contact. The way they expressed themselves, spoke about their ‘becoming’, and shared their views and opinions though verbal and non-verbal language was in line with descriptions found in existing literature (Gee, 2005; Olsen, 2008; Ticknor, 2010). Olsen (2008) suggests that language relates to identity and holds representational possibilities, which was evident during all the interviews.

Second, emotions underpinned the majority of findings. Participants not only described complex relationships between themselves and their own teachers, but also their relationships with colleagues, mentor teachers, other teacher-like figures in their lives and family, all of which stemmed from deep emotions. This is consistent with Britzman’s (2003) view that emotions are created through social relationships. The role of emotion is recognised as a significant aspect of identity in literature on this topic (Britzman, 1993; Hargreaves, 2001; Winograd, 2003), as was echoed in the findings of this study. Three participants became visibly

emotional when they recalled memories of the passing of own teachers, indicating the depth of the emotional bonds created with own teachers. Another participant explicitly demonstrated the anger that she had felt when her own teacher left the teaching profession. It is noteworthy that participants expressed strong emotions when recalling events that had taken place long ago. They also shared the significance of those emotions in their professional lives and the ways in which they had influenced their professional identities.

The findings regarding language and emotions cannot accurately be termed as ‘differences’. However, the variance between the findings revealed by the literature search and those of this study lies in the fact that the literature does not include focused discussions on paralinguistic cues and non-verbal behaviour during interviews in instances where those studies focused on professional identity.

Freeing the professional self

Another difference noted between the findings of this study and those discussed in the relevant literature relates to the actions taken by beginner teachers when they feel uncomfortable in their teaching environments. According to Britzman (1993:252), “feelings are made in social relationships”. She further notes the conflict between institutional structures and “expectations of how teachers *should* behave and feel” and the actual “structure of feelings” that teachers already hold because of who they are and “the lives they live”. This was evident in this study, particularly regarding the navigation of socio-political influences on the participants’ professional identities. Literature further shows that teachers either build up a sense of affiliation with the teaching profession or change their careers (Nieto, 2003; Inman & Marlow, 2004; Yost, 2006; Clandinin *et al.*, 2009). First, literature does not link this concept to ‘freeing the professional core self’, as became evident during this study. Second, participants in this study showed ways of navigating professional identities that differed from the two ways of doing so that are described in the literature. These other ways of ‘freeing’ their core selves included changing schools, finding support from colleagues or own teachers with whom they still had contact, or changing the direction of their careers to another avenue in the teaching profession.

Past teacher role models

Differences between this study and literature were also evident in terms of past teacher role models. The literature that was consulted demonstrated reflection on both positive and negative past experiences with teachers as role models, but the studies referred to focused on decisions to choose the teaching profession and on ways of becoming better teachers (Korthagen, 2004; Lunenberg *et al.*, 2007; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2010). The work of these authors centred on intervention strategies aimed at becoming an ‘ideal teacher’ and does not include the iteration between possible professional selves, which is a theme that is strongly evident in this study.

5.5 Areas of silence in this study

In this section, I discuss aspects pertaining to challenges faced by beginner teachers that are mentioned in the literature, but were not evident in this study.

5.5.1 Challenges faced by beginner teachers

Educational research often focuses on the challenges faced by beginner teachers when they first enter the teaching profession and during their early years of practice (Kumazawa, 2013). International research indicates that beginner teachers struggle with the shift from student teacher to beginner teacher, e.g. previously in the USA (Veenman, 1984), Israel (Friedman, 2000) and the Netherlands (Stokking, Leenders, De Jong & Van Tartwijk, 2003), and more recently in Germany (Klusman *et al.*, 2012). Researchers describe the challenge of learning to teach in a ‘real’ teaching environment by using various terms, such as transition shock (Cocoran, 1981), praxis shock (Veenman, 1984), reality shock and “the survival phase” (Huberman, 1989), and “shattered dreams” (Friedman, 2000). One of the challenges described in literature is the “dilemma from the extensive range of duties” (Kumazawa, 2013:50), where beginner teachers are expected to take on various other duties besides teaching. Other researchers have also studied workload and role ambiguity as stressors affecting beginner teachers (Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008; Betoret, 2009; Dicke, Elling, Schmeck & Leutner., 2014). Friedman (2000) is of the opinion that stressors resulting from the problematic nature of the transition from student to beginner teacher have a negative impact on the well-being of beginner teachers, which manifests in different forms, such as low levels of well-being (Evers, Tomic & Brouwers, 2004; Friedman, 2006; Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti & Xanthopoulou, 2007).

The participants in this study had experienced several hardships during their early years and lower levels of well-being did surface in the results. However, they showed resilience and hopeful attitudes. Challenges mentioned by participants in their current teaching contexts included negative attitudes of family members and friends when they chose teaching as a profession, teaching in unsafe environments, language barriers, transitions between different kinds of schools (private, public or township schools), academic struggles and bullying because of racial differences. It appeared as if the challenges faced by participants in this study stemmed largely from the unique socio-political environment in South Africa. Despite the fact that participants were indeed very busy with extracurricular duties, which became evident when I tried to make appointments to conduct interviews with them (cf. Chapter 3, 3.4.2.3), aspects such as workload, a wide range of duties and burn-out (Veenman, 1984; Friedman, 2000; Bakker *et al.*, 2007; Evers *et al.*, 2004; Emmer & Evertson, 2008) did not appear as challenges during the interviews. Participants mentioned some of these aspects, but seemed to accept them as part of their new realities.

5.6 Generation of new knowledge

The following section contains a discussion of the findings based on this study that were not apparent in the literature. By discussing these silences, I present this as the study's contribution to the existing body of knowledge in the field of the beginner teacher's establishment of a professional identity. This study is presented throughout as a layered palimpsest construct, allowing for a wide range of interpretations and also touching on the fringes of other disciplines besides education, such as communication and biology. In this section I will describe the birth of a *new palimpsest* consisting of the novel findings yielded by this study. Once again, and consistent with the nature of this study, new findings were multiple and layered, and reached across various levels. I divide this section into two broad categories, namely methodological (5.7.1) and theoretical contributions (5.7.2-5.7.4). Just like the own teachers' voices constantly heard by beginner teachers, a new methodological palimpsest gained a voice through this study. It is this creation, the new palimpsest that was formed while a new story was being told, that unfolds in this section. Thereafter, I will discuss new findings of a theoretical nature pertaining to the influence of own teachers on the professional identity of beginner teachers. New findings were threefold and included own teachers substituted by fictional 'teachers', own teachers as beacons of hope and resilience, and own teachers guiding levels of cautiousness of an emerging professional identity.

By including a phrase in isiZulu as part of the title of this study: “Bayakhuluma Kaningi¹⁵: the influence of own teachers on the professional identity of beginners”, the scene was set for listening to voices from different backgrounds. The term “bayakhuluma kaningi” also refers to “things mentioned often”. In this section, I complete the intertextual reference to other South African languages by presenting a palimpsest of findings of new “things mentioned often” by my participants, i.e. things that I have not come across elsewhere in related literature. I conclude with a last intertextual reference by presenting my contribution to the field by providing the gist of each heading in isiZulu.

Methodological contributions

5.6.1 “Izingqimba entsha”¹⁶: A new palimpsest of methods

With regard to the methodology applied for this study, I employed a unique strategy. Instead of choosing a specific and set research design beforehand and being limited to set data-gathering methods and attempting to fit findings into it, I chose three designs and/or paradigms that are loosely related to the research questions in each methodological section to allow participants’ narratives to reveal themselves in their own ways. The initial discomfort I experienced, which was eventually put to rest after the interpretation of findings, is set forth in this thought moment from my researcher’s diary:

Thought moment 5.2

It fits.

Against the advice of numerous other scholars, I employed more than one research design and multiple meta-theoretical paradigms.

It worked.

I conceptualised and conducted this study to reach across the ‘borders’ of set research designs and paradigms by isolating what was relevant and building something new. I deconstructed the existing and set designs and brought something new into being. In the same way, the stories of my diverse participants reached across borders, simultaneously utilising ‘same-ness’ and ‘other-ness’.

Research diary, 2016

¹⁵ “Mentioned often” (isiZulu)

¹⁶ “New layers” (isiZulu)

One could say that I took on the role of ‘facilitator of research’, rather than ‘being the researcher’. The way in which I clarified my role as researcher (cf. Chapter 3, 3.2) placed me in the position of ‘researcher as observer’ of the research process. This study pushed back the boundaries of feminist research in that it completely encompassed the trust relationship between researcher and participants (suggested by feminist research) and showed how the researcher can take on an almost phantom-like pseudo-presence. It further challenged post-modern research in the sense that the process implied the complete deconstruction of set methodological ‘rules’ and allowed participants to construct and reconstruct memories as an iterative process not limited by a stringent interview protocol.

All the aspects included in the research methodology were layered and only significant tenets of three research designs were applied. I purposefully chose specific tenets of each research design to allow the study to ‘unfold itself in its own’ way. Furthermore, the conceptual framework was constructed in the same multi-layered way. This method implies that a multi-layered method approach is not only possible, but is indeed necessary. The employment of relevant tenets of particular research designs created a vast space for the acknowledgement of more than one insight from different perspectives. I was able to elicit and interpret entire narratives of the journey of participants towards their professional identities.

Likewise, the sample selection was a palimpsest in its own right. I purposefully chose participants of both genders from four racial groups in South Africa. At first, I presented what seemed like a crude segregation of races. The initial, blunt ‘segregation’ of races enabled me to explore the ‘same-ness’ and ‘other-ness’ of these groups in a deconstruct-reconstruct way. I was able to acknowledge the ‘other-ness’ in the backgrounds of the groups and was astounded to find the ‘sameness’ to be the overpowering element. The deconstruction and reconstruction of traditional methodological approaches yielded findings that may otherwise not have been brought into the open. In the next section, I discuss the new knowledge in terms of the theoretical findings generated by this study. I present these as the voices of the participants as beginner teachers on their journey towards a balanced professional identity, and their views on the influences of own teachers on their professional identities.

Theoretical contributions

5.6.2 “Eqanjiwe”¹⁷: Own teachers substituted by fictional ‘teachers’

Although only a minority of participants mentioned intertextual influences substituting own teachers, the presence of such influences is still an important finding of this study and contributes to the field of the professional identity of beginner teachers. Similar studies with a bigger sample size may yield more findings like these. In the relevant literature, only one indirect reference is made to intertexts. Bakhtin (1981) maintains that language is also a conversation with prior texts. Apart from this indirect reference to intertexts, no educational studies of intertextual influences taking on the role of own teachers have yet been conducted. Participants who did not demonstrate any close bonds with own teachers did exhibit influences from intertextual characters or events as substitutes for the influence of own teachers. It also became clear that influences on professional identity cannot be controlled or limited and that the professional identities of beginner teachers may be influenced by any perceived persona, whether fictional or real. It was interesting to note that the participants who showed a stronger sense of self and more advanced self-knowledge were the ones who had been influenced by multimedia intertexts, rather than by family members or educational role players. It was clear that the participants’ professional identities had been influenced by various forms of multimedia. Intertextual influences of this nature were characters in novels and, in one case, a television character. These influences were significant as a result of the strong influence they had exerted on some beginner teachers; characters from external media sources guided their teaching selves and provided role models to live by. Significantly, although these characters were of a fictional nature, their influences were perceived as ‘real’. Participants pointed out how they had become acquainted with the characters in novels and how “stories teach us what to do” (Thabiseng). This finding is significant in that own teachers’ influences still seemed to be present, although they took on an entirely different form. This reveals the ‘need’ that is felt for an own teacher’s voice, even if other ‘characters’ have to be found to satisfy that need.

5.6.3 “Othisha bangisekela”¹⁸: Own teachers as beacons of hope and resilience

In the following section, I first discuss the ways in which participants experienced their own teachers and the extent to which they were aware of them. This leads to a discussion of how

¹⁷ “Fiction” (isiZulu)

¹⁸ “Supportive teachers” (isiZulu)

these experiences unfolded to mark own teachers as beacons of hope and resilience. The contributing factor in the first section pertains to the participants' awareness of the influences of own teachers and what they 'do' with this awareness. The new insight discussed in this section relates to certain levels of experience, a concept which has not been pointed out in the literature. The novel insight in the second section involves the ways in which positive own teachers guided participants through hardships by taking on different roles to support them with regard to particular aspects of their professional identities.

Experiences with own teachers

Different levels of awareness of the role of own teachers were found, as well as diverse reactions to the awareness of the role played by own teachers. Findings revealed that participants can be divided into three groups of awareness of the role of own teachers: participants who were acutely aware of the influence of own teachers and wanted to reflect that influence in their own practice; participants who were aware of own teachers and did not want to reflect that awareness in their own practice; and participants how were becoming aware of the role of own teachers through probing or post-reflective thoughts.

The participants experienced own teachers either positively or negatively on different levels. It became evident that they experienced own teachers unfavourably on four levels, namely on either direct or indirect psychological levels and on either direct or indirect physical levels. Psychological levels involved participants' intrinsic emotions, whereas physical levels entailed own teachers' classroom behaviour and the teaching environments created by own teachers. Physical levels of discomfort include those aspects external to the participants. First, they experienced teachers adversely on a direct psychological level when confronted with insults or negativity directed towards learners. Second, own teachers were experienced negatively on an indirect psychological level when participants felt that they were not meeting teachers' standards, experienced feelings of "being dumb", perceived disappointment on the side of own teachers, or own teachers' expectations were not aligned with learners' expectations of themselves or their perceived performance. Third, own teachers were experienced negatively on a direct physical level when they were perceived as being disorganised and unable to establish and maintain discipline. Fourth, unfavourable experiences surfaced on indirect physical levels when own teachers appeared to be unsuitable for the subjects they taught, were perceived as "boring", or influenced the classroom environment through negative dispositions

towards teaching as a career. The majority of participants shared more positive than negative experiences with own teachers.

Positive and negatives experiences with own teachers were experienced on the same four levels. First, the participants experienced teachers positively on a direct psychological level when they were perceived as approachable, open, friendly and helpful. Second, own teachers were experienced favourably on an indirect psychological level when they were perceived as safe to bond with, and as honest and direct without being insulting, and when they displayed self-motivation and a positive attitude towards the teaching profession. Third, positive experiences with own teachers occurred on a direct physical level when subject matter was presented in innovative and interesting ways. Fourth, favourable experiences surfaced on indirect physical levels when discipline and strictness were employed by own teachers in balanced and timeous ways.

Findings based on the outcome of this study showed that views of the ideal teacher were based on *positive experiences* with own teachers. Other studies make no specific mention of this and do not clearly describe the perceived position of the own teacher in the minds of the beginner teachers, but focus on their views of all and any teachers. This study showed that beginner teachers considered only the characteristics of *own teachers with whom they had had positive experiences* as part of their view of the ideal teacher.

Own teachers as markers of hope and resilience

The findings of this study confirmed that challenges brought about by the South African socio-political environment had a distinct influence on the emergent professional identity of beginner teachers and the participants related numerous difficulties with which they had been confronted during their early years of teaching. These difficulties have been extensively described in both local and international literature (Britzman, 1993; Jansen, 2001; Moore, 2002; Gu, 2012). Although international studies mention the role of mentoring programmes (Wang & Odell, 2002; Achinstein & Barret, 2004; Franzak, 2010;), relatively little research has been conducted on the role of own teachers as a supportive and guiding factor in the navigation of these challenges. My findings show that own teachers manifested as a powerful resource in dealing with socio-political challenges, such as changing curricula, large classes, corrupt management systems and several other adverse aspects stemming from the South African socio-political environment. Some of the participants still had contact with past teachers with whom they

discuss difficulties, in which instances own teachers took on the role of a reflective partner. It was evident that the mere fact that participants could talk to someone who had been in the profession strengthened their own resilience.

In other cases, participants relied on vivid memories of own teachers who had provided support during their school years when they faced hardships of a socio-political nature. It is significant that the participants showed respect for own teachers who had demonstrated a positive attitude towards the teaching profession and who had chosen to remain in the profession despite challenges. Participants not only respected own teachers who had displayed a positive attitude towards the profession, but had also had overwhelming positive experiences with those teachers. Another important finding was that the participants reported negative experiences with own teachers who had displayed negative dispositions towards the teaching profession. However, even though they were inspired by positive teachers, they were also affected by those who had displayed negative attitudes towards the teaching profession as this hindered the formation of their professional identities in that it caused them to experience emotional dissonance.

The role of own teachers as beacons of hope and resilience is extended in that, in some cases, their roles became those of 'substitute parents'. Findings that emerged from this study indicate that negative attitudes displayed by family members seriously impeded the professional growth of the beginner teachers. They entered the profession with less self-confidence and a weaker sense of self than their counterparts whose career choices had met with the approval of significant family members. The substitutive role of the own teacher came into play in this regard. In cases where support from significant family members was absent, the participants strongly relied on own teachers with whom they still had contact, or on the memories of own teachers who had motivated them in the past to pursue a career in teaching. In the majority of cases, the own teacher became a substitute for the 'supportive parent' that the beginner teacher did not have. Participants whose family members had disapproved of their decision to follow a career in teaching did not pursue the issue with their parents or family members, but relied instinctively on the support of own teachers or memories of own teachers who encouraged them to follow their dreams.

In other cases, parents from all the racial groups, with the exception of Whites, struggled to obtain what they perceived as a 'good' education for the so-called Born free generation. The

fact that education had become a possibility for all in a non-segregated society did not mean that it was easily accessible. Parents who were determined to provide their children with a traditionally “White” education (Tarryn, Jantjies) struggled to find the means to do so. The parents of the Born frees were mainly skilled labourers without professional qualifications. This meant that they had to work wherever they could find the best opportunities, which left them with no choice but to leave the young Born frees with family members who lived close to ‘good schools’, usually in urban areas. The result was that while they were receiving the ‘best’ education, the young Born frees developed closer bonds with own (supportive) teachers than with their parents. While the participants appreciated the sacrifices their parents had made to provide them with better opportunities, it was clear from their narratives that they had eventually forged stronger emotional bonds with own teachers as ‘substitute parents’. Overall findings showed that positive own teachers had contributed largely to the professional identities of the beginner teachers by taking on various roles according to the participants’ needs. This is a significant finding yielded by this study, since literature has not yet explored the specific role of own teachers in the professional identity of beginner teachers.

5.6.4 “Othisha siqu eziqondisayo”¹⁹: Own teachers guiding levels of cautiousness of an emerging professional identity

This study found that beginner teachers navigated different aspect of their professional identities along a *continuum of cautiousness*. This concept ‘levels of cautiousness’ is not described in any of the existing literature. Levels of cautiousness, strongly influenced by own teachers and memories of own teachers, came to the fore in aspects of the participants’ reflections on and awareness of their emerging professional identities. Own teachers and memories of own teachers played a significant role in their progress on the continuum of cautiousness.

Reflection

Findings based on this study show that reflection occurs either on a conscious or on a subconscious level. In some cases, participants employed reflective strategies without being consciously aware of this mental activity. Thus participants were not necessarily always aware of the fact that reflection was ‘happening’. Reflection can take place either intentionally or

¹⁹ “Own teachers guiding” (isiZulu)

unintentionally. In these cases, the participants either *wanted* to reflect or *did not mean* to reflect. The difference between intentional and unintentional reflection and conscious and sub-conscious reflection lies in the *awareness* of the process. When conscious/ subconscious reflection takes place, the reflective process happens spontaneously and the participant can be either aware or unaware of the process. In the case of intentional/ unintentional reflection, participants are aware of the process taking place, regardless of whether they *wanted* to reflect or not. The interplay between the four levels of reflection yielded a variety of different emotions, actions and reactions in terms of the professional identity of beginner teachers. In some cases, where conscious, unintentional reflection occurred, participants experienced emotional discomfort and did not want to think about specific events. This resulted in the suppression of an instinctive mental occurrence, which led to feelings of unease and uncertainty. Actions following this were more uncertain and influenced their communicative behaviour. In some cases, participants displayed defensiveness and reverted to verbal aggressiveness or assertiveness when confronted with situations on which they chose not to reflect. The intricate levels of reflection and the participants' reactions to such reflections had a significant influence on their professional identities.

Participants also employed reflective strategies by using either one of two methods (or both). First, they used individual reflection of a solely personal nature and second, they used reflection with a reflective partner. Significantly, in most cases the reflective partners were own teachers. In the majority of cases, participants made use of both forms of reflection. It should be noted that the participants did not consciously think about wanting to reflect with someone else. Reflecting with a reflective partner happened mostly without participants being aware of the fact that they were entering a reflective discussion. The only way to determine whether those discussions were actually of a reflective nature is to determine whether they resulted in participants thinking about what had been said, and (in most cases) whether the course of action had been changed. Furthermore, it was significant that participants reflected with own teachers with whom they still had contact, or if that was not the case, they reflected on memories of their own teachers. Some of the participants revealed that they 'talk' to own teachers in their minds, discussing current challenges and achievements with them. Although this reflection is a form of individual reflection taking place in the mind of the beginner teacher, it is still significant in that participants were guided by perceptions of how they thought own teachers would advise them.

Awareness of emerging professional identities

My study found that beginner teachers were aware of the fact that their professional identities were in an undeniable state of vulnerability and that they *knew* they were in an uncertain period of their careers. The emerging professional identities were also shown to develop on a continuum of cautiousness. Findings show that all the participants were cautiously venturing on the journey to a professional identity and that their own development was unique. A positive correlation between views of personality, knowledge of personality traits (self-knowledge), inherent communicative behaviour and levels of cautiousness were found. In the majority of cases, prior interaction and experiences with own teachers greatly influenced participants' views of their personalities and self-knowledge.

In cases where participants revealed a stronger sense of self (self-knowledge), held more positive views of their personalities and showed an inclination towards more forceful communicative behaviour (e.g. verbal aggressiveness, assertiveness, willingness to communicate and less communication apprehension), they tended to take more risks in terms of professional development. Risk-taking was linked to memories of experiences with own teachers. In cases where participants had been influenced by strong, dynamic own teachers, they were more inclined to take risks and displayed 'less caution' in terms of their actions and decision-making processes. They also tended to ask more reflective questions about their own actions and reactions, and the actions of colleagues and learners. My study found a positive correlation between awareness of an emerging professional identity and the growth of the professional identity. Participants who were *more aware* of the fact that their professional identities were vulnerable and in a state of growth adapted to the unstable state of being and applied strategies to move towards a stable professional identity. Influences of own teachers in the form of memories of own teachers, or own teachers as reflective partners, played a significant role in this process.

A palimpsest of novel findings

Thought moment 5.3

Finally, my own palimpsest and the palimpsest of participants' stories came together. My personal journey was now connected to theirs and were similar in many aspects. The new findings of my study showed that own teachers are significant in many ways. They shape the professional identities of beginner teachers on various psychological levels; thus they are present on deep sub-conscious levels and their influences stretch much further than we thought.

I added one more layer to my own palimpsest. It is said that Dali was apparently fascinated by actress Mae West and viewed her as the pinnacle of womanhood and sexuality. The novel findings of my study involved various 'pinnacles': positive experiences with own teachers as central to beginner teachers' views of the ideal teachers they want to become, own teachers as beacons of hope and resilience and own teachers guiding levels of beginner teachers' cautious approaches towards professional identity.

I added the face of Mae West in a disjointed manner to first signify own teachers as 'pinnacles', but also to show that professional identity is never 'perfect'. The 'perfect face' is always an on-going process.

Research diary, 2016

Figure 5.1: Own palimpsest IV (2016)



5.7 Conclusion

In Chapter 5, I first described the interrelated nature of this chapter. I then discussed the findings of this study, which proved to be similar to the findings encountered in the relevant existing literature, according to the three theme clusters in which the themes and categories

were divided in this study. Next, I pointed out findings described in the literature that differed slightly from those of this study. I highlighted areas of silences, i.e. findings about which the literature was silent, but which had emerged from this study. I integrated the findings as underpinned by the palimpsest conceptual framework of this study throughout the discussion of echoes and silences correlating with literature. I completed the chapter with a section on the generation of new knowledge stemming from the silences in literature through certain findings of this study. In the next chapter, I conclude by making recommendations with regard to possible future research and practice, and a discussion of the limitations and significance of this study.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

“Reasoning draws a conclusion, but does not make the conclusion certain, unless the mind discovers it by the path of experience.”

~ Roger Bacon ~

6.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I present a summary of the findings of this study and the themes that emerged from it, which is followed by a discussion of the significance of the study and its possible limitations. I then revisit the research assumptions on which the study was based. Finally, I propose recommendations for future research and practice, focused specifically on teacher training programmes.

6.2 Summary of emerging themes and findings

This study explored the influence of own teachers on the professional identities of South African beginner teachers belonging to four different racial groups. The primary findings of the study were framed against the backdrop of three central aspects: first, the influences on beginner teachers that are of a personal nature and relate to their unique personal and professional contexts (theme cluster one); second, the navigation of beginner teachers' emerging professional identities according to their possible professional selves (theme cluster two); and third, own teachers as the primary influence on the professional identity of beginner teachers (theme cluster three). These themes and findings will be summarised in the following section.

6.2.1 Beginner teachers in contextual spaces

Several contextual factors influence the professional identity of beginner teachers. Beginner teachers enter the teaching profession as individuals, each with their own lived experiences, which makes them susceptible to a variety of influences according to their unique circumstances. The findings show that on their path to establishing their professional identities, beginner teachers are influenced throughout their lives by family members and other significant

role players. Participants showed different reactions and improvisations (Holland *et al.*, 1998) when confronted with diverse influences (Ahearn, 2001; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Findings further showed that participants negotiate their contextual spaces through language and emotions embedded in social relationships. Emotions manifest in specific communicative behaviour (*how* they use language), which is determined partly by inborn, genetic traits (McCroskey *et al.*, 2004).

Furthermore, it became evident that an interplay exists between one or two supportive parents and compassionate own teachers. In some cases, participants were more attracted to own teachers who were showing the same caring characteristics than the supportive parents. Where participants lacked support from significant family members or where parents were absent, they relied on own teachers who took on the role of a supportive parent. The findings revealed the important role played by parents in terms of obtaining the best possible education for their children (participants of this study). All the parents considered a good education as being imperative and applied various means to obtain it. However, parents of the born free generation (in which participants of my study can be categorised) could not easily afford the school fees payable at the traditionally White schools, which they preferred. In some cases, participants were left in the care of other family members when their parents found employment far from home. This enabled the parents to afford the ‘best’ education for their children (the participants), but resulted in less close emotional bonds with parents. The participants acknowledged and appreciated their parents’ contribution towards their education, but mentioned own teachers or other educational role players as those who had supported them and had thus become key to their professional progress.

A minority of participants substituted the role of own teachers with intertextual influences such as role models found in literature or multimedia sources. Those participants demonstrated better-developed self-concepts achieved through narratives and frequently mentioned their independent learning strategies. The fictional characters on whom they had modelled themselves were ‘real’ in the minds of the participants and their attitudes and emotions towards the fictional characters were similar to those shown by their counterparts towards own teachers.

Furthermore, contemporary external influences exerted on beginner teachers were strongly revealed in narratives. Socio-political issues influenced participants differently, according to their unique backgrounds. Distinct differences were evident between the educational

backgrounds of Black, Coloured and Indian participants and those of White participants. The discrepancies between urban, township and private schools were also highlighted in the narratives. All the Black, Coloured and Indian participants revealed that they had experienced bullying on account of their skin colour. White participants experienced emotional conflict and discomfort when they were ‘bullied into bullying’ and refused to participate. They also revealed feelings of tension where they experienced school systems as ‘still very Afrikaans’ and perceived their schools as adopting attitudes of ‘mock democracy’ without truly embracing transformation. Challenges experienced as a result of poor management, corruption in school management teams, lack of discipline, lack of physical space and facilities at certain schools, which stemmed from poor management at the higher educational levels, also surfaced in the majority of narratives. Despite these differences, my study showed that these conditions did not detract from their attitudes of hope and resilience and their acceptance of the diversity in their personal backgrounds and the diversity they encountered in their classrooms or among colleagues. The participants’ ability to establish and maintain classroom discipline stood out as a way in which they measured their ‘successes’ as beginner teachers. This was also the measure employed by the rest of the school community.

Participants coped with these challenges in different ways, but mostly reverted to strategies of ‘freeing’ their core selves and striving to create their professional identities in teaching environments where they felt safe and able to grow. Reflection surfaced as a way of not only coping with challenges, but also navigating experiences and building towards their emerging professional identities. Reflection occurred on four psychological levels and some participants only became aware of reflection processes taking place during interviews. They further revealed the need for, and in some cases the value of, reflective partners, mostly in the form of own teachers. In some cases, the reflective partners manifested in memories of own teachers’ voices and examples of their conduct.

Own teachers and memories of own teachers were revealed as an overwhelmingly supportive influence in facing the challenges experienced by beginner teachers. In a few cases, the role of own teachers had been taken on by colleagues who acted as mentors. It was clear from all the participants’ narratives that they needed the ‘voices’ of own teachers to guide them in the process of finding their true professional identities. Some participants explicitly referred to the challenges being ‘harder’ when the voice of an own, experienced teacher was perceived as being lacking. When facing challenges, participants were more likely to revert to memories of

own teachers and their own school contexts for help than to consider pedagogical knowledge acquired during teacher preparation programmes. They also commented on the discrepancies between teacher training programmes at various tertiary institutions and the real-life challenges faced when starting as beginner teachers.

6.2.2 Navigating professional identities according to possible selves

Employing the possible selves established through the three tenses of the self, namely past, present and future selves, proved to be valuable for the exploration of the professional identity of beginner teachers. Through reflecting on the present self, categories such as self-knowledge and perceptions of personality, the cautiously emerging self and the core personality in survival mode came to the fore. These sections of their narratives illustrated the caution with which participants approach their new careers in unfamiliar environments. It further came to light that the present self is continuously influenced by memories and perceptions of the past self and manifestations of who participants want to become and what they are afraid of becoming. It was evident that the strength of the self-concept (which relates to unique personality traits) influenced the way in which they made meaning of classroom experiences. Self-knowledge, perceptions of personality and inherent communicative characteristics displayed by discussions of the present self-surfaced as particularly important. These concepts, which are linked strongly to the participants' ability to establish and maintain discipline in the classroom, affected their ability to reflect, as well as how and at what tempo their professional identities developed.

The past self was expressed through memories of a personal nature and in particular of own teachers, since this was the focus of the study. Memories of participants' past selves were embedded in the recollections of specific incidents during childhood and as adolescents during their school years. It was specifically during this time that memories of own teachers and their influence became evident. In the majority of cases, participants' perceptions of their own teachers' communicative behaviour had contributed to their views regarding what teaching and teachers should be like – views that were extended into their presentations of their future selves. Furthermore, they recalled challenging incidents that had taken place during their own school years and connected them to supportive or 'bad' own teachers, thus extending the own teachers' influence on their emergent (later) professional identities.

Perceptions of future selves were presented through narratives of participants emulating what they perceived as the 'ideal' teacher. The majority of participants assigned similar

characteristics to their ideal teachers and described the ideal teacher mainly as a moral and balanced persona. They shared experiences with own teachers who they considered to be the embodiment of the ideal teacher. All the participants related their views of what they hoped to become to positive experiences with 'ideal own teachers'. Despite several accounts of hardships experienced during their early years of teaching, the majority of participants were looking forward to a bright future in the teaching profession and demonstrated a hopeful attitude in terms of their own futures as teachers.

6.2.3 Own teachers as primary influence on beginner teachers' professional identity

The third theme cluster contained the crux of the study. This theme cluster dealt with own teachers as a primary influence on the professional identity of beginner teachers and was divided into two categories, namely experiences with own teachers and realisation of own teachers. In the first category I described negative and positive experiences involving participants' own teachers. These experiences highlighted the ways in which positive or negative experiences during participants' entire school and tertiary careers had influenced their views of teaching and what teaching should be like, and related to their emerging as professional beginner teachers. It was quite evident that the participants had been influenced to such an extent by their own experiences that they were determined to avoid becoming like a specific (negative) teacher, or would strive to emulate another with whom they had had positive experiences. The tremendous effect of teachers in practice also became clear in this section. In some cases, negative or positive experiences involving own teachers had influenced the entire process of making a career choice and ultimately the professional identities currently displayed.

The focus of the second category was participants' perceptions of the communicative behaviour displayed by own teachers. Specific aspects, such as dress code, the ability to maintain a balance between humour and discipline, approachability, a positive attitude and a positive approach to teaching as a career were noted as having had a significant influence (either positive or negative) on the participants. It was apparent that perceptions of own teachers in the classroom included both verbal behaviour and non-verbal traits.

Different levels of awareness of own teachers came to light in this section, and different reactions were demonstrated by participants with regard to their awareness of the influence of own teachers on their professional identities. Participants were divided into those who were acutely aware of the influences of own teachers and were willing to emulate their behaviour,

those who were aware of their own teachers' influences but showed no desire to extend those influences into their own teaching practice, and those who were gradually becoming aware of the influences of own teachers through a process of reflection. The significance of the role of own teachers was evident throughout the findings presented and two unique cases of profound influence were also highlighted in this section.

6.2.4 A palimpsest of novel findings

Findings from my study either resonated with the findings discussed in existing literature, or were categorised as silences in the study or in the literature. Findings contributing to the body of knowledge relating to the professional identity of beginner teachers included methodological contributions, as well as theoretical findings, namely own teachers substituted by fictional 'teachers', own teachers as beacons of hope and resilience, and own teachers guiding levels of cautiousness of an emerging professional identity.

The methodological contribution of this study pertains to the interrelatedness with which particular methodological constructs were applied. Through a purposeful choice of relevant paradigms and research designs, their strengths and their application to this study, I was able to conduct a research study that yielded findings that could be interpreted extensively and are relevant to a wider audience. This method further allowed me to arrive at more findings than might have come to light if I had employed only one specific research design. Additionally, the extended metaphorical use of the palimpsest construct contributed to create a novel and unique research methodology and provided a fresh lens with which the role of the researcher can be approached.

Several new findings pertained to the persona of the beginner teacher. Findings based on my study showed how participants connected with fictional characters from various types of media and substitute those characters as role models in the place of 'real' own teachers or teacher-like figures. This sample of participants exuded hope and resilience, despite having been influenced to some extent by the previous Apartheid regime. They were positive about their future careers as teachers and about the teaching profession in general, and strongly condemned colleagues who displayed negative attitudes towards the profession. They embraced and celebrated diversity and were sensitive with regard to differences between themselves, their learners and colleagues.

Regarding the influence of own teachers on the professional identities of beginner teachers, more findings came to light. In many cases parents were absent from the participants' daily lives as they had to accept jobs far from their children's schools in order to earn enough money to pay for the 'best education'. In such cases own teachers fulfilled the role of 'substitute parents' and provided emotional and academic support. In the majority of cases, positive own teachers served as beacons of hope, strength and resilience. Participants were instinctively drawn to own teachers who were approachable and displayed a positive attitude towards the teaching profession. Furthermore, participants constructed their emerging professional identities around what they perceived as the qualities of the 'ideal' teacher. All these qualities stemmed from memories of positive experiences with own teachers. Participants strongly condemned what they perceived as characteristics of 'bad' teachers and made it very clear that they did not want to be like them.

All the participants were aware of the vulnerable state of their professional identities. In the case of participants who were more aware of the process of the development of a professional identity, the process seemed to progress at a faster pace. Finally, participants showed different levels of awareness of the influence of own teachers on their professional identities. While some welcomed those influences, others specifically did not want to be influenced by own teachers and were set on "becoming my own teacher". Own teachers influenced participants physically and psychologically on various levels.

6.3 Limitations of the study

This study was qualitative in essence and description and it is thus necessary to point out that its findings cannot be generalised. The findings have to be considered against the specific contexts in which this study was undertaken. This study explored how beginner teacher identities in South Africa were influenced by 'own teachers'. The experiences and behaviours of the research participants were distinctly individualised. Research participants represented different racial and gendered groups and came from different socio-economic and educational backgrounds. These differing contexts limit the generalisations of the findings.

6.4 Significance of the study

This study is significant as it focused on obtaining a better understanding of the phenomenon of the professional identity of beginner teachers. Professional teacher identity research has been

criticised by authors who posed that it is too limited and “may fail to capitalize on all the insights this line of inquiry may afford for both new and established teacher-professionals”, (Hamman *et al.*, 2010). Rogers and Scott (2008) highlighted the fact that researchers fail to consider psychological models of identity development, which leaves the matter of professional identity unexamined. This study proved to be of significance in this regard as it explored beginner teachers’ professional identities on various levels. This study strengthened the body of knowledge on beginner teacher professional identity, in that the findings contributed particularly to psychological processes during the early years of professional identity formation.

Additionally, the educational significance of this study to South African education students and staff focuses on virtually all aspects of the professional lives of beginner teachers who enter the profession. Furthermore, this study proved to be of significance in terms of certain socio-political matters influencing the professional lives of beginner teachers. The professional identity of *beginner teachers* is a specialised tenet of professional teacher identity in the sense that it is during this period, when the professional identity emerges, that the background for the rest of the beginner teacher’s career is set. In most cases the successful construction of a professional teacher identity during the early years of teaching may lead to satisfaction, success and motivation as part of the ‘growing’ teacher’s career. Consequently, it may be viewed as a crucial time for beginner teachers to make decisions about whether or not to remain in the profession.

If teachers do not experience job satisfaction during this phase, it may be a good time for them to leave the profession as they are still young enough to pursue other careers and membership of a pension fund and the availability of other job opportunities may not be of great concern. This is important in terms of teacher attrition and retention (Marais, 2010). The findings of this study show that when beginner teachers are not satisfied during their early years of teaching and there is a lack of space for their professional identities to grow, they become stifled in their teaching contexts, and one way of ‘freeing’ their professional selves is to leave the profession, or at the least a specific school. Additional research undertaken during this study revealed that very few beginner teachers hold teaching posts at rural schools and prefer teaching at urban schools. The establishment of a stronger self-concept and a professional identity may contribute to making beginner teachers feel more capable of teaching at rural schools, where conditions seem to be harsher.

Findings of this study is of significance to educational policymakers, school management teams and other role players in education in terms of the current contexts in schools. The vast discrepancies that exist between urban, rural, private and public schools came strongly to the fore in this study and it was evident that unfavourable learning contexts have had many negative effects on the participants as young learners. Some of them even taught in schools that were far below standard and in most cases decided to transfer to other schools.

Through an analysis of beginner teachers' experiences with own teachers, the focus extends to the attitudes of *current teachers* in educational practice. Teachers' communicative behaviour in the classroom as well as their attitudes towards the profession proved to be a salient aspect of this study. The way teachers conduct themselves in the classroom and the perceptions this creates in the minds of young learners has a tremendous effect on several educational aspects, such as motivation, learners' own self-concepts, overall learning experiences and, in some cases, their career choices (Sithole, 2004; Grant, 2005; Matoti, 2008). The attitudes displayed by teachers in the classroom have a shaping effect on all learners (Wolhuter *et al.*, 2012). The fact that the majority of participants perceived their own teachers' attitudes towards the profession as negative is noteworthy and mirrors the current state of the South African educational system as seen through the eyes of teachers currently in the profession. These perceptions could be further investigated and the findings that emerge may influence educational policies.

In contrast, significance in this study is established through the hopeful and positive attitudes of beginner teachers in the profession amidst turbulent teaching environments. Beginner teachers' optimistic attitudes despite challenges faced in practice, sets an example for prospective education students, student teachers and colleagues. These attitudes are also conveyed through their teaching practice in their classrooms and may influence learners.

6.5 Revisiting research assumptions

I realise that certain assumptions made during the early phases of this study need to be reconsidered, which is what I will do in the following section.

Assumption 1

Beginner teachers face many challenges when starting their teaching careers, which leaves their professional identities in a state of vulnerability and open to influences (Varah et al., 1984; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Le Maistre & Pare, 2010)

Findings in this study confirmed this assumption. Participants in my study revealed several challenges that they faced when they entered the teaching profession, and given our social-political background, the challenges faced by beginner teachers in South Africa are unique. Although the problems experienced by the participants were similar to those described in the literature, the most significant challenges related to the fact that the South African school system was in a transitional phase following the demise of the Apartheid regime. Ripple effects of the previous school system and the transformation to a new democratic system are still present in the teaching environments of beginner teachers. Challenges with which they are faced include large classes, overcrowded classrooms, constant changes in the curriculum and managerial dissonance as a result of transformative processes. With regard to the abovementioned assumption, participants' professional identities are indeed in a vulnerable state and open to a myriad of influences. Own teachers and memories of own teachers unfolded as one significant influence.

Assumption 2:

Beginner teachers draw on memories of past experiences of their own school years and examples of own teachers to navigate their professional identities in their new professional environments (Vuorikoski, 2001; Rogers, 2002; Britzman, 2003; Rogers & Fuller; 2007, Ticknor, 2010).

My study led to similar findings that support this assumption. Participants in this study did draw on memories of previous school experiences and examples of own teachers as a tool for navigating their own developing professional identities. However, the findings of my study added that participants considered these past examples carefully. They disapproved of past own teachers who had demonstrated a negative attitude towards the teaching profession and made a determined attempt not to emulate their negative behaviour. Participants in this study filtered their memories of past teachers and adopted only those strategies that were perceived as bringing them closer to best classroom practices.

Assumption 3:

Memories of own teachers' communicative behaviour in the classroom has a major influence in the way beginner teachers perceive teachers positively or negatively, and influence their own classroom behaviour and professional identities as beginner teachers. (McCroskey, 2001, McCroskey et al., 2004; Danielewicz, 2001, Utito, 2011, 2012)

Findings in my study concurred with this assumption. Memories of experiences with own teachers played a significant role in the construction of beginner teachers' professional identities. Furthermore, participants illustrated that they were aware of own teachers in a holistic way. They were conscious of the way own teachers responded on various levels as well as non-verbal communicative aspects such as dress code and the way own teachers treated other learners. Findings of this study showed that participants construct their own classroom behavior according to their lived experiences of own teachers during their schooling years. Additionally, these perceptions contributed to participants' views of the 'ideal teacher', what they hope to become and what they are afraid of becoming.

6.6 Recommendations

6.6.1 Recommendations for future research

In the next section I propose four suggestions for future research and provide a brief background of the area in which such research should be conducted, followed by suggested research questions.

First, during the data-collection phase of this study, I contacted various schools in search of suitable participants for this study. I was unable to locate beginner teachers at any of township schools that I contacted in the Gauteng area. What surprised me was the reaction of the principals of those schools who seemed to be astonished that I hoped to find beginner teachers at townships schools and informed me that their staffs consisted of people above the age of 40. I was intrigued by the fact that although a number of learners who had completed their school careers at township schools and had chosen teaching as a profession seemed to be reluctant to return to their roots and teach at their own or similar schools. The obvious reason seemed to be that urban schools are perceived to offer more or better opportunities, but that assumption was refuted by the participants' narratives about the many hardships suffered in urban schools. This led me to the following research question:

- Why do beginner teachers prefer teaching at urban schools as opposed to township schools?

A second possible avenue to pursue for future research pertains to the socio-historical backgrounds of beginner teachers. The focus of this study was on the influence of own teachers on the professional identities of beginner teachers, and their social and historical backgrounds merely provided the context for this study. However, it was evident from the findings that beginner teachers end up in the teaching profession for a variety of reasons. Some of them end up in teaching ‘by accident’. It might be significant to determine why individuals become teachers and, more importantly, how their professional identities are influenced by their reasons for choosing this profession. Two possible research questions stem from this insight:

- Why do people choose teaching as a career?
- How do ‘stumbling into teaching’ and ‘choosing teaching as a career’ influence the professional identities of beginner teachers?

Third, further research could also examine the possible selves of beginner teachers. As stated before, the focus of this study was on the influential interplay between beginner and own teachers, however, future research may be extended to include other factors that influence the professional identities of beginner teachers. In this study I assumed that own teachers play a significant role in the development of the professional identity of beginner teachers, but further research is still necessary to investigate all the factors that influence beginner teachers’ professional identities. The answer to the following research question may yield valuable insights into the field of beginner teacher professional identity:

- Which factors influence the professional identity of beginner teachers?

Fourth, the communicative behaviour of own teachers and the influence it has on beginner teachers was central to this study. Research into the initial communicative behaviour of beginner teachers has not been exhausted. Furthermore, establishing whether there is a link between beginner teachers’ initial communicative behaviour, the way in which it develops during the early years of practice and how it affects their professional identities may also prove to be of value. Possible research questions in this area are:

- What is the nature of communicative behaviour displayed by beginner teachers during their early years of practice?
- How does the communicative behaviour displayed by beginner teachers evolve during the early years of practice?

- What are the effects of beginner teachers' communicative behaviour on their professional identity?

6.6.2 Recommendations for practice and future training and development

In the next section I make recommendations, based on the findings of this study, regarding an encompassing teacher preparation programme.

The majority of teacher preparation programmes offered at universities in South Africa focus on preparation strategies presented in theoretical modules and the exposure of student teachers to teaching practice at various schools. Bearing this in mind, I recommend the following:

During the practical stage of teacher preparation programmes different types of schools, such as urban, private, township and farm schools should be included. In some cases, the rationale for universities placing students mainly in 'good' (mostly urban) schools is to expose students to best educational practices. This may be a valid reason, but exposing students to a greater variety of schools may develop their emerging professional identities by strengthening their self-concepts when being confronted with a variety of teaching contexts. This may also address the question of why student teachers prefer to start their teaching careers at urban schools.

This study indicated the significance of reflection on various levels. Teacher preparation programmes may be designed to include reflection on all the levels suggested by this study. Reflection on prior experiences, specifically with own teachers and other influential role players, may propel education students into an awareness of reasons for engaging in specific actions and conduct in the classroom. An understanding of the reasons for their classroom behaviour may help them to anticipate challenges and prepare themselves for dealing with their insecurities prior to teaching.

Although some educator programmes include modules that deal with the communicative behaviour of student teachers, it may be valuable to integrate the rationale for engaging verbally and non-verbally in specific ways. Once again, if student teachers can be helped to explore and understand their own communicative behaviour to a greater extent, it may prove valuable as part of their preparation.

6.7 Conclusion

In this study, I attempted to shed some light on one tiny aspect of the vast concept of beginner teacher professional identity by examining the influence of own teachers. It turned out to be more complex than I had anticipated and opened a vast store of experiences lived by all the participants and reaching far into different tenets of 'life as we know it'. The professional identity of beginner teachers, the myriad of influences thereon and the specific influence of own teachers on their professional identity were among the concepts thoroughly explored in this study. Their actions, behaviour and reactions to specific situations were accounted for to some extent by their unique inborn and genetic traits. It was not the focus of the study to explore the extent of 'nature' and pre-determinate inherent physical traits to account for their emerging professional identities, although it was presented in a way that emphasised the fact that those traits cannot be ignored as a powerful influence on beginner teachers' professional identities.

Furthermore, the socio-political climate in South Africa during the years when the participants attended schools and studied at different tertiary institutions played a significant role in their professional identity. The fact they are classified as the *Born free* generation made them a unique group of beginner teachers, hovering in the transitional space of a country on the road to complete democracy, with many accompanying challenges in the field of education. Despite many hardships faced on both a personal level and as a result of the socio-political situation, participants seemed to feel overwhelmingly 'hopeful' about their future selves in the teaching profession. In situations where their core selves became too stifled, they reverted to coping mechanisms and tried to find suitable environments in which their professional identities could grow and thrive. Their past, present and future selves came to the fore in iterative and complex ways.

The influence of own teachers on the participants' professional identities featured strongly in all their narratives. Once they had explored it, they realised the effect that the own teachers' influences had had on them and how they had been 'watching' their own future careers playing out before them during the course of their entire school careers. Own teachers are remembered. Own teachers do influence the professional identity of beginner teachers to an extent that is difficult to fathom.

On a personal level this study left me with more questions than answers. The effect of this study on my own professional identity and growth is summarised in the last though moment:

Thought moment 6.1

Socrates was convicted of “corrupting the youth” by motivating his students to continue their search for truth and knowledge. Socrates admitted that he was uninformed, and yet he became one of the wisest men through this self-knowledge. Socrates urged his students to develop their self-knowledge and ask demanding questions.

The effect of Socrates’ point of view was punishment by death. However, his legacy was carried on by his student, Plato. The close relationship between Socrates and Plato is marked by an ongoing debate about Socrates’ original teachings and Plato’s own ideas. Plato wrote ample dialogues with Socrates as the key character. We are not sure what was said or written by whom. My study resonates with the story of Socrates and Plato. Eventually, when beginner teachers enter the profession, we are not sure who is teaching: the beginner teacher or the beginner teacher through the voices of all past own teachers.

At the end of this study, it is safe to say that the beginner teacher’s voice consists of more than one voice, more than his or her *own* voice. We can now say that when beginner teachers utter their first words in their first classrooms, it is actually a harmonious symphony of all past voices they have ever heard.

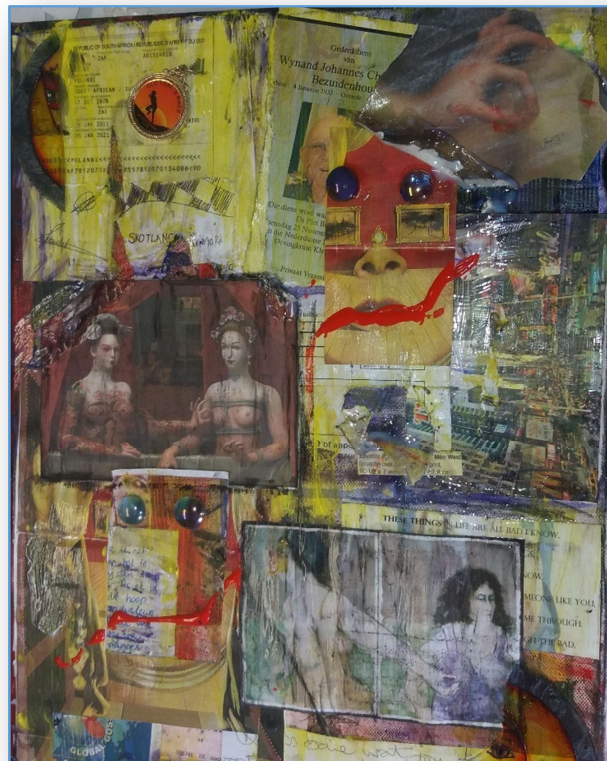
If I use a metaphysical substance to display my thoughts, I might be anywhere at one time, influencing a number of different things. There’s a chance that I’m not here at all, that all the parts of me, running along all the choices I did and didn’t make, for a moment brush against each other ... Perhaps for a while these two selves have become confused. I have not gone forward or back in time, but across in time, to something I might have been, playing itself out. (J. Winterson, in Oranges are not the only fruit)

Research diary, 2016

~THE FINAL PALIMPSEST~

(Own palimpsest V, 2016)

The first inscription of my own palimpsest was a sketch of a nude female torso, signifying my feeling of 'nakedness' when starting this thesis. I have added layer upon layer of experiences with important role players throughout my professional journey, my participants in my study and other relevant aspects pertaining to my journey. The first layer is still visible through other layers if one looks closely. I have now added the final layer. The final layer overshadows the palimpsest by figures of two females, one touching the nipple of the other in a tender way. This suggests the gentle ways in which certain individuals touch our professional lives; in a way that one cannot ever be 'untouched' and can never be forgotten.



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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Main generative question:

How did/do your own significant teachers(s) influence your process of becoming a teacher?

Open-ended questions:

- These questions served as a guideline to initiate the discussion.
- How do you understand the concept “teacher identity”? How do you understand the concept “professional identity”?
- How often do you think about your identity as a teacher? Has your personal identity changed since you have become a teacher? If so, in what ways?
- Describe the main challenges of being a beginner teacher. How did/do you cope with these challenges?
- To what extent do you draw on your teacher training to cope with the challenges of being a beginner teacher?
- Describe the “good” teacher that first comes to mind when you think about influential teachers of your own.
- Describe the “not-so-good” teacher that first comes to mind when you think about influential teachers of your own.
- Describe the general characteristics of your own significant teachers that you think may have made an impact on your own teaching style.
- Think about cases where you had to make instantaneous decisions or take immediate action. How did you decide what to do? Who/What do you think influence those decisions?
- To what extent did your pedagogical training influence decision-making?
- If you had to compare your own current classroom practice to that of your most significant “good” and “not-so-good” teachers, what would you say are the similarities? What are the differences?
- To what extent do you consciously think about your own teacher(s) when faced with any unfamiliar teaching situation?

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT LETTERS



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

Dear

Date.....

LETTER OF CONSENT

As part of my doctoral studies I am currently preparing to engage in research related to the role of own teachers in the professional of beginner language teachers.

Title

Bayakhuluma Kaningi? The influence of own teachers on the professional identity of beginner teachers.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which the influence of own significant teachers contribute to filling the space between pedagogic training and immediate action as well as the complete professional identity of beginner teachers/

Ethical principles

As researcher, I need to apply for ethical clearance from the university before engaging in any form of data collection. Such clearance will only be granted if all participants have given their informed consent. There is an outline below of which internationally accepted ethical principles are applicable when working with human participants.

Autonomy and voluntary participation:

You have the right to decide to participate. You will not be co-erced. This means that the researcher will not exert inappropriate pressure or undue influence to recruit or retain participants. You will have all the information in order to make an informed choice. You will be allowed to ask any questions prior to making a decision to participate/not. You also have the right to withdraw at any stage of the research process without any negative consequence.

Full disclosure:

You will be provided with sufficient information about proposed activities, the expected benefits, or material risks i.e. anything that might influence your decision to participation or not. You will also be consulted during the research process and will be debriefed after the conclusion of the research process.

Confidentiality

Although this study does not plan to delve into sensitive or personal issues, you have a right to privacy and your anonymity will be protected meaning that no identifiable information will be reported either in writing or orally. Codes and pseudonyms will be used to hide your identity. You also have a choice of whether your responses and behaviour be known to more than the researcher.

Y. Woest, yolandj.woest@up.ac.za, Mobile: 071 203 5381, PhD Consent forms – Participants, 2014-2015

Safety in participation

You will not be at physical or psychological risk or harm of any kind. This means that you will not be placed in circumstances which may cause undue stress, embarrassment, or loss of self-esteem.

Trust

I shall report findings in a complete and honest way without any misrepresentation using formal yet comprehensible English. I will not fabricate data or alter findings to suit interest groups. I shall give credit and acknowledgements appropriately and disseminate the practical implications of our research in a comprehensible way. As a participant, you will not be party to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.

Estimated time frame

Semi-structured interviews should start in January 2013 and continue sporadically until April 2013. Each participant teacher will be interviewed no more than four (4) times. You will be consulted and a convenient time of day and week will be negotiated with you for when interviews can take place.

Your co-operation would be highly valued. I look forward to your positive response which would start a mutually beneficial involvement.

Yolandi Woest
Lecturer
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071 203 5381
012 420 5532 (W)

Professor Saloshna Vandeyar
Supervisor
Saloshna.vandeyar@up.ac.za
012 420 2003 (W)



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA
Faculty of Education

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY PERTAINING TO BEGINNER TEACHER IDENTITY

This is to state that I, _____ a beginner language teacher have been informed and fully understand the nature and purpose of the research project. I thus agree to participate in the study being conducted by Yolandi Woest, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria.

A. PURPOSE

I understand that this is not an experimental study and have been informed that the purpose of this study is to explore the ways in which the influences of own significant teachers contribute to filling the space between pedagogic training and immediate actions of beginner teachers.

B. PROCEDURES

I will be asked to conduct two (2) semi-structured conversational interviews with the researcher. During the first interview the research process and relevant activities will be explained. During these interviews I will share my experiences with significant own teachers during my schooling career. Interviews will be held at a time and venue convenient to my schedule. These discussions will be tape recorded. I will be kept informed of the research process at all times. I will also be consulted to check data and details provided by myself to ensure a true reflection of my experiences.

C. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

- I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at anytime without negative consequences or penalty.
- I may do so by informing the researcher verbally, in writing or by telephone. She has provided me with her contact numbers for this purpose.
- I am at liberty to contact the researcher at any time if I have any questions or concerns about the study.
- I understand that my participation in this study is CONFIDENTIAL.
- I understand that the findings of this study will be disseminated within an academic context.

I have carefully studied the above and understand this agreement. I thus freely consent and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Name: (Please print): _____

Signature: _____

Contact number(s): _____

E-mail: _____

School: _____

Y. Woest, yolandi.woest@up.ac.za, Mobile: 071 203 5381, PhD Consent forms – Participants, 2014-2015

Although I have signed, I would still like to know or suggest:

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this the research or have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the researcher. If you have any complaint concerning the manner in which this research project is conducted please speak to the researcher or if an independent person is preferred, consult with the chairperson of the Ethics Committee (Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria).

APPENDIX C: LIST OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Transcript of interview with Cindy

Transcript of interview with Elsa

Transcript of interview with Jantjies

Transcript of interview with Msizwe

Transcript of interview with Pieter

Transcript of interview with Rajesh

Transcript of interview with Steven

Transcript of interview with Tarryn

Transcript of interview with Thabiseng

Transcript of interview with Vanjaria

APPENDIX D: EXTRACT FROM RESEARCHER'S DIARY

February 2013

I have just read *Carien's dissertation and I cannot describe how good she seems to work with her participants. I am so worried about my own: where will they come from, how will I find them, how will they be and most of all: HOW will I get them to be willing to talk to me?? I remember my years as beginner teacher SO well, besides the fact that I was so confused and struggling to find my feet. I truly would not have the time to be interviewed by someone. Even in my last year as a teacher I never wanted to participate in any research regarding teachers. I have always figured that 'university people' and anyone interested in educational research should rather get into a classroom to see what it's really like. Maybe this is Karma?? Getting back at me for my attitude? ☺ Ai, I hope not.

* Carien Lubbe-De Beer, PhD Dissertation, 2006

August 2013

Today I stumbled upon this quote as if it were handed to me from some higher source who knew I needed to have my questions validated. I don't mind not having the answers, but I do mind you not acknowledging my questions. Got it between books, many books, where I feel safe. Mainly because I feel protected by clever people and (more so) people with questions. People who also have unanswered questions, for that matter.

"Bigger questions, questions with more than one answer, questions without an answer are the hardest to cope with in silence. Once asked they do not evaporate and leave the mind to its serener musings. Once asked they gain dimension and texture, trip you on the stairs; wake you at night-time. A black hole sucks up its surroundings and even light never escapes. Better then to ask no questions? Better then to be a contented pig than an unhappy Socrates? Since factory farming is tougher on pigs than it is on philosophers I'll take a chance."

(Jeanette Winterson, "Written on the body")

Written December 2013, when Madiba died

[That's the one thing about a teacher's voice, they get excited about stuff other people don't see. Your voice likes the same stuff you like, not stupid stuff though, the sort of things that feels like magic and like it's gripping you in the gut. Voice and I have been excited for long about the upcoming and inevitable death...suddenly it strikes me as the purest form of irony]

Iconfusion I

*blood relatives are usually of the same colour
it's genetically determined
or pre-determined
so i'm not of your blood*

*

Iconfusion II

*Father of the nation they say
But i cannot be your child
I am white
Who's your daddy anyway?*

State funeral

*the mourners
the oppressed
the suppressed
the dormant
the hidden
the concealed
the indignant
the once-angry
the now-oh-so-forgiving
the poor
the poor deaf*

APPENDIX E: LIST OF APPENDICES STORED ON CD-ROM AS AUDIT TRAIL

List of appendices

Audio recordings of interviews (Final)
Transcriptions of interviews (Final)
Audio recordings of interviews (Pilot study)
Transcriptions of interviews (Pilot study)
Interview protocol (Pilot study)
Participants in pilot study
Consent letters signed by participants (Final and pilot studies)
Complete researcher's diary
Confidentiality form signed by external transcriber
List of rural and township schools contacted