

**Teacher Identity Construction of a Black Male Beginner Teacher in the  
Intermediate Phase**

**by**

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree**

**MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS**

**in**

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**in the Faculty of Education**

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**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

**Supervisor: Dr Yolandi Woest**

**NOVEMBER 2023**

## Declaration

I declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree *Magister Educationis* at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.



Sibusiso Michael Moripe

29 November 2023

## **Ethics Statement**

The author whose name appears on the title page of this dissertation has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that he/she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's Code of Ethics for researchers and the Policy Guidelines for responsible research.

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- Data storage requirements.

## Dedication

I dedicate this research to myself, for believing in myself. To my father, James Sibeko, my mother, Jane Tsotetsi, my sister, Tshepiso, and my nephew Amogelang Tsotetsi. To my one and only love of my life Kgomotso Senoamadi.

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## Abstract

In this study, I explored my teacher identity construction as a Black male beginner teacher who was trained in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase but taught and still teach in the Intermediate Phase. This study adopted autoethnography as the research design, which allowed me to explore and make meaning of deeply personal experiences within a specific culture in a scholarly manner. This study was driven by two main questions, namely “How did I construct my identity as a Black male beginner teacher in the Intermediate Phase (IP)?” and “Why did I construct my identity as a Black male beginner teacher in the IP in this way?” Being a qualified male beginner FET teacher in the IP where there are fewer male than female teachers have made me question my teacher identity.

From an epistemological point of view, this study was underpinned by the interpretivist paradigm. Theoretically, I designed a conceptual framework that included relevant concepts from possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and social role theory (Eagly, 1987). Methodologically, a qualitative research paradigm was chosen for this study, which employed autoethnography as the research design. I was the sole participant in this study and generated my data by conducting self-interviews, doing memory work, and from external data such as photographs and a researcher’s journal. Co-constructors of knowledge were involved in the study to corroborate my memories through the process of verisimilitude as a quality measure. To analyse my data, I followed the process of thematic data analysis where the main theme and sub-themes were identified.

The findings included past experiences influencing my beginner teacher identity, intrinsic perception of and experiences contributing to my beginner teacher



identity, experiences of my beginner teacher identity in a state of transition and experiencing my emergent teacher identity as a fluid state. The study recommends that professional development should be given to beginner teachers who have not been trained for the phase in which they are teaching.

The benefit of this study will allow other people to link their personal stories. The study could be used in a similar situation, for example where qualified male beginner teachers are qualified for the FET Phase but are teaching in the IP, or beginner teachers who are qualified for the IP. The study can be used for future research in the field of teacher identity and for continuous professional development purposes.

**Key Terms:** Autoethnography, beginner teacher, Black male teacher, Intermediate Phase, teacher identity construction.

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## List of Abbreviations

| <b>Abbreviation</b> | <b>Definition</b>                    |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| BEd                 | Bachelor of Education                |
| BEd Hons            | Bachelor of Education Honours        |
| EMS                 | Economic Management and Sciences     |
| FETP                | Further Education and Training Phase |
| FP                  | Foundation Phase                     |
| GET                 | General Education and Training       |
| ICT                 | Information Communication Technology |
| IP                  | Intermediate Phase                   |
| MEd                 | Master of Education                  |
| NST                 | Natural Sciences and Technology      |
| SACE                | South African Council of Educators   |
| SP                  | Senior Phase                         |

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## Chapter 1: Overview of the Study

### 1.1 Introduction

I was born in the year 1991. I am a Black male and I was raised in a rural area. I am also a son, brother, uncle, fiancé, and primary school teacher. In terms of my education, I have a Bachelor of Education (BEd) in Further Education and Training (FET) (General) and a BEd Honours in Teacher Education and Professional Development. I am currently teaching in the Intermediate Phase (IP). This study focused on my teacher identity construction as a Black male FET teacher who was trained to teach in the IP. This study adopted autoethnography as the research methodology through which I wanted to understand my identity construction as a Black male FET teacher who was trained to teach in the IP phase from a professional, conceptual, and scholarly perspective.

I started my school educational journey in a rural area in 1997 and completed it 2010. The primary school that I attended was not well-resourced; it did not have textbooks or information and communication technology tools. It was also understaffed. There was no electricity available in the classrooms, the ceiling was dilapidated, and the windows were broken. My secondary school was not that different to my primary school. We had a laboratory and library which were not functioning. The school building was old with broken windows, rusty roof, no doors at the classrooms.

After completing my coursework at the university, we had to choose two schools for the duration of our teaching practice. One of the schools that I chose was the secondary school where I had been enrolled for my matriculation. My particular qualification prepared me to teach mathematics at Grade 10 to 12 level, where the

ages of the learners ranged from 16 to 18 years.<sup>1</sup> After graduating with my BEd (FET) degree at a university in South Africa, I intended to find a teaching position as a secondary school mathematics teacher.

In 2017, I completed my teaching practice as part of the requirements to obtain a bachelor's degree in education. Teaching practice is where the mentor teacher scaffolds student reflection and supports the student teacher in combining the practical and theoretical aspects of the teaching profession (Loukomies et al., 2022). My teaching practice was completed under the mentorship of an experienced mathematics teacher and a university lecturer from the Faculty of Education. This was the training phase during which I gained practical experience and used my theoretical experience to become a mathematics teacher. I was well-trained and prepared to be a mathematics teacher in the FETP.

After completing my practice teaching and the requirements for the degree, I applied for several teaching vacancies, searching specifically for mathematics vacancies because the subject was my passion and my training had focused it. After failing to secure a mathematics position in the FETP, a few of my friends advised me to also apply for positions in phases other than the FETP. Some of them were also qualified FETP teachers but were teaching in other phases. I decided to extend my search to the Foundation Phase (FP), Intermediate Phase (IP), and Senior Phase (SP). It was only months later, in March 2018, that I received a response from one of

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<sup>1</sup> "The South African Department of Basic Education groups grades into two 'bands' called General Education and Training (GET), which includes Grade 0 and Grades 1 to 9, and FET, which includes Grades 10 to 12. The GET is sectioned further into 'phases': FP (Grades 0 to 3); IP (Grades 4 to 6); and SP (Grades 7 to 9)" (Woest, 2018, p.3).

the schools to which I had sent my application for a teaching post. The school wanted a teacher to teach mathematics, natural sciences and technology, and sepedi home language at a primary school in the IP. Although I was qualified to teach at the secondary school level (FETP), I decided to accept the teaching post as I was unemployed and had not been able to get a teaching post at a secondary school.

I started my teaching career in 2018 at a public primary school in the rural area of the province of Limpopo, South Africa. I vividly remember the first day I started my lesson in a Grade 4 class. The class was full of learners aged of eight to ten years. I was nervous when I started my first lesson. I did not know how to start teaching a class of 40 to 50 learners who were half the age of the learners I had taught during my teaching practice. I felt lost for a few moments until they greeted me. At that moment, I realised that I had to be a teacher and perform my job. The exciting moment was seeing the learners treating me like they would treat a parent, unlike during my teaching practice in the FETP where the learners saw me as a peer. These young learners had a lot of respect for their elders, and this brought me joy in my teaching career.

The school at which I was working had 10 teachers in total, eight women and two men, one of whom was the school principal. I remember when I was introduced to the staff members in a briefing session, one of the male teachers approached me after the briefing and said that he had been praying to have another male teacher at the school to help him with the sports and athletics activities. The female teachers were surprised to see a young man who was qualified to teach at a secondary school accept a post at a primary school. One of the female teachers advised me not to be too strict with the learners and stated that I should give them time to complete their activities because they were “slow” and were used to their teacher in the previous grade.

I started to question if I had made the right decision by taking the teaching post in the IP and whether I would be able to adjust to this phase. I was given three Grade 4 subjects (mathematics, sepedi home language, and natural sciences and technology) and one Grade 7 subject (life orientation). I have generally found since then that the male teachers at primary schools usually only teach Grades 6 and 7. For the first few weeks, the learners looked nervous or scared to be around a male teacher, especially the Grade 4 learners as it was the first time that they had been taught by a male teacher. In their previous grades, Grades R to 3, they had only been taught by female teachers.

Teacher identity includes conscious feelings that question the subconscious beliefs which lead teachers to know and recognise their personal needs (Khoza, 2020). The feelings that I experienced during the beginning of my teaching career in primary school shaped my teacher identity. I saw myself as a FETP male teacher rather than as a teacher in the IP. Macías et al. (2020) claim that “teacher identity is not something that is fixed nor is it imposed; it is rather negotiated through the experience and the meaning-making potential of that experience” (p. 2). My initial teacher identity, which I constructed before my teacher education, was not fixed, so I was able to reconstruct it in the new phase that I was teaching. I realised that identity was not fixed but an ongoing process that a teacher needed to construct all the time. When I started teaching in the phase that I was not trained for, I questioned my thoughts, behaviour, and actions in my classroom, and wondered how to understand my work as a beginner male teacher in the IP. The questions that came to my mind centred around how to act, behave, and teach as a teacher in front of learners half the age of those that I had taught during my teaching practice. From starting my teaching



career in the FET Phase during my teaching practice to teaching in the IP was a challenging and exciting moment.

In this study, my aim was to explore the process of my own teacher identity construction as a Black male teacher in a South African rural primary school teaching in a phase that I was not trained or prepared for. Because of the personal and unique nature of my experiences, autoethnography was selected as a research method where I could look at my own experience (auto), the environment (ethno) in which I was teaching, and my cultural experiences (graphy), (Ellis et al., 2010).

Through this study, I came to understand my personal and professional journey of becoming a teacher, specifically in terms of the development of my identity as an undergraduate student to a beginner teacher in the IP. I considered my own schooling, teaching, and family context and how it influenced the process of the construction of my beginner teacher identity. In this study, I unpacked how these various contexts influenced my teacher identity construction. The autoethnography was suitable for this study as the ethno in autoethnography focused on the importance of the cultural context of the school culture, family culture, and ethnic culture.

## **1.2 Background and Context**

In South Africa, the teacher training for primary and secondary school teachers is different. Teachers in the IP are trained to teach at primary school; they, therefore, need to obtain a BEd specialising in the IP, that is, Grades 4 to 6 (University of Johannesburg, 2023a). “The degree provides students with subject content knowledge, teaching competence, and a sound and nuanced understanding of the integrated nature of theory and practice in education” (University of Johannesburg, 2023a, n.p.). A secondary school teacher needs to have a degree in the Senior Phase, that is, Grades 7 to 12, or FETP, or only in the FETP, that is, Grades 10 to 12. The

FETP students are trained to have specialised competencies in at least three specialisations, one of which is for the SP and two of which are for the FETP (University of Johannesburg, 2023b). The FETP degree “[provides] students with subject content knowledge, teaching competence, and a sound and nuanced understanding of the integrated nature of theory and practice in education”, and the qualification prepares educators to focus on high school teaching (University of Johannesburg, 2023b, n.p.).

Students teachers who study the degree for the FETP are expected to have the dedication to be specialists in school subjects like accounting, science, and mathematics (Basen, 2022). The student teachers in these two phases are not trained in the same way. Teachers transitioning from the FETP to the IP need to have the skills and competencies to be able to teach in the IP. I studied a qualification that focused on secondary school teaching, which gave me the specialised skills required for secondary school teaching.

Beginner teachers face many challenges when they enter the teaching profession. They face a reality shock which is the teacher’s expectation versus the reality at the beginning of their career (Ndabankulu et al., 2022). Woest (2018) states that “the reality is that once newly qualified teachers start teaching they experience teaching ‘from the other side’ for the first time” (p. 2). My reality shock came when I was offered a teaching post as a beginner teacher in a phase that I was not qualified to teach, the IP. I was not ready to deal with young children who were less than 14 years of age. This also impacted my beginner teacher identity construction as a male teacher who had been qualified to teach in the FETP.

Teaching is considered an essentially feminine occupation rather than a masculine one. Globally, fewer men choose to teach young children than women

(Palmer et al., 2019). Male teachers are constantly aware of the attention paid by others to their gender and sexual identities. Men are seen as harmful and violent (Moosa & Bhana, 2021; O’Keeffe & Skerritt, 2021). Male teachers in schools are expected to fulfil the role of management, discipline, and physical activity rather than the role of nurturing young children (Palmer et al., 2019). In general, society does not consider male teachers to be capable of teaching young children, like their female counterparts. Therefore, teaching in the IP and FP has traditionally been regarded as “women’s work” (Mashiya, 2014). Learners in the IP are from the FP where most are taught by female teachers. During my primary school years, I was taught by one male teacher in the FP in Grade 3.

At the school where I am employed and in nearby schools, there are few male teachers. In the United States, men are also underrepresented in the teaching field (Davis et al., 2020). A research study conducted in South Africa by Davids and Waghid (2020) shows that female teachers outnumber male teachers both in primary and high schools. The number of males entering the teaching profession in primary teaching has been influenced by the perception of society that the teaching profession at primary level is for women (Cruickshank et al., 2021). According to McGrath et al. (2020), in studies conducted in South Africa and Australia, there is a shortage of male teachers in primary schools. Men do not take teaching as a first-choice career due to the stereotype that teaching is for women (Mashiya, 2014). Han et al. (2020) showed that girls were likely to become teachers and boys were less interested in being teachers. In their study, McGrath et al. (2020) claimed that male teachers in primary schools were underrepresented. Consequently, there is a shortage of male teachers in primary schools. Principals of primary schools have no choice but to hire male

teachers who are trained to teach in the FETP due to a low numbers of men choosing to study teaching in the lower school phases, such as the FP and IP.

By using autoethnography as a research design, I am hoping to close the gap in the research area of a beginner teacher's identity construction by looking at my teacher identity construction as a Black male beginner teacher who was qualified to teach secondary school but transited to primary school. The study has allowed me to share my experiences of being a qualified secondary school teacher who is teaching full-time at a primary school, thereby giving a beacon of hope to the male teachers who are qualified in secondary school but do not have knowledge of the IP.

### **1.3 Rationale and Motivation for This Study**

During the first years of my teaching career, I always wanted to understand and share my experience as a Black male FETP beginner teacher in the IP. The motivation and justification for choosing this study is divided into four categories: personal, professional, conceptual, and scholarly.

#### ***1.3.1 Personal justification***

Starting my teaching career in a phase that I was not qualified to teach has caused me a lot of stress. I was faced with so many challenges that I wanted to leave the teaching profession. It was not easy to adjust to a new environment that I had not prepared for. I chose to stay in the phase because I believed that I would be able to be a good teacher in as it in the FETP. I therefore gained an interest in finding out how my teacher identity was reshaped by the unfamiliar environment. My experience of teaching in the IP, and the pressure of adjusting to an unfamiliar environment and facing new challenges were critical moments in my beginner teacher identity. In my opinion, the learners feared being taught by a man just as I was afraid of being around

young learners. In my culture, a man does not take care of young children. This study has strengthened my beginner teacher identity as a Black male FETP teacher in the IP in terms of how I continue to conduct myself professionally in the phase.

### ***1.3.2 Professional justification***

Being a full-time Black male beginner teacher in the IP means that I should be able to continue developing my teacher identity as a Black male teacher in this phase. I had to teach, grow, and be suitable in the phase as a teacher. This study was beneficial to me as a Black male beginner teacher in my career and the new teaching phase I am currently teaching. These benefits include that I now have more knowledge about how to function effectively as a beginner male FETP teacher in the IP. This research developed my understanding of my teacher identity as a beginner male FETP teacher in the IP and strengthened my teacher identity. I am more confident in certain aspects of teaching such as learner engagement. This study permitted me to continue growing in my teaching career and personally in my life.

### ***1.3.3 Conceptual view***

The key concepts in this study are beginner teacher identity, gender identity, autoethnography, and teacher identity construction. Beginner teacher identity interests me since beginner teachers face many challenges at the start of their teaching careers. I was, and remain, interested in how the difficulties that beginner teachers face influence their beginner teacher identity (Vikaraman et al., 2017). The challenges I faced when starting my teaching career included classroom management, dealing with emotional challenges, and the struggles I encountered with my learners.

Being a male teacher in the IP brought many questions to mind about male beginner teachers. For example, do male beginner teachers face similar challenges

to those faced by female teachers when teaching the lower grades at school? Autoethnography was included in this study's research design because I understood autoethnography as a concept, and I was able to use it as the relevant approach for this study. Writing my stories was a good way to help me understand my teacher identity construction as a Black male FETP teacher in the IP.

#### **1.3.4 Scholarly view**

This research might be beneficial to male beginner teachers in the future who are facing a similar situation of teaching in a phase other than the one that they were trained for. I also embarked on this study in the hope that it might contribute to the body of knowledge in terms of the key concepts, namely gender identity, autoethnography, beginner teacher identity construction, and Black male beginner teachers in South African primary schools.

Autoethnography allows us to “look inward into our identities, thoughts, feelings, and experiences – and outward into our relationships, communities and cultures” (Yazan, 2019, p. 40). By employing an autoethnography research design, I was able to look inward (self) and outward (the culture) into my own beginner teacher identity, thoughts, feelings, and experiences through the analysis and interpretation of the data. I want to be an advocate for male teachers in primary schools. This research fills the knowledge gap about the identity construction of male beginner FETP teachers who are teaching in the IP.

#### **1.4 Focus and Purpose of the Study**

- The focus of the study was my identity construction as a qualified FETP male beginner teacher teaching in the IP.

- The purpose of the study was to understand and make sense of my experiences as a beginner male FETP teacher in the IP in the way I did.

## 1.5 Research Questions

The research questions for the study were formulated according to my experience as a male beginner teacher in the IP. The following research questions informed my study:

- How did I construct my identity as a Black male beginner teacher in the IP?
- Why did I construct my identity as a Black male beginner teacher in the IP in this way?

## 1.6 Clarification of Concepts

In this section, I explain the key concepts used to understand this study. My understanding of the significant concepts included in this study is explained below:

### 1.6.1 *Beginner teacher*

Little more than a decade ago, Robinson and Rousseau (2012) referred to beginner teachers as novice teachers, pre-service teachers, and neophytes. According to Harmsen et al. (2019), beginner teachers are defined as those who have obtained their qualifications but who have less than three years of teaching experience. On the other hand, Robinson and Rousseau (2012) define beginner teachers as new graduate teachers with less than five years of teaching experience. In this study, I agree with the earlier definitions by Robinson and Rousseau (2012) that a beginner teacher refers to a newly qualified teacher who has less than five years of experience in the teaching profession.

### **1.6.2 Beginner teacher Identity**

Teacher identity is a “dynamic phenomenon that teacher candidates start to develop while they study in teacher education programs” (Peker et al., 2020, p. 230). The identity construction of a beginner teacher starts before they begin with their teacher education (Anspal et al., 2019). Beginner teachers face an identity shift when they enter a new environment, that is, when they start their teaching career (Peker et al., 2020). I faced an identity shift when I was starting my teaching career as a male FETP teacher in the IP. In this study, beginner teacher identity refers to the identity that a teacher constructs at the start of their teaching career.

### **1.6.3 Black male teacher**

A Black male teacher is also referred to as a male teacher of colour (Woodson & Bristol, 2020). Woodson and Bristol (2020) add that “a large body of scholarship on male teachers of colour has focused on Black male teachers” (p. 282). Carey (2020) refers to a Black or non-White male teacher as a “male of colour”. According to Stevenson (2010), the description of a person as Black is related to a human group that has dark-coloured skin, especially those of African ancestry. Gender provides a cultural meaning of male and female and of highly varying cultural enactments of masculinity and femininity (Fausto-Sterling, 2019). The concept of gender roles refers to individual personal characteristics (Fausto-Sterling, 2019). In this study, I refer to a male human being who has dark-coloured skin, was born in Africa, and is qualified as a teacher as a Black male teacher.

### **1.6.4 Construction**

Construction is a method or process by which something is built or made (Stevenson, 2010). In this study, the word construction is used to conceptualise the



process in which a teacher builds or constructs their teacher identity. The construction of teacher identity is when teachers are engaged in continuous learning and their teacher identity undergoes constant change (Yuan & Lee, 2015). My Black male beginner teacher identity construction was already in progress before I entered the teacher education programme, and it is an ongoing process that is influenced by internal and external factors (Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019). This study focused on the construction of my beginner teacher identity as a teacher who was teaching in the IP.

#### **1.6.4 Intermediate Phase**

As discussed in the background and context section, in South Africa, the schooling education system is divided into two bands. The first is the GET band and the second is the FET band (Reddy, 2021). The GET band caters to the FP, which is Grades R, 1, 2, and 3, IP which is Grades 4, 5, and 6, and SP which is Grades 7, 8, and 9. The FET band, also called the FET Phase, is Grades 10, 11, and 12. This study focuses on the IP, that is, Grades 4 to 6.

#### **1.6.5 Rural school**

Rural schools are schools that are situated in rural areas. Du Plessis and Mestry (2019) state that “rural areas are generally remote and relatively underdeveloped” (p. 1). They are found in the countryside, mountains, and forests (Dube, 2020). Rural schools lack basic resources such as sanitation, water, electricity, roads, transport, and information and communication technology (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019). According to Dube (2020), “rural people lack access to socio-economic amenities, such as quality education, good health services, transport, marketing facilities, and even electricity” (p. 137). The rural school referred in this study is situated in an underdeveloped area in the countryside that does not have facilities such as

health services and the school does not have resources such as information communication and technology.

## 1.7 Overview of Research Methodology

This study was guided by the interpretivist paradigm which “considers humans as different from physical phenomena as they create further depth in meanings with the assumption that human beings cannot be explored in a similar way to physical phenomena” (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020, p. 41). The paradigm was suitable for the study because I wanted to understand my own experiences in it. The paradigm was aligned with the qualitative methodological research approach that was used in this study. The paradigm allowed me to develop a deep understanding of how I constructed my teacher identity as a Black male beginner teacher in the IP. The methodology paradigm influenced the research design I chose and the ways in which I collected and generated my data.

I employed autoethnography as my research methodology. In conducting this autoethnography research study, I focused on myself as the main and only participant. I used self-reflective methods in which I recalled and documented my lived experiences during the previous four years as a Black male beginner teacher in the IP and my schooling years in rural schools. I also used memory work to create artefacts such as pictures. I kept a research journal to write about my lived experiences as a beginner teacher.

To interpret and analyse the data, I used thematic analysis. In thematic analysis, a researcher needs to identify themes in the data collected (Lochmiller, 2021). I followed the steps of thematic analysis listed by Herzog et al. (2019) to find the themes as well as the sub-themes. The steps of thematic analysis are explained in more detail in Chapter 3. I identified the themes and sub-themes in order to respond

in a scholarly manner to my research questions. The themes and sub-themes are stated and explained broadly in Chapter 5.

## **1.8 Overview of Conceptual Framework**

This autoethnography study was theoretically grounded in a combination of two theories. The first was the theory of the possible selves by Markus and Nurius (1986), which was used to understand the ideal self. The second theory was social role theory by Eagly (1987), which was used to understand the role of gender in my teacher identity construction. I created a single framework to help with the analysis and interpretation to respond to the research question.

Possible selves theory discusses the ideal self from past to future (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Possible selves theory is significant in understanding the meaning of the construction of my beginner teacher identity. It allowed me to understand teacher identity construction through autoethnography. Possible selves theory is important in understanding my beginner teacher identity construction since possible selves theory is aligned to understand identity.

Social role theory argues that gender stereotypes develop from the gender classification of labour that characterises a society (Eagly, 1987). It was suitable for the process of understanding the complexity of my gender role in this study. The conceptual framework of this study is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

## **1.9 Quality Measures**

In qualitative research, it is important to make sure that the results are meaningful (Nowell et al., 2017). Quality measures in “an autoethnography study are based on the subjective view of the researcher” (Ellis et al., 2011, p.273). When using autoethnography as a research methodology, it is good to include the credibility and

relatability of the study (Claassen, 2020). Other quality measures used in this study were verisimilitude, trustworthiness, authenticity, and transferability. My co-constructors provided support for the concept of verisimilitude by writing letters to provide evidence that the experiences I discussed were true. The details of the quality measures are explained in detail in Chapter 3.

### **1.10 Ethical Considerations**

Any researcher who is conducting research is faced with ethical dilemmas. I had to follow ethical procedures before starting to collect data and proceed with the study. I first had to defend my research topic. Thereafter, the study was approved by the committee of the Faculty of Education. I then applied for an ethical clearance certificate at the university which was approved before I started to collect my data for the research study. An invitation was sent to my co-constructors explaining to them that they had been selected to be co-constructors in the study and asking them to sign a consent form to confirm that they knew what the study was about and that they could withdraw from it at any time. My former classmate and friend decided to be kept anonymous in the study. I used a pseudonym instead of his real name. Other ethical principles that were followed in this study were the basic ethical principles: acknowledging the potential for harm, caring for the co-constructors, caring for self, and honesty. The details of the ethical considerations are explained in detail in Chapter 3.

### **1.10 Outline of Chapters**

**Chapter 1: Orientation of the study.** This chapter provides an overview of the study. First, I set the scene of this study, then I shed light on the background and context, which is from the perspective of a Black male beginner teacher. The rationale and motivation of the study were explained in detail, which included my professional

and personal justification for the study, the conceptual view, and the scholarly view. I introduced the research questions that guided the study and clarified the concepts that were used. The overview of the research methodology and conceptual framework were explained. I also provided an overview of the quality measures and ethical considerations.

**Chapter 2: Literature review.** This chapter is about the literature review of previous studies and the theoretical framework chosen for this study. I discuss the literature review using themes. The themes I use are teacher identity construction, multiple identities, the factors influencing a teacher's identity, and male primary school teachers. The themes look at international and local perspectives. In the conceptual framework, I use possible selves theory by Markus and Nurius (1986) and social role theory by Eagly (1987).

**Chapter 3: Research methodology and design.** In this chapter, I discuss the research methodology and design by considering the study's epistemology, ontology, and paradigm. Autoethnography as a research design chosen for this study is explained in detail. I explain the data collection methods and generation. Lastly, I discuss the data analysis, quality measures, and ethical aspects used in this study.

**Chapter 4: My autoethnographic story.** In this chapter, I provide the readers of this study with my story in the form of self-reflective narratives in understanding my analytical autoethnography. The story tell of my experiences and emotions, which give meaning to this autoethnography from a personal perspective to provide an understanding of my teacher identity construction as a Black male teacher.

**Chapter 5: Data analysis and interpretation.** This chapter presents the findings of this study. Relevant themes and sub-themes are identified from the data analysis section. The data are discussed, represented, analysed, and interpreted.

Findings and interpretations of the study are supported by the review of the literature that is related to this study.

**Chapter 6: Conclusion.** This chapter concludes the study. I link the research question, purpose, and focus of the study with the data gathered to draw conclusions from the findings. The literature review is also used to support the conclusions of the study. Recommendations for future studies are suggested in this chapter. Possible contributions and challenges of this study are included.

### 1.11 Summary of Chapter

Chapter 1 has provided the background, context, and research questions of this study in the South African context. The rationale, motivation, focus, and purpose of this study are discussed in this chapter. I also clarified the key concepts that were used in this study. An overview of the conceptual framework and research methodology is provided. This chapter outlines the chapters that are in this study. In Chapter 2, I discuss the relevant literature review related to this study and the conceptual framework.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the literature review conducted for this study. After presenting the literature review, main findings are synthesised from the literature review and then discuss the two theories that were combined to form the conceptual framework. Possible selves theory by Markus and Nurius (1986) and social role theory by Eagly (1987) are the two theoretical frameworks used in this study. Later in this chapter, I discuss in greater detail how the theoretical frameworks have been merged to form the conceptual framework and how the conceptual framework formed was suitable for application to this study.

### 2.2 Purpose and Method of Conducting my Literature Review

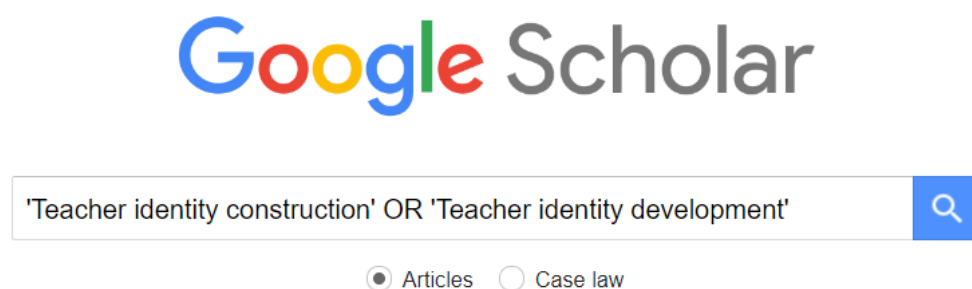
As a researcher, I first needed to understand what a literature review was. Ramdhani et al. (2014) define the literature review as “a survey of scholarly articles, books and other sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory, and by so doing, providing a description, summary, and critical evaluation of these works” (p. 48). The purpose of the literature review is to provide a framework to relate new findings to the previous findings in the dissertation discussion (Randolph, 2009). Winchester and Salji (2016) add that a literature review has to set the scene, demonstrate the current knowledge in research, and also identify gaps in the field of research.

The literature review also provides a connection between the present issues and previous findings in the same study topic (Shahsavari & Kourepaz, 2020). I looked for studies in the past and present research papers. The majority of the articles were not more than 10 years old. I customised my search year from 2019 to the current

year. I read older articles to understand what was found in the past decades about my study's topic. The first step in choosing a literature review was to have a research topic, then the next step was searching for and selecting relevant articles related to my research topic. I used Boolean searches such as “and”, “or”, and “not” to find articles that only contained specific concepts. One of the Boolean searches I used was “Teacher identity construction OR Teacher identity development”. Thousands of articles showed up, and I had to read the abstracts and keywords to select articles that were relevant to the study. I used the university library website where I used multiple databases on the website and Google Scholar to search for articles that were relevant to this study. After finding the articles, I read the articles and analysed them according to group or themes.

## Figure 2. 1

*Google Scholar Search Example*



My teacher identity construction of myself as a Black male beginner teacher in the IP is the research topic for this study. In this chapter, I consider the literature review in the fields of teacher identity, Black male teachers, and IP to examine the concept of teacher identity construction, how it is influenced by our past and present experiences, and how the various social groups and contexts influence teacher identity construction. It was necessary to look at the experiences influencing teacher identity because those



experiences led me to focus on the teachers' multiple identities including personal identity, professional identity, social identity, gender identity, and ethnic identity which are part of the self. The relationship between the multiple identities and teacher identity construction as an unstable and ongoing process is explained in the next section. I also consider influences on teacher identity such as the past experiences of beginner teachers, initial teacher training, and teaching practice because these are the stages at which the beginner teacher starts to construct their beginner teacher identity by interacting with teachers and learners. Research about male primary school teachers locally and globally is reviewed and compared to local and international studies on male teachers. Lastly, in the literature review, I consider the role of male teachers in schools and the stigmatisation of male teachers both locally and globally to understand different contexts.

As a researcher, I had to be incredibly careful not to plagiarise other authors' work. Currently, artificial intelligence (AI) software exists that generates ideas. I did not use AI to generate ideas for me. Using AI is considered academic dishonesty because of the machine-generated ideas. Plagiarism is writing someone's ideas without acknowledging them. I avoided plagiarism by using paraphrasing and citing the author when I was paraphrasing. I also used direct quotes when other authors' words were used. I also referenced all sources used in this research. The reference style used in this research is American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition. I used Turnitin software to detect and find index similarities in this study. I had to make sure that the index similarities did not exceed the maximum percentage of plagiarism set by the university which should not exceed 10 per cent. The AI should not exceed 0 per cent in the Turnitin report.

## **2.3 Discussion of Key Concepts in my Study**

### **2.3.1 *Black male teacher***

A study by Young and Young (2020) states that Black male teachers are underrepresented in instructional settings. I was only taught by one male teacher in the IP and FP at school. This shows that men are underrepresented in instructional settings. In the US, Black male teachers are needed in schools to serve as the disciplinary agents due to the large numbers of Black students in the schools (Young & Young, 2020). The female teachers in my school would ask me to talk to or discipline the boy learners who were disrespecting them in class. Also, boy learners who were treated badly by others came to me to report that others were not treating them well.

The recruitment of Black male teachers is said to be uniquely responsible for the Black boys (Carey, 2018). There is another male teacher at the school. He mentioned that one of the reasons he was appointed for his teaching post was because they were looking for a male teacher as the school had only two male teachers. This was to increase the number of male teachers available to discipline the boys and for the school to have more males responsible for them. Black male teachers give emotional and social support to their learners, particularly their learners of colour (Bristol, 2020). Being a male teacher is not about discipline only but also about giving emotional and social support to boys. Boys learners are more open to talking to male teachers about their social issues than to female teachers.

### **2.3.2 *Intermediate Phase***

In South Africa, the IP relies on a curriculum that provides and shows the progression of the context and content of each grade, including the development of the imparting of simple to complex skills (Department of Education, 2011). The IP falls between the FP and SP with learners being between the ages 10 and 14. The IP

consists of three grades, namely Grade 4, Grade 5, and Grade 6. There are seven subjects in FP of which English First Additional Language and Home Language are fundamental subjects. The other five subjects that are outlined by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) are life skills, mathematics, natural sciences, technology, and creative arts (Department of Education, 2011). The aim of the IP curriculum is to produce learners who can:

- Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
  - Work effectively as individuals and with others as members of the group;
  - Organise and manage themselves and their activities effectively and responsibly;
  - Collect, analyse, organise, and critically evaluate information;
  - Communicate effectively using symbolic, and/or language skills in various modes;
  - Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others; and
  - Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems, by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation
- (Department of Education, 2011, p. 5).

### **2.3.3 The concept of identity**

To understand the teacher identity concept, we first need to understand the concept of identity. Vignoles et al. (2018) refer to identity as “how people answer the question ‘Who are you?’ ‘Who am I?’ and ‘Who are we?’” (p. 1). I asked myself the same questions about who I am as a male beginner teacher in a phase that I am not qualified to teach. Identity is a dynamic, multidimensional, and contextualised

construct that involves agency and is influenced by personal conception, experiences, and expectations (Vignoles et al., 2018). I had expected that the IP would not be much different from the FETP. I had even expected that the IP was easier than the FETP because of the age group of the learners in these two phases, the FETP learners being in their teens, and most being at the adolescent stage. The IP learners are still young.

Identity is a person's perception of their role and position in a particular context and environment. Teachers construct their identities from their work and the institutional environment they work in on a daily basis (Moghal et al., 2019). My role as a teacher influenced my beginner teacher identity construction which began when I entered the teaching field. I constructed my identity during my teacher education training and teaching practice which took place in the FETP. Identity is developed by environmental and social influences that are continuous over time (Lawler, 2015). The environment that we live in and the social interaction with others influences our identities. My identity as a teacher was constructed and influenced by the school environment where I faced daily experiences and expectations that influenced my identity. Identity is unique to each one of us; it is more or less consistent or might be the same over time (Buckingham, 2008). It is a relationship with a social group or a broader collective, and it is what we share with other people (Buckingham, 2008). Identity is who we are in society, how we see ourselves, and how others see us. The identity of this study focuses on the who am I question. Identity negotiations over time are fundamental for the construction of one person's identity (Pierson, 2023). Identity development is also influenced by role modelling, education practice, academic learning, professional socialisation, and assessment activities (O'Mahony et al., 2023).

In identity studies, a teacher has various positions and takes on various roles (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). A person's identity is shaped by the upbringing of family,

gender, the social group that they belong to, and the ethnic and cultural group of which they are a part (Nematzadeh & Haddad Narafshan, 2020). Multiple factors, such as personal lives, technical and emotional aspects of teaching, and the interaction between the teacher's personal experiences and the social, cultural, and institutional environment in which the teacher is situated, influence teacher identity development (Day et al., 2006). There are multiple identities such as political, cultural, and so on. In this research, I discuss the four identities which are related to teacher identity construction, that is, personal identity, social identity, gender identity, and ethnic identity.

I strongly focused on personal identity in this study since the study is about me and it aligns with my chosen research design, namely autoethnography. The study focuses on me as a Black male beginner teacher who qualified to teach the FETP in the IP. My professional identity is based on my role as a teacher, which is my professional career. I wanted to understand how my teacher identity has influenced my professional identity.

One's social identity is chosen because each person is living in a society every day where we interact with different people, therefore society also shapes one's identity. I interact with different people from different cultures, genders, and professions in my society. The school I am working at is part of my society, which is part of my teacher identity construction. My gender identity was based on me as a beginner Black male teacher in the IP. Gender identity in which I identify myself as a male biologically also influences my teacher identity. Lastly, my ethnic identity is based on me being a member of an ethnic group. Our ethnicity influences our identities as individuals. My ethnic identity is as a Black person. These four identities are part of my teacher identity construction in this study and one does not exist without the other.

### **2.3.3.1 Personal identity**

A study by Bukor (2015) states that teacher identity is deeply rooted in one's biography. Teacher identity cannot exist without a person's biography. The teacher's identity cannot exist without personal and other identities such as social and gender identity. Personal life, such as childhood, family, friends, and significant other people, schooling, and professional education, is understood as personal experiences (Bukor, 2015). Personal identity develops from our childhood lives and it is also influenced by family and friends. Our hopes, dreams, and ideals are part of the personal experiences a teacher brings to teacher education (Beijaard, 2019). We all had or have our ideal teacher selves before we entered the teaching profession, even in our current selves as professional teachers. Our ideal selves are also influenced by our personal lives. Our dreams, hopes, and ideal selves make us who we are and who we want to be in our professional and private lives. Personal identity makes us who we are as human beings, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and so on. Personal identity helps us to know and understand ourselves and what we want in the future.

I interrogated different aspects of my life from childhood onwards to obtain an understanding of my past, present, and future self. I went back to my past experiences as a child and examined how my early education influenced my beginner teacher identity. In the interrogation of my present self, I asked myself about my goals and hopes of being a teacher in the IP. I wanted to be good and effective. I asked myself if my personality was relevant to the phase I was teaching. Being in the phase, I wanted to improve myself as a man and also improve in my profession as a male teacher. Personal identity is constructed and linked to our autobiographical memories (McCarroll, 2019). Our "self" arises from the stories that we tell ourselves, a narrative construction, the self, which is based on autobiographical memory (McCarroll, 2019).

Autobiographical memory is the “memories of our personal experiences” (Fivush & Grysman, 2023, p. 2). It is the facts that we know about ourselves, such as our dates of birth, names of parents, and recurring and extended events such as summer holidays, university, and soccer, and the general schematic information about our routine events, such as going to the local supermarket (Fivush & Grysman, 2023). When constructing our identity, we ask ourselves who we are in this world. I have been asking myself who I am in this world and who I am in my profession as a person. I went back through my childhood to adulthood memories when writing the study by using a self-reflection method to understand how my autobiography has been linked to my identity. I went back to my memory from knowing my name, birth date, name, and birth date of my parents. I also went to my primary to secondary school education memory in which I reflected on how my time in school influenced my identity.

### **2.3.3.2 Social identity**

Social identity is “that part of the individual’s self-concept which derives from their knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” as define by Tajfel (1982, p. 2). In a recent study, Rushton and Reiss (2021) defined social identity as follows:

A person’s sense of self is largely determined by their social context and the groups to which they belong and identify with, and that people seek to develop and maintain a positive view of themselves by comparing themselves and their group memberships in a more positive light than their alternative (p. 5).

Furthermore Mpisi et al. (2020) state that “identities are constructed in society” (p. 573). Social identity is part of an individual’s self-concept. It derives from the

knowledge an individual has as a member of the social group with the emotional significance attached to that membership (Yali, 2019). In this study, social identity is important since I belong to a social group of teachers, schools, and the education sector. I also belong to an ethnic group. Teacher identity is influenced and developed by interaction with others in preparation for being a teacher and part of a school community, which includes mentor teachers, colleagues, learners, and parents (Gatti, 2019; Yuan & Mak, 2018).

Teacher identity cannot exist without social identity. This view is carried throughout the study. I also discuss social identity in terms of the characteristics that are mentioned by Subedi (2023) that teaching experience, academic qualifications, and technological knowledge are markers of social identity. Social identity plays an important role in this study, and I relate the characteristics of social identity. My position at work, experiences, education level, and technological knowledge are part of my social identity.

### **2.3.3.3 Gender identity**

My study focuses on a Black male FETP beginner teacher in the IP; therefore, it is important to include gender identity as part of my teacher identity construction. To me, being a male person in the past meant that I should be strong and work hard. Growing up I always thought that men should not show their emotions, the man should not cry. When I was young, it was hard for me to cry in front of my friends and family because of my fear that they would say I was not a strong boy. I also considered teachers at primary school to be feminine. Now I understand that being a man is not different from being a woman, even though there are roles that men should have in society. I find that in today's world, men are equal to women and both genders are



given equal opportunities. I now understand that women do well in male-dominated careers and men can do well in female-dominated careers.

A teacher's identity will never be complete without looking at gender identity. Schneider and Bos (2019) address the concept that gender interacts with other identities including religion, ethnicity, race, and more. To understand beginner teacher identity, gender identity has to be included as it is a part of our identity construction. The American Psychological Association cited in Polderman et al. (2018) defines gender identity as a

person's deeply felt, inherent sense of being a boy, a man, or a male; a girl, a woman, or a female; or an alternative gender (e.g., genderqueer, gender non-conforming, gender-neutral) that may or may not correspond to a person's sex assigned at birth or to a person's primary or secondary sex characteristics. (p. 95)

In addition, Snitker (2018) explains that gender is constructed daily through interaction with others and also in the context of society and culture rather than biological variances based on sex. Snitker (2018) adds that gender is also constructed through constant doing. During the pregnancy period, couples expect either a boy or a girl to be born. In this era, a pregnant woman or the other members and friends of the family can arrange a party called a gender reveal, also known as a baby shower. The family and friends of the expecting mother get to know whether the unborn child is a boy or a girl.

Polderman et al. (2018) further explain that there are two types of genders, the first is called cisgender, which is used to refer to a gender identity that "matches a person's sex assigned at birth (that is, the sex determined by examination of genitals at birth, or through genetic testing)" (p. 95). Castro-Peraza et al. (2019) state that

gender identity is based on our physical features. I agree with Castro-Peraza et al. (2019) that gender identity is based on our physical features. At a young age, I used to distinguish between a man and a woman, a boy and a girl by looking at their physical features. During my childhood playtime, I used to play soccer since it was categorised as boys' play. I did not play much with girls; I always isolated myself from playing with them with dolls. I preferred to play with cars, soccer, and toy guns.

The second type of gender is transgender. Polderman et al. (2018) explain transgender as gender identity that differs from the sex allocated at birth. Dickey et al. (2022) adds that transgender includes people who identify as non-binary. Being non-binary means that the individual does not identify themselves as either male or female (Dickey et al., 2022). I am a binary person who identifies as a male. A trans person is someone who “identifies with a different gender and/or expresses their gender identity differs from the gender assigned at birth” (Castro-Peraza et al., 2019, p. 1). Transgender people are “grouped as lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals by researchers because it is wrongly presumed that these groups are the same” (Anderson, 2019, p. 1). The transgender group is extensive, and a person needs to know to which group they belong.

In this study, gender identity was used to understand the gender to which I assigned myself, that is, which gender I constructed by “doing” and interacting with others, and also the gender that I was allocated at birth. My gender identity is male, to which I was biologically assigned and also constructed through interaction with others in this autoethnographical study. I identify as a male both in primary and secondary characteristics. Primary characteristics are the gender I was assigned from birth and secondary sex characteristics are my expression of traditional, societal, or cultural norms.

#### **2.3.3.4 Ethnic identity**

The terms race and ethnicity are mostly used interchangeably (Chang et al., 2017; Du Plessis & Naudé, 2017). Race is a social construct where people are classified by biological and immutable genetics and ethnicity is an anthropological and social characteristic. I chose to go with the term ethnic identity in this study (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016). My skin colour is black. I was born this black colour and am also socially constructed as a Black person. Ethnic identity is defined as signalling “a commitment to a cultural group, and that ethnicity refers to a cultural practice such as customs, language, and values of group” (Helms, 2007, p. 236). Ethnic identity is a shared sense of belonging to a specific group of people in which the members share cultural values, beliefs, and behaviour and also a similar racial background (Seife, 2022). In South Africa, there are four main ethnic–racial groups, namely Black African, Indian, Coloured, and White. Each group has its own characteristics, beliefs values, attitudes, and behaviours (Du Plessis & Naudé, 2017). I belong to the Black African ethnic group. Our skin colour black and we have been classified as Black African. I also share the values and beliefs as a Black person born on the African continent, who lives in South Africa. I practice the Sepedi culture.

In a study by Chandra (2006), ethnic identity was categorised into the following subsets: the impersonal group, in which members are not part of the immediate family; or kin group with the qualifying of one’s own genetically transmitted features such as languages, religion, place of origin, nationality, and the race of one’s parents and ancestors. My ancestors were originally Black Africans who were born and grew up on the African continent. I speak several of the official African language of South Africa some of which are Sepedi, isiZulu, Ndebele, and Setswana. Chandra (2006) further explains that being Black is a qualifying attribute of descent from African parents and

is marked by attributes such as the colour of one's skin and physical features. African Americans are also descended from Black African parents (Chandra, 2006). Being a Black person means that I had to be resilient in my life. I have had to follow traditions and cultural practices, such as going to initiation school and paying a lobola, to be considered a fully Black man in my society. Being a Black person is about me following my roots. Being a Black person born in South Africa means that I am a Black African man who lives in a country of Africa.

## **2.4 The Interrelated Nature Of Multiple Identities**

In this section, I investigate how multiple identities are interrelated in my teacher identity construction. The relationship between the identities is discussed. Professional identity is discussed as a concept of teacher identity and teacher identity as a tenet of professional identity. Lastly in this section, teacher identity construction is discussed.

### ***2.4.1 Relationship of multiple identities***

Teacher identity does not stand alone; it involves other identities for a teacher's identity to be fully constructed. Multiple identities build the identity of an individual. Reeves (2018) explains that "identity is not singular but multiple, and multiple identity positions are inhabited by an individual simultaneously" (p. 2). There is a range of identities in a teacher's identity which include cultural, professional, and political identities, as stated by Nordstrom (2020). In this study, I only looked at the four identities that formed part of my teacher identity, namely personal, social, gender, and ethnic.

I agree with Reeves (2018) that identity is made up of multiple identities, not a singular identity. In the previous statements, I explained how the multiple identities are

interrelated to my identity. I am (this is my personal identity) a Black (ethnic identity) male (gender identity) in the IP (social identity). In my personal identity, I look at how my personality has influenced my teacher identity. This includes the influences such as my childhood memories. The ethnic identity is how my ethnicity as a Black male has influenced on my identity as a Black person in the IP. My gender identity is me as a male teacher who is qualified to teach in the FETP and is currently teaching in the IP. Lastly, my social identity interacts with my study because I am a person who works in a social environment, that is, with teachers, learners, and the community.

## **2.5 Professional Identity Concept as Part of Teacher Identity**

Identity development starts from birth and continues throughout infancy, childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood (Monrouxe, 2013). A study by Beijaard (Heled & Davidovitch, 2021) states that professional identity “is complex, personal, and varies between those practicing the profession and is a continuous process in which the experiences of practitioners are interpreted, and it is forged by many factors” (p. 64). Heled and Davidovitch (2021) furthermore explain that professional identity has two classifications, group and personal. Group professional identity is defined “as a collection of expectations and characteristics ascribed to the profession both by those who belong to it and by those who do not practice it, enabling distinction between groups” (p. 65). Professional identity is explained as “one’s self-identity and it is the answer to the questions, ‘Who am I, or what am I, as a professional?’ It is “dependent upon both genetic and environmental factors” (Cruess, 2019, p. 641).

Most studies define professional identity as the way in which teachers see themselves as professionals; this includes motivation, pedagogical view, self-efficacy, and perspectives on relationships with colleagues (Anspal et al., 2012; Nickel & Zimmer, 2019; Stenberg et al., 2014). In this study, I viewed my professional identity

as a male beginner teacher in primary school and how I, as a male teacher, should act and professionally identify myself. It included me as a professional teacher in a school environment in which I also belonged to a community of teaching professionals.

A professional identity is comprised of different factors according to Tan et al. (2017). I investigated the five factors mentioned by Tan et al. (2017) in their study. The first factor is knowing the profession, which is more than the teachings of the profession (Tan et al., 2017). I know the teaching profession as the mother of all professions. I learned about education as a subject in my teacher education training. I also gained practical knowledge during my teaching practice with a qualified teacher who was my mentor. The second factor is having a role model in the profession who guides the profession (Tan et al., 2017). I had a mentor lecturer and teacher during my teaching practice period. During my early teaching career, I also had my former teachers as my role models. The third factor is gaining experience through practice in the environment (Tan et al., 2017). In pre-service and in-service practice, I participated in a community of practice through which I gained experience. The fourth factor is when a person selects a profession that they are enthusiastic about (Tan et al., 2017). I have always been enthusiastic about the teaching profession. The last factor that Tan et al. (2017) mention is professional self-efficacy. This was being able to set goals to enable me to be an effective teacher so that the learners could perform well in their studies. These factors are important in oneself in any profession.

### ***2.5.1 Teacher identity as a tenet of professional identity***

Teacher identity is dynamic and multifaceted. Its development is situated in the professional lives of the teachers, including their learning in teacher education programmes and student teaching or field experiences (Cobb et al., 2018). My teacher identity has been situated in my professional life as a beginner teacher since I

developed my teacher identity in the education course and teaching practice. Multifaceted teacher identity has social, emotional, and cognitive aspects (Flores, 2020). Teacher identity is the process in which identity work is filled with emotional experiences. For example, the negative emotions of teachers lead to conflicts in their teacher identity construction (Chen, 2016). The emotions include the feelings of the teachers about the process and also their concerns about their learners' process of learning (Gelir, 2023). Teacher identity construction is explained as an unstable and ongoing process which it is not fixed. It is negotiated through experiences and the making of meaning of the experiences (Macías et al., 2020). Vokatis and Zhang (2016) discuss the concept of teacher identity as how teachers identify themselves as teachers, who they are as professionals, who they struggle with, and who they are empowered to become in a continuous process of reflecting on their practices and experiences. Also, the teachers realise that their previous teaching practice impacts the development of their identities, and they deal with this in different ways (Clarke et al., 2023)

A study by Walkington (2005) refers to the concept of teacher identity as the self-concept or image that is central to the beliefs, values, and practices that inform the teacher's actions. A recent study by Marschall (2021) found that teacher identity has a role in teacher self-efficacy through the way teachers see themselves. Marschall (2021) also states that teacher identity supports the development of teacher self-efficacy. The way I see myself in the IP as a male teacher has influenced my teacher identity and my self-efficacy.

### ***2.5.2 Teacher identity in continuous professional development***

In-service teachers learn that their understanding evolves to teach their subject matter as they participate in the teaching of learning communities (Yazan, 2018). In-

service teachers participate in professional learning communities for their professional development. According to Noonan (2019), professional development “is a shared experience, with many teachers inhabiting the same learning environment and encountering the same material” (p. 1). Professional development is understood as activities that develop and support the instructional practice of teachers (Noonan, 2019). Teachers must attend workshops for their subjects and other professional development. In a professional learning community, teachers share their knowledge, or an expert shares knowledge with the teachers. Yazan (2018) adds that “teacher identity is not fixed but they are shaped by their participation in the activities of communities of the teaching profession” (p. 24). Participation in activities of professional learning communities does influence teacher identity development. I attended professional development workshops in the first year of my teaching and the workshops were beneficial for my identity construction. In the workshops, I expanded my teacher identity as a primary school teacher and realised that the pedagogy and teaching methodology of primary and secondary schools were not the same.

In the next section, I discuss the views of male teachers in primary schools. Primary schools in South Africa are from Grade R in the FP to Grade 7 in the IP whereas secondary school caters to the SP and FETP. I also discuss how society views male teachers and how male teachers feel about and view themselves. The section includes the emotions that male teachers experience in primary schools. I then address the uncomfortable tensions which are the good, the bad, and the ugly of being a male teacher at a primary school.

### ***2.5.3 Teacher identity construction***

According to Elmoazen et al. (2022), identity construction is



an iterative process in which the teachers construct and reconstruct their identities through every interaction within their selves and the outer world, and multiple components at play, how such identities are negotiated and what elements at play in this construction process becomes a matter of concern in this study” (p. 99).

The interaction between my possible selves influenced the construction and reconstruction of my beginner teacher identity. My possible selves were a motivation for my teacher identity. My past, present, and future selves have been very helpful in providing me with a direction for my identity construction.

The construction of teacher identity is not a stable process but an ongoing process in which an individual interprets and reinterprets who they consider themselves to be and who they would like to become (Van Lankveld et al., 2017). I interpreted and reinterpreted the process of my teacher identity construction in order for me to become an effective teacher in the IP. I always asked myself about myself as a beginner teacher in the IP. This helped me to reinterpret the teacher identity I had before entering the IP.

Britzman (2012) identified three dimensional voices in teacher identity development: emotions, biography, and institutional structure. Emotions are the intimate, personal, and internal aspects of teacher identity. Inconsistencies, uncertainty, and often silences contribute to becoming a teacher (Huang et al., 2021). Moreover, Richards (2022) adds that emotions shape the way that teachers teach. Biography is the experiences of a person’s life and journey of schooling (Huang et al., 2021).

The identity of a teacher changes throughout their teaching career and professional development (Chien, 2019). Teacher identity changes quickly and over

time in social interaction with other teachers, educators, and learners, in the material that they interact with, and with places such as institutions (Barkhuizen, 2017). Teacher identity construction is a process that keeps on going and never ends (Macías et al., 2020). My teacher identity started before my enrolment in the teacher education programme. The interaction with the learners, teaching materials, and colleagues influenced my beginner teacher identity construction.

## **2.6 Factors Influencing Beginner Teacher Identity Construction**

In recent research on teacher identity, it stated that the identity of teachers relies on various factors and processes that take place across multiple contexts, which makes a unique experience for each teacher (Dimitrieska, 2022). Teacher identity is constructed in different contexts in which a teacher spends time. Therefore, the identity of an individual changes over time and with needs that the person wants to satisfy (Jakaza, 2022).

The experiences of beginner teachers involve learning in school when they learn how to teach in teacher education at the university, and also the teaching practice at schools where they try out what they have learned during their first year of teaching (Huang et al., 2021). Beginner teachers negotiate their teacher identity in three categories: the first is the identity that they bring with them into teacher education; the second is the identity they develop while studying coursework at the university; and the third is the identity that they develop during teaching practice (Kaynak, 2019). The three categories all link and are important stages in the teacher identity construction of a beginner teacher.

### **2.6.1 Past experiences in beginner teacher identity construction**

We all know what teachers look like because we have images of our teachers which were created through our direct experiences with them (Dolloff, 1999). I knew what it was like to be a teacher because of seeing my teachers while I was at school. A beginner teacher's prior life and personal history shape the beliefs and expectations about teaching (Edwards & Edwards, 2017). The life of beginner teachers before they enter their teaching career influences their current beginner teacher identity. At some point in life, I wish to be like one of my teachers who taught me at primary school. The teachers who taught us during our primary and secondary education influenced our teacher identity. Also, the television shows depicting teachers and the stories we hear from others shape our beginner teacher identity before we even enter our initial education training.

#### **2.6.1.1 Initial teacher education in higher education institution**

Student teachers undergo an identity change as they move through teacher education programmes (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). These programmes help beginner teachers to build and emerge their identities (Krisdianata & Mbato, 2022). I built my teacher identity in the teacher education course by learning about teaching and interacting with lecturers and students. At the institution of higher education, the beginner teacher starts to develop a teacher identity shift. The teacher identity that I constructed in primary and secondary school shifted. This is the period when student teachers start to negotiate their teacher identity as prospective teachers. Teacher education influences who we are, what we learn, and what we will be like as teachers; therefore, there is an effect of initial teacher training on the construction of teacher identity (Gracia et al., 2022). Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) argue that "situating the shaping of a teacher's identity within the context of practice implies the necessity to

be aware of the effects this context might have on the shifts and changes in a teacher's identity".

### **2.6.1.2 Teaching practice in school**

Teaching practice is when a student goes to work and learns in a school under the supervision of a qualified teacher who becomes the mentor of the student. Teaching practice is a time of intensive and extensive identity work where student teachers find themselves in a situation where they must create and recreate, frame and reframe their developing beginner teacher identities (Trent, 2014). Trent (2014) adds that the teaching practice period is "when student teachers engage in processes of self-positioning and repositioning, and where they can experience contradictions between different teacher identities, as well as between personal and professional identities" (p. 76).

The mentor teachers do not get any remuneration to mentor the student teachers. Also, the student teachers are not paid by the school for doing their teaching practice there. Student teachers in their teaching practice interact with the mentor teacher in the journey of their professional growth. I interacted with my mentor teachers during my teaching practice period and I grew professionally when I worked as a teacher in the FETP. Teaching practice experience gives beginner teachers an opportunity for professional development and training skills (Atmoko & Kuswandono, 2021). In the teaching practice, I gained skills and constructed my teacher identity. Therefore, teaching practice is one of the factors that influence the development of a beginner teacher's identity, both personally and professionally. Beginner teachers must prepare, practise, and teach in a school to gather and understand how a teacher works, as stated by Crosthwaite and Schweinberger (2021). Being in a school to do teaching practice where learning takes place means that the student teacher is taking

part in the community of practice, that is, where “privilege focuses on the creation of knowledge” (Wenger, 1999, p. 214). Wenger (1999) adds that community of practice is “a living context that can give newcomers access to competence and also invite the personal experience of engagement by which to incorporate that competence into the identity of participation” (p. 214). To qualify for my degree, I had to go and teach in a formal school to gain practical knowledge of how a teacher works. Beginner teachers are supervised, accompanied, and mentored by experienced teachers (McDonough, 2018). I was under a qualified teacher at the school who supervised me in my teaching practice.

During the teaching practice period, beginner teachers experience several obstacles which are stressful or negative, such as the teaching preparations, administration, disciplining learners in school, and negative emotions (Elias, 2018; Kerr et al., 2017). My mentor teachers were there to give me advice on how I might overcome the challenges I had during my teaching practice. Teachers find the best solutions to overcome the challenges they face during their teaching practice. The strategies and methods that beginner teachers use to overcome their challenges may influence their teacher identity construction (Ozdas, 2018).

## **2.7 Gender Roles of Men and Women**

This section discusses the gender roles of men and women generally, and also cultural gender roles.

### ***2.7.1 General view on gender roles***

Gender role “refers to a person's psychological identification with typical societal gender roles” (Yarnell et al., 2019, p. 1137). In this study, I look at the gender role in terms of societal gender rather than biological sex. For centuries the position of

women was primarily that of homemaker and men of breadwinner (Asif, 2019). Men and women are different in several areas of life and are categorised based on the general expectations of a particular social group (Rabie et al., 2021). Certain roles in terms of gender attributes have been researched focusing on behaviour, such as being a leader, or having occupational status, or as homemaker, which they apply when comparing man and women as stated by Eisend (2019). My gender role was constructed from childhood. I believed that women were homemakers while men were meant to go work and provide for their families.

During the apartheid era in South Africa, the labour system kept African men from their households for long periods of time. This created fathers of families who were financial providers rather than sources of emotional support (Moosa & Bhana, 2018). This has led to the gender role construction of men and women.

## Figure 2. 2

### *Research Journal Entry 1*

#### Research journal entry 07 December 2022

I used to play soccer with my friends. I am not that gifted in soccer. This has made my friends see me as not a boy enough because I was not good with soccer. Soccer is a sport which was associated with boys. If a boy did not play soccer or understand it, they were called 'mama's babies' meaning that they were soft and considered to be feminine.

In their early years, boys and girls start to notice their gender roles. For example, in a study conducted by Ward and Grower (2020), they reported that young children, boys and girls, chose toys that were associated with their gender, for

example, boys chose airplane sets. In the teaching profession, men and women also follow gender roles. For example, generally teaching profession is regarded as “women’s work” (Demirkasimoglu & Taskin, 2019). I also recognised my gender role as a boy by knowing which toys I should play with, and which toys I should not play with were mostly classified as girls’ toys. In fact, McGrath et al. (2020) state that “men who teach young children are frequently marginalized” (p. 3). Unfortunately, some people think that male teachers who teach children might be gay or are not manly enough. This is because of the gender role construction that was developed in the early years.

### **2.7.2 Cultural gender role**

The next figure is an extract taken from my research journal in which I was thinking about how culture has influenced my teacher identity.

#### **Figure 2. 3**

*Research Journal Entry 2*

Research journal entry 07 December 2022

Thinking about how my culture has influence my personal identity as a Black male it makes me realise that our culture creates a stereotype toward males taking care of children. How can as a Black male in the 21<sup>st</sup> century advocate for equality in gender and culture? Does a man who work with children weaker than those men who does not work with children?

Groysberg et al. (2018) state that “culture is the tacit social order of an organisation in which it shapes attitudes and behaviours in wide-ranging and durable

ways” (p. 4). I agree with Groysberg et al. (2018) that our culture is a social order which shapes our behaviours and attributes. Culture is what an individual needs to follow as part of their identity construction. In most South African cultures, men and women have traditional, distinct gender roles that place an emphasis on men as breadwinners and women as homemakers (Mshweshwe, 2020; Sikweyiya et al., 2020; Wang & Coulter, 2019). As men are considered the breadwinners, they are expected to have higher positions in the company (Demirkasimoglu & Taskin, 2019). In most African cultures, male headship and women's submission are valued both in culture and religion (Bassey & Bubu, 2019). Bassey and Bubu (2019) further add that “African males and females are taught their duties, roles, responsibilities, and positions, both in the home and society” (p. 27). Our gender roles are taught through cultural roles. In the South African “cultural context, for example, young girls are specifically taught to perform motherly roles whereas young boys are taught to herd cattle, sheep and goats, and later on as adults, to provide security for their aged parents” (Bassey & Bubu, 2019, p. 26). Women are assumed to take on the nurturing roles in the family (Moosa & Bhana, 2020). The man who takes on the nurturing role is considered to be feminine and is labelled “weak” or “gay”.

## **2.8 Views on Male Teachers in Primary School**

Male teachers in primary schools do not make physical contact with their learners, such as hugging an upset child, to protect themselves from accusations of inappropriate behaviour (Cruickshank, 2019). Cruickshank (2019) states that “many male primary teachers feel they cannot comfort a young child like parents or female teachers could, without putting themselves at risk” (p. 247). A research study conducted by Gosse (2011) in Canada found that male primary school teachers were unwilling to interact with their learners in a way that women would consider acceptable,



such as nurturing young children. In a study that was conducted in the United Kingdom, Szwed (2010) found that male primary teachers had anxiety and were concerned about the consequences of wanting to show compassion to their learners through physical contact. The consequences might be that “male teachers can be extremely fearful of the possibility of being falsely accused of sexual abuse” (Gosse, 2011, p. 248).

## Figure 2. 4

### *Research Journal Entry 3*

#### Research journal entry 05 December 2022

Reading research journals that talk about the view of male teachers in primary schools has shown me that men in primary schools are considered dangerous and not fit to teach young children. How can I change these negative views of men as a male beginner teacher?

Emotions also play a role in teacher professional identity. A study conducted in China found that the media had commonly used “emotion-laden terms such as anger, frustration, or anxiety to explain the incidences of child abuse by preschool teachers” (Zhang & Jiang, 2023, p. 1). Emotions are considered prominent in the teaching profession and emotions should be considered in research that is related to the concept of teacher identity (Arslan, 2023). Beginner teachers experience emotions more than other teachers who have had more years in the profession (Schutz et al., 2018). Displaying emotions such as anger is considered unprofessional (Zhang & Jiang, 2023). The negative emotions that delay identity development are supported by the positive emotions (Day, 2018).

A South African study conducted by Petersen (2014) states that there was an “uncomfortable tension between the ‘good’, the ‘bad’ and the ‘ugly’”. Petersen (2014) referred to the good part of men in primary schools as men being positive role models, the bad as the unsuitability of male teachers to the needs of children, and the ugly as men not belonging in primary schools because of the threat of sexual abuse.

The reflection of the “good” was that males could serve as role models and father figures for young children with absentee fathers. De Salis et al. (2019) argue that “boys without a father at home needed a male teacher role model” (p. 9). Bennett and Varghese (2021) add that male teachers are role models not only in preschool but also in other phases of teaching and learning. Learners who are living without their fathers at home see their male teachers as role models.

The “bad” revealed participants who reasoned why men were unsuitable to instruct young children in South Africa. People whose behaviours are contrary to what others expect are stigmatised (Yang, 2018). People are against male teachers in the teaching profession. The concern that has been raised by parents or guardians when their young children are assigned to a male teacher in the early grades is the stigmatisation of male teachers (Yang, 2018). A study conducted by Mayeza and Bhana (2017) states that in the “poverty of everyday life and the hopelessness around employment opportunities, young men, in particular, were noted to drink, smoke, take drugs, engage in fights, and partake in gang activities”. The behaviour of drinking, smoking, taking drugs, and engaging in fights are violent actions of men, so men are seen to be unfit to work with young children.

The last view was the “ugly” which is perceived threats of sexual abuse. A male teacher was suspended after a video was leaked on social media of him having sexual intercourse with a female learner (Moosa & Bhana, 2020). The girl learners were

“particularly constructed by the above teachers as being more vulnerable and in danger of sexual abuse by men” (Moosa & Bhana, 2020, p. 178). With the gender-based violence (GBV) pandemic in our country and internationally, it is not easy for men to be trusted around young girls or women. GBV is a “violence that is directed against a person based on their sex or gender, and it includes acts that inflict emotional, physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty” (Dlamini, 2021). According to the Statistics of the The World Bank (2019), the percentage of women worldwide who experienced physical and or sexual intimate non-partner violence and partner violence was 37 per cent. The percentage of women who were sexually assaulted by someone who was not their partner was seven per cent For women who are murdered by their intimate partner, the percentage was 38 per cent. South Africa has the highest number of GBV events, which includes domestic violence and rape (Ellis, 2020). Every three hours a woman is murdered (Ellis, 2020). After looking at the views on primary male teachers, it is necessary to also look at their role and that of their counterparts.

## **2.9 Synthesis Findings in the Literature Review**

At the end of my review of the literature review for this study, the following findings were discovered that relate to the construction of my beginner teacher identity as a Black male teacher:

- Identity does not stand alone – it is interrelated with other identities (Hardy et al., 2017; McLean et al., 2020; Slay & Smith, 2011).
- Our identities are linked to our self-concept (McNeill & Venter, 2019; Slay & Smith, 2011).
- Teacher identity starts when one understands their personal identity (Cooper & Olson, 2020; Hanna et al., 2019).

- Gender is an important part of the identity construction process (Casad et al., 2017; Kornienko et al., 2016).
- The construction of teacher identity is through the fundamentals of professional, social, and personal identities which depend on one another (Carvalho-Malekane, 2015; Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020; Woest, 2016).
- Teachers construct their unique sense of identity (Moghal et al., 2019). Teacher identity construction is influenced by many factors such emotions (Ainsworth & Oldfield, 2019; Kayi-Aydar, 2019) and teacher identities are influenced by different key elements such as professional experiences and teaching methods which are all intertwined with each other (Elmoazen et al., 2022).
- Male teachers are underrepresented in primary schools (Callender, 2020; McGrath et al., 2020).
- There is a perspective that people consider teaching as “women’s work” and other low-status careers that are also suited to women (Moosa & Bhana, 2018; Petersen, 2014).

## **2.10 Grounding my Autoethnography in Theory**

Mensah et al. (2020) state that “research without the theoretical or conceptual framework makes it difficult for readers to ascertain the academic position and the underlying factors to the researcher’s assertions and/or hypotheses” (p. 54). I selected a conceptual framework that used two theoretical frameworks. I merged possible selves theory by Markus and Nurius (1986) and social role theory by Eagly (1987) to form the conceptual framework for my study. A theory is “a set of propositions that are logically related, expressing the relation(s) among several different constructs and propositions” (Varpio et al., 2020, p. 6).

In the next section, I discuss the two theories that I chose as the theoretical framework for this study, namely possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and social role theory (Eagly, 1987). I look at the historical overview of possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and social role theory (Eagly, 1987) and give a brief overview of the application and the relevancy of the theories in the study. Lastly, I explain the limitations of using each theory in teacher identity research.

### **2.10.1 Possible selves theory**

#### **2.10.1.1 Historical overview**

The first theoretical framework used in this study is possible selves theory by Markus & Nurius (1986), which was first generated in the 1980s. Markus and Nurius (1986) define possible selves theory as a theory in which “possible selves represent individual ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming and thus provide a conceptual link between cognition and motivation” (p. 954). I had an idea of what kind of teacher I wanted to become once I qualified to be a teacher but I also had fears of becoming a teacher in a phase that I was not qualified to teach. Hamman et. al (2010) adds that possible selves theory “describes the importance and dynamics of self-relevant, future-orientated self-concepts, and these self-views relate to motivation for present and future action”. Markus and Nurius (1986) state that possible selves theory can be divided into three categories: the hoped-for self, the expected self, and the feared self.

The hoped-for self is the kind of person we would like to be, the expected self is the self that a person expects to become, and the feared self is the person we are afraid to become. I always wanted to be a mathematics teacher in the FETP . I hoped that after completing my degree I was going to secure a post in the FETP Phase but my hoped-for self might not be a realistic goal or achievable in the future. My hope of

becoming a FETP mathematics teacher was not achievable because I did not secure a post in the FETP but got a post in the IP instead. Thus others have influence in shaping our individual possible selves for our future and current selves. Babanoğlu (2017) states that feedback from others influences the development of our possible selves. In the education context, feedback from colleagues, friends, and family can influence the development of the possible selves of a teacher. I had conversations with my family, friends, and colleagues who changed my goals about my possible selves. I had hoped to be an FETP teacher but talking to my family and friends about taking a post in the IP influenced my ideal goal of being a mathematics teacher in the FETP. Possible selves theory can work as a motivation for plans, hopes, and goals for the future. Future-orientated identities contribute to self-improvement, growth, and change, which the individual views as a critical way of becoming a teacher (Lutovac, 2020).

A research study conducted by Lutovac (2020) identified possible selves theory as being a useful framework for studying teacher identity development in the context of teacher preparation for prospective teachers who seek self-definition. I selected possible selves theory as one of my theoretical frameworks to form a conceptual framework for the study as I was investigating the construction of my beginner teacher identity as a qualified male FET teacher in the IP. The theory of possible selves looks at the past, current, and future selves of individuals. Therefore, I looked at my past experiences, current experiences, and future goals and how they influenced my beginner teacher identity as a Black male. Possible selves result from the “inclusion of what is possible within self-concept, ideas about what a person can become, and provide direction and stimulus for change” (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

The stimulus of my change was to become a qualified beginner male FET Phase teacher in an IP. Emotions and identity relate to goals and aspirations for the future such as hopes and fears which can be constructed in the present by approaches to avoid them in the future (Babanoğlu, 2017). In my case, this was my fear of being a male beginner teacher in IP and my hope of becoming a better teacher in the IP. I feared not being able to perform my teacher duties as a man in a phase that I did not plan to teach. I also was afraid of myself as a man being around young children. I did not know how, as a male teacher, I should act or behave around the young learners. Even though I had fears of becoming a teacher in the IP, I also had hopes that I would be a good teacher and be able to do my teacher work.

In this section, I looked at the three concept categories that Markus and Nurius (1986) stated in their theory. The hoped-for self was my hopes of becoming a beginner male IP teacher, the expected self was as an IP teacher, and lastly there were my fears of becoming a Black male beginner teacher in the IP.

#### **2.10.1.2 Application and relevance to the study**

The possible selves theory was relevant to this study as identities “are shaped by individuals' interpretations of past and present experiences, and their imagination of the future self” (Rinne et al., 2023, p. 2). I constructed my teacher identity from my past selves, currently continue to construct it in the present, and will do so with my possible future self, which may influence my teacher identity. Identity is shaped by our past and present experiences and future hopes. This study is about my teacher identity construction looking at my past, present, and future imagination as a Black male beginner teacher in the IP. Current research on possible selves theory has tended to address issues similar to that undertaken by researchers of teacher identity, as stated by Hamman et al. (2010). The theory is relevant to the study because “possible selves

theory seems to be a particularly good fit for examining the developing teacher identities of the newest teachers and student teachers engaged in their final teaching practicum, and newly graduated teachers during their first year of teaching” (Hamman et al., 2010, p. 1349). This study explores my beginner teacher identity and the theory fits well with examining the teacher identity. I agree with Hamman et al. (2013) that possible selves theory is useful in helping us to understand how to become a certain type of teacher and it is rooted in the emerging teacher of the present.

### **2.10.2 Social role theory**

#### **2.10.2.1 Historical overview**

The second theoretical framework used for this study was social role theory by Eagly (1987) which was developed in the 1980s. Social role theory is defined as “behavioural expectations deemed suitable for persons occupying a certain social position or associated with a particular social category” (Kaur et al., 2023, p. 161). “These [consensual] beliefs are more than beliefs about the attributes of women and men: many of these expectations are normative in the sense that they describe qualities or behavioural tendencies believed to be desirable for each sex” (Eagly, 1987, p. 13). Roles affect how individuals see themselves and how their behaviour is perceived by others (Anglin et al., 2022). This has led the socially perverse to believe that traits required are associated with a particular gender (Koenig & Eagly, 2014). Okeke and Nyanhoto (2021) state that social role theory “explains that the inherent physical differences between men and women result in a division of labour in society” (p. 1). Social role theory recognises “the historical division in labour between women, who usually assume responsibilities at home, and men, who usually assume responsibilities outside of the home” (p. 2).



### **2.10.2.2 Application and relevancy to the study**

Social role theory is significant to this research study because the study focused on me as a Black male beginner teacher. By combining the gender roles and identities, the study identified the role of being a Black man in the IP, which is associated with my biological sex. The gender roles of men and women have specific occupations and social roles, for example, a woman being a nurse or a mother influences her behaviour, traits, and beliefs. I investigated my beginner teacher construction in this study and social role theory fits in with the understanding, expectations, and roles that I had as a man in the IP.

I used social role theory to understand how society and I made sense of gender activities such as teaching young children. Social role theory was also applied for its relevancy to the study to understand how gender influenced my teacher identity construction. The roles included my daily life as a Black man in carrying out my gender roles in society, such as being a teacher, fiancé, brother, son, and member of the community.

### **2.11 Toward a Conceptual Framework: Merging Theoretical Frameworks**

I have combined the tenets of possible selves theory by Markus & Nurius (1986) which are the past, current, and future selves, and the tenets of social role theory by Eagly (1987), which are the division of labour and gender role beliefs, to create the conceptual framework for my study. It was important to use these two theories because using one theory was going to be insufficient. I wanted to understand my teacher identity construction on both personal and social levels. I used the concepts of the two theories to understand my teacher identity construction – possible selves and social roles theories – as a Black man. The two theories were relevant to my study because I investigated my teacher identity construction as a Black male teacher in a

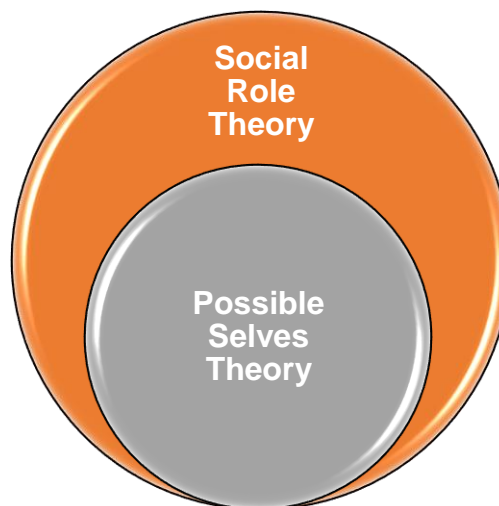
phase that I was not qualified to teach, that is, the IP. I used the two theories to cover all the aspects of this study

### **2.11.1 Conceptual framework design for my study**

A conceptual framework is an explanation of how the research problem will be explored by the researcher (Mensah et al., 2020). A conceptual framework in research “is something that the researcher constructs [and] is not something that s/he finds” (Tamene, 2016, p. 52). I constructed my conceptual framework using two theories and visualised it in the form of a diagram (Figure 2.5). I created this diagram to show how the theoretical frameworks are linked in this study. Additionally, Mensah et al. (2020) add that a “conceptual framework is the logical master plan for your entire research project” (p. 59).

#### **Figure 2. 5**

*Merging of Possible Selves Theory and Social Role Theory*



### **2.11.2 Interpreting the conceptual framework**

I designed my conceptual framework using a diagram that has two circles (Figure 2.5). The orange-shaded coloured circle represents social role theory (Eagly,

1987) and the grey-shaded circle represents possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986). When I designed the diagram for my conceptual framework, I thought of myself since the study was about me as a Black male beginner teacher in the IP. The thoughts I had were about myself as a Black man in society, my personal life, and my teaching career. I noticed that the self in a person is influenced by social role expectations. Our social roles influence our possible selves. I looked at the concept of teacher identity in which I engaged the concept of self to understand the construction of my beginner teacher identity as a qualified FETP teacher in the IP. The focus of my study was my identity construction as a qualified FETP male beginner teacher teaching in the IP. Possible selves theory by Markus and Nurius (1986) focuses on an individual's past, current, and future selves. In this study, I wanted to understand my possible selves of my past, current self, and ideal self and how they influenced my teacher identity construction. In social role theory, an individual is expected to have certain roles in society. In this study, I also investigate how my role influences my teacher identity as a Black man.

### ***2.11.3 Application of the conceptual framework to the study***

The conceptual framework I used was suitable for the study as I was focusing on my beginner teacher identity construction as a Black male FETP teacher in the IP. Possible selves theory is linked to self-concept and identity (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Yavuz Tabak et al., 2021). In analysing and interpreting my self-reflective stories, it was clear that in the process of constructing my beginner teacher identity, I looked at my past, current, and future selves. I went through the process of examining my past self where I constructed my beginner teacher identity through my past experiences. For my past self, I examined the plans and expectations of how I wanted to see myself as a teacher. I also looked at my current or present self in which I continue to construct

my teacher identity in my current position as a professional teacher in the IP. My current self is my goal of how I see myself currently as a qualified teacher. The last self I looked at was the future self in which I want to see myself as a teacher. Looking at my future self, I looked at my future career goals as a Black male teacher in a phase that I am not qualified to teach. I used possible selves theory to discover my teacher identity construction through self-knowledge.

Social role theory in this study was relevant because I also looked at myself as a Black male teacher in society. The social roles applied to this study are the expectations of society and also my expectations as a male teacher. I looked at social expectations and gender roles. I also went through the process of social expectations as a male teacher in a primary school.

## **2.12 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the literature review defined the concept of teacher identity, the multiple identities a teacher has, the influences of beginner teacher identity, the role male teachers play in schools, and the stigmatisation of male teachers. Based on the literature review, there was limited research on a male beginner teacher's identity in the IP. I came across research that focused on male teachers who were teaching in the FP rather than the IP. My research study focused on my teacher identity construction as a qualified Black male FETP beginner teacher in the IP. I concluded the literature review by synthesising the findings.

After writing the literature review, I explained the two theoretical frameworks, possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and social role theory (Eagly, 1987), and formed my conceptual framework using the two theoretical frameworks chosen for this study. In the next chapter, I provide information about the research

methodology and design which includes the paradigm stances, research design, data collection, analysis of data, ethical clearance, and quality measures used in this study.

## Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Design

### 3.1 Introduction

The focus of this study was on my teacher identity construction as a qualified FETP Black male beginner teacher teaching in the IP and the purpose of this study was to understand and make sense of my experiences as a beginner Black male FETP teacher in the IP. My research questions were: How did I construct my identity as a Black male teacher in the IP? And Why did I construct my identity as a Black male beginner teacher in the IP in this way? In Chapter 2, I explored the scholarly documents related to this study, such as journal articles, academic books, and so on. The scholarly documents provided me with the gaps and trends in my research topic. I then continued to discuss the conceptual framework underpinning the study, merging possible selves theory by Markus and Nurius (1986) and social role theory by Eagly (1987).

This chapter outlines the research design and research methodology of the study. I first elaborate on my paradigm stances and then explain the ontology and epistemology of this study. The research design is explained with its purpose and relevance to the study. I then look deeply at the research methodology of autoethnography then move to the data collection and documentation where I give details about the instruments that were used to collect data for the study. The chapter concludes with the data analysis and interpretation.

### 3.2 Paradigm Stances

According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017), a paradigm is a worldview which is “the perspective, or thinking, or school of thought, or set of shared beliefs, that informs the meaning or interpretation of research data” (p. 26). Rahi (2017) defines the term

paradigm as beliefs that are shared by scientists, a set of agreements on how a problem is understood, and how we view the world and conduct research. I needed to understand and know how I viewed and positioned myself in the world. To understand how I positioned myself in this study the three paradigmatic stances were used namely: ontology, epistemology, and methodology. According to Sefotho (2018), ontology asks the question, “What is a reality out there?”, epistemology asks the question “How can we know about the reality out there?”, and methodology asks the question “How can we acquire the knowledge about the reality out there?” (p. 20).

### **3.2.1 *Ontology***

Ontology in philosophy is a study of being. It describes what can be known and covers what we believe can exist. Ontology is a belief system in which an individual understands what represents a fact (Don-Solomon & Eke, 2018). Ontologies are the theories of what exists and what does not exist (Sefotho, 2018). Ontology paradigm stances state that multiple realities exist to discover a phenomenon. In this study, as a researcher, I expected that there were multiple realities of the research phenomenon that could be interpreted in diverse ways. The chosen ontology for this study was realism. Mukumbang (2023) states that realism “assumes that there is a ‘real social world’ that can be observed objectively” (p. 94). In this study, I read scholarly articles about teacher identity construction. Therefore, I believe that teacher identity is constructed in different environments which have an influence on teacher identity.

### **3.2.2 *Epistemology***

The epistemology of the paradigm is that the researcher investigates knowledge by being inside (emic approach) to understand the phenomenon. I am investigating the study by being a researcher–participant. In epistemology, the

researcher aims to uncover knowledge to reach reality (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Epistemology is the possibility of finding out the truth about the world. Knowledge is constructed and known by our lived experiences. The study was about me as a Black male beginner FETP teacher who was teaching in the IP. My beginner teacher identity was influenced by many factors such as gender, environment, and others. Therefore, my beginner teacher identity was shaped by my reality.

The epistemology paradigm of this study is interpretivism. Interpretivist researchers believe that reality is not objective but is socially constructed (Maree, 2020). Rahi (2017) adds that the “interpretive paradigm believes in the deep understanding of a concept and explores the understanding of the world in which they live” (p. 1). The interpretive researcher’s life is the life that they understand as knowledge. Researchers in interpretivism believe that reality is based on people’s experiences of the external world (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021) and believe in the knowledge that they have constructed. Tubey et al. (2015) state, “The interpretive research paradigm views reality and meaning making as socially constructed and it holds that people make their sense of social realities” (p. 225). This study is about my lived experience as a beginner Black male teacher who was qualified to teach in the FETP but moved to teach in the IP. My identity was influenced by male factors, such as my background, gender, race, and culture. The epistemological stance for this study was subjective.

### ***3.2.2 Methodological paradigm***

Methodology is explained as “the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes” (Al-Ababneh, 2020, p. 77). The selected methodology was the qualitative methodological paradigm. A qualitative study is



multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative naturalistic approach to its subject matter (Maree, 2020). A qualitative methodology helps in the understanding of why things are the way they are in the social world, and why people act as they do (Al-Ababneh, 2020), how certain decisions are made, and how the intervention may change people view the world (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). My decision to act and behave when changing from the FETP to the IP gave meaning to my beginner teacher identity. In a qualitative study, data is non-numeric and the data is represented in words (Bansal et al., 2018). My voice as a researcher and a participant in this study will be heard by others. I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of my own beginner teacher identity and my experiences in the IP as a qualified beginner Black male FETP teacher.

All methodologies, such as quantitative, mixed-method, and qualitative research methods have limitations. Limitations are the impact that influence the findings of the phenomenon studied. A limitation is defined as “represent[ing] weaknesses within the study that may influence [the] outcomes and conclusions of the research” (Ross & Bibler Zaidi, 2019, p. 261). As a researcher, I looked for things that could negatively influence the study. Qualitative research might, for instance, leave out contextual sensitivities and focus more on experiences and meaning (Rahman, 2020). This limitation could be overcome by not focusing too much on the experience but on other imperative issues in the study. In this study, I wanted to understand my teacher identity construction as a Black man in the IP. In my stories, I portrayed the gender and cultural context of how I was raised in my culture and how my gender influenced my personal identity which, in turn, influenced my teacher identity.

The advantage of choosing a qualitative methodology is that it allows people to speak up and allow for new evidence and knowledge (Mohajan, 2018). This research

constructed a piece of new knowledge and evidence in the area of teacher identity research. The method was advantageous to my study because it allowed me, as a researcher and participant in this study, to speak out about my experiences of my beginner teacher identity construction in the IP. These experiences included my background, culture, and gender as a Black man in the construction of my teacher identity. The new knowledge that was constructed in this research is in the field of teacher identity and Black studies.

### **3.3 Research Design**

A research design is described as a blueprint for studying the research problem. It is a blueprint of how to conduct research. According to Rahi (2017), a research design is like a strategy in which a research strategy is defined as “a process of collecting and interpreting data with a clear objective” (p. 2). The research design of an autoethnographic study has a specific frame which includes the research questions, theoretical framework, pragmatic stances, methodological process, data collection, and data generation (Aboo, 2021; Mlangeni, 2019). In the research process, data collection, data analysis, and report writing are part of the research design procedures (Creswell, 2021). The study was about my beginner teacher identity construction; hence an autoethnography was selected as the research design for this study. Autoethnography allowed me to gather information on my teacher identity construction as a Black male beginner teacher in the IP as my research topic. In this section, I discuss autoethnography as my research design, the type of autoethnography that was selected, and the benefits, constraints, and challenges of the selected research design.

### **3.3.1 Autoethnography as the chosen research design**

The term autoethnography was first used in the 1970s when “it was used to describe studies in which cultural members gave an understanding of their own cultures” (Mlangeni, 2019, p. 35). In the 1980s, autoethnography was seen as a disciplinary drift as it expanded beyond the anthropology and was incorporated into more literary modes of analysis, but the method was not consolidated as a qualitative research method (Gannon, 2017). Later, “during the 1990s, the literary impulse in autoethnography continued, and it began to appear as a research method with wide disciplinary scope” (Gannon, 2017, p. 2). Autoethnography comes from the social sciences and anthropology because the autobiography narrative is familiar to anthropologists and social scientists (Anderson, 2006).

Autoethnography is described as an approach that “uses personal experience (auto) to describe and interpret (graphy) cultural texts, experiences, beliefs, and practices (ethno)” (Adams et al., 2017, p. 1). Ellis et al. (2011) add that autoethnography is “a researcher’s subjectivity, reflexivity, and personal experience (auto) in an attempt to represent (graphy) cultural experiences (ethno)” (p. 1). Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that uses data about the self and its context to gain an understanding of the connectivity between the self and others within the same context (Ngunjiri et al., 2010). Autoethnography is like other research approaches such as ethnography, self-study, and narrative inquiry. This approach examines how relationships are understood by people and also how they understand their sociocultural context (Hughes & Pennington, 2017). An autoethnography not only considers the self but also others who are connected to the self; it is a form of self-narrative (Bennett & Varghese, 2021). The autoethnography approach combines autobiography and ethnography (Ellis et al., 2011). According to the Oxford English

dictionary (Stevenson, 2010), an autobiography is a written story of an individual's own life. Ethnography research has been used both by sociologists and anthropologists to investigate the understanding of how people create and experience their worlds. It is regarded as the product of methodologies that share the assumptions of personal engagement with the subject, which is key to understanding a particular culture or social setting (Hammersley, 2018; Till, 2009).

The autoethnography approach for this study was suitable because the study was about my personal experiences as a Black male beginner teacher who was a qualified FETP teacher working in the IP. In this study, I investigated my beginner teacher identity construction. I wanted to know and understand how and why I constructed my beginner teacher identity in the way I did in the phase in which I was not trained. My journey as a Black male teacher started in the FETP as a student teacher and then I transited to the IP as a permanent teacher. An autoethnography definition by Ellis et al. (2010) includes cultural experiences. This aspect is relevant and related to this study as I am a Black man teaching in the IP. The study is written from my personal experiences.

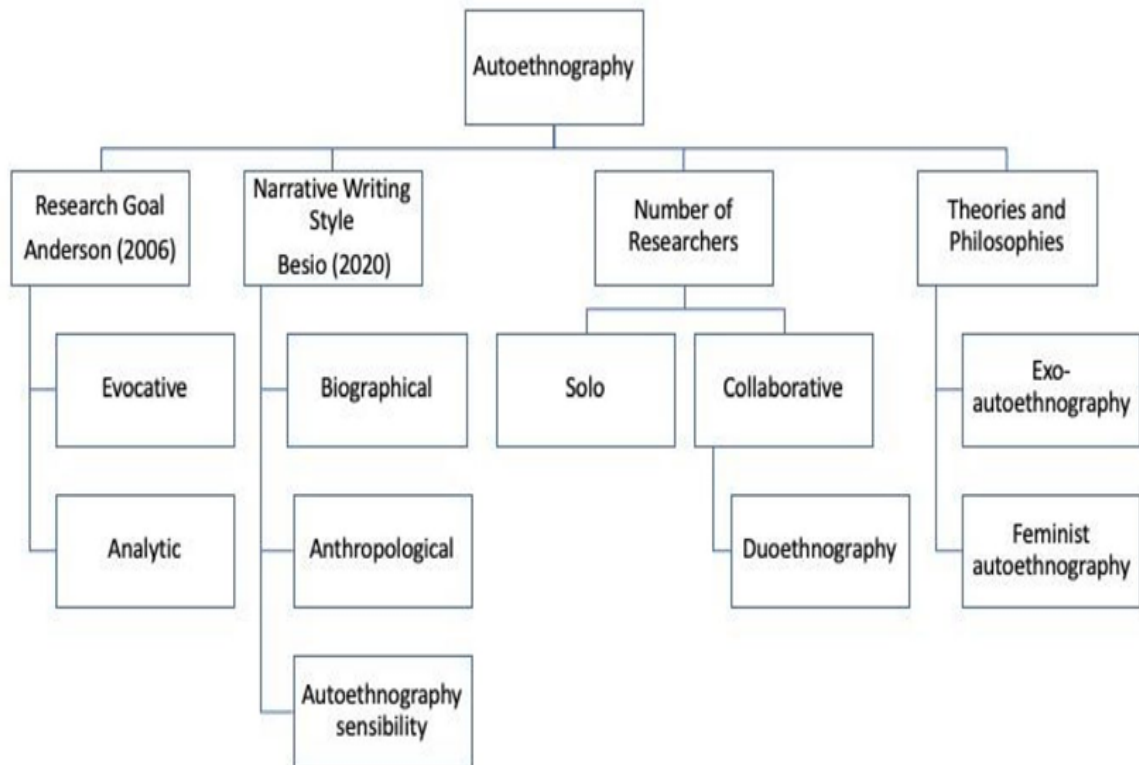
Analytical autoethnography and evocative autoethnography are the best-known autoethnographies, as described by Hughes and Pennington (2017) although there are other types of autoethnography as mentioned by Mao et al. (2023). In this study, I only discuss analytical autoethnography and evocative autoethnography. These autoethnographies differ in that “emphasis is placed on the study of others, the researcher’s self and interaction with others, traditional analysis, and the interview context, as well as on power relationships” (Ellis et al., 2010, p. 15). Keoshkerian (2017) state that “an evocative autoethnography has evocation as its goal and it aims to create evocative and aesthetic thick descriptions of interpersonal and personal

experiences by finding patterns in interviews, filed notes, authorial voice, showing and telling, and using various *artefact*” (p. 21). Koay (2023) states that the goal of evocative autoethnographers is to “help their readers experience the lived experiences of the researchers, they present their stories in a form of rich detailed narratives” (p. 2).

Anderson (2006) explains that “analytical autoethnography is focusing on its characteristics, namely the researcher must be a full member in the research group or research settings; the researcher visibility must be clear in published texts” (p. 373). In analytical autoethnography, the analytical agenda is represented explicitly in the storytelling in which the stories are connected to the research findings and the theories. I conducted my study using analytical autoethnography because I wanted to connect my stories to the two theories that were merged to form the conceptual framework for my study (see section 2.10), that is, possible selves theory by Markus and Nurius (1986) and social role theory by Eagly (1987), and the findings of my study to understand how I constructed my teacher identity in the IP as a Black male beginner teacher. The next section explains more about analytical autoethnography as the chosen type of autoethnography for this study and its applicability (see section 3.3.2).

**Figure 2. 6**

*Types of Autoethnography (Mao et al, 2023)*



### **3.3.2 Analytic autoethnography**

Autoethnography researchers write about their own lives, which are used as a case, and their own experiences to generate data to understand larger social processes in analytic autoethnography (Smith, 2021). Anderson (2006) defines analytic autoethnography as

ethnographic work in which the researcher is a full member in the research group or setting, visible as such a member in the researcher’s published texts and committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena. (p. 375)

Analytical autoethnography is used to understand a person's growth, analysis of their culture, and social inequality (Smith, 2021). I investigated my personal and professional growth as a beginner FETP Black male teacher in the IP. The social injustice that I faced was that male teachers are not well-trusted to teach young children. The stereotype is that FP and IP are more suitable for female teachers than male teachers. The lived experience of a beginner FETP Black male teacher in the IP was explored in this study.

### ***3.3.3 Benefits of an autoethnography***

The benefit of using autoethnography as a research methodology is that it allows the researcher to understand his or her their position (Abraham, 2018). Autoethnography helps the researcher to investigate their own experiences and to understand the self in a stronger way (Abraham, 2018). Using this research design helped me, as an insider in the research, to understand myself and to better understand others as people who experience a similar phenomenon.

### ***3.3.4 Constraints of an autoethnography***

The advantage of autoethnography is that it exposes the researcher's inner feelings and thoughts. Honesty and willingness for the researcher to self-disclose is therefore required (Méndez, 2013). As a research participant, it was not easy to open up about my feelings before I started the journey of writing this study. The study helped me to reflect on the feelings and thoughts that I kept hidden for a long time. Feelings which might be unpleasant are also evoked in the reader since the connections the reader makes to the narrative cannot be predicted (Méndez, 2013). Vulnerability is "part of what makes reading autoethnographic works so compelling, as researchers expose their pains, hurt, loss, grief, heartbreaks, and other emotions experienced as

they travail through events in their lives” (Ngunjiri et al., 2010, p. 8). As the researcher–participant of this study, I needed to be willing to self-disclose and talk about my feelings and thoughts and be true to myself and my readers.

### **3.3.5 Dealing with the challenges of autoethnography**

The book *Autoethnography as a Method* by Chang (2008) mentions five pitfalls of doing an autoethnography that a researcher should avoid. These are:

(1) excessive focus on self in isolation from others; (2) overemphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation; (3) exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source; (4) negligence of ethical standards regarding others in self-narratives; and (5) inappropriate application of the label autoethnography (p. 54).

The first pitfall is excessive focus on the self, in isolation from others. Even though the study is about me as the sole participant, it does not exclude the sociocultural context of this study. Significantly, the ethno in autoethnography discusses the social-cultural context of the study, which in this study is a Black man. When engaging with my narrative stories, I made sure that I focused not only on myself but on others who were part of the events I experienced. The others who had been part of my experiences were asked to write verisimilitude letters, and my conversations with them gave more meaning to my experiences.

To avoid the second pitfall, which is the overemphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation, I reminded myself that my experiences were part of culture, society, and school, which I had to include and analyse throughout the study, since they contributed to my teacher identity construction.



The third pitfall is the exclusive reliance on personal memory and recall as a data source. This pitfall means that autoethnography researchers should not only focus on memory. To avoid only relying on my memory, I added external data such as photographs to add trustworthiness to my self-reflective stories, but I also included verisimilitude from the chosen co-constructors of this study and had conversations with my co-constructors.

The fourth pitfall is the negligence of ethical standards regarding others in self-narratives. To not neglect the ethical standards of the study regarding others, I used pseudonyms to the co-constructors who did not want to use their real name. Only my friend asked to be kept anonymous. The use of pseudonyms was to hide and protect his identity in this study. My family, former teacher and colleague wanted not to be kept anonymous. I use their real names throughout the study. My co-constructors signed consent forms to participate in this study. A letter of invitation was sent to them which explained the ethical considerations.

The last and fifth pitfall is the inappropriate application of the label autoethnography. The study uses autoethnography study as a research method. To focus on my experiences as the sole participant, after studying and reading more about autoethnography, I realised that it was more than just focusing on the self. I helped my co-constructors and readers to understand what autoethnography is all about.

### **3.4 Data Collection and Generation**

A systematic approach is taken in “autoethnography such as data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the self and social phenomena which involve the self” (Ngunjiri et al., 2010,p.21). Data collection is when a researcher uses various tools to collect data for the study. Data is a piece of information that can be found in the

environment as defined by Athanasou & Maree (2012). For autoethnographers to emphasise the empirical dimension of qualitative study and contextualise the cultural aspects of ethnography, they must use a wide range of data collection tools (Keleş, 2022). Data can be collected in many forms such as shared notes of on-field experience, journal records, interviews, observations, and written short stories (Maree, 2020). Autoethnographers not only collect the research data but are also the subjects of the research (Bennett & Varghese, 2021). The following data tools were used to generate data in this research: memory work, self-interview, and external data. I also collected photographs and wrote data from personal memory.

#### **3.4.1 *Memory work and self-interview***

Our memory holds much data. Through the memories we have, we ground our analysis and these inform our epistemology and methodologies (Sidorenko, 2022). Personal memory provides “the most source of data in autoethnography” (Ramalho-de-Oliveira, 2020, p. 159). Autoethnographers use memory to recall their lived experiences of the investigated phenomenon. I used my memory to recall all the lived experiences that were necessary to respond to my research questions in this study. In writing my stories from memory, I recalled being a beginner Black male teacher in the IP.

In conducting the memory work, I focused on the events that happened before I became a teacher and after I qualified to be a teacher. I selected these events because they were fundamental to this study (Mlangeni, 2019). Sometimes when I recalled events in my memory, I had limited information or did not know how to put the information into words. I had to take some time and use the external data such as photographs to go deep into my memory. Conducting memory work led me to have an

unpleasant moment and anxiety about recalling things that hurt me in my life as a beginner Black male teacher (Rosenberg, 2016).

Another memory work method used in this study is self-interview. I used a self-interview to recall all the events that happened. Keightley et al. (2012) argue that self-interview

aims to incorporate both of these features, firstly by allowing space for reflection and pauses as it can be stopped and resumed at any time by the participant, and secondly by facilitating this reflection by using a guide sheet, and at the same time allowing the processes and practices of remembering to be recorded as they are performed during the time of the interview. (p. 512)

The questions that a person asks in a self-interview are responded to through a critical review of their past and present experiences (Pasa, 2019).

I went deep inside my mind and asked myself questions about my beginner teacher identity as a Black male in a phase I was not qualified to teach. I used self-interview to ask myself questions that I had never asked myself before about my beginner teacher identity. I recorded all the memories that came to my mind when I was doing the self-interview in a research journal. I did not have any specific time to do the self-interview. I was always questioning myself about my teacher identity construction through the data collection stage.

### **3.4.2 External data**

External data were used in autoethnography research are photographs, reports, letters, diaries, and other documents and artefacts that are relevant to the study (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022). In this study, I went through the photographs of others and myself from my childhood to the present and also the photographs that I had taken

during my years of teaching in the IP. I have included a photograph of me as a baby, my father's photograph at the military camp, my mother's photograph at her previous job, a photograph with my fiancé, and photographs that were taken with learners. I revisited all these photographs to understand how my identity had been constructed throughout all these years. The other external data included in this study was my professional development plan which I revisited to understand what my future plans were and how the plan had influenced my current self, which was my future self during its writing.

The advantage of using external data such as photographs was that the data had already been collected and kept safe (Dooley, 2015). Previously, I had not known that such memories of my life could be used as my data in this study. This saved me a lot of time and money in conducting the study. The photographs were use as a tool to articulate my thoughts and experiences. Using this method taught me that every piece of an artefact in our lives is important as it can be used in the future for research purposes.

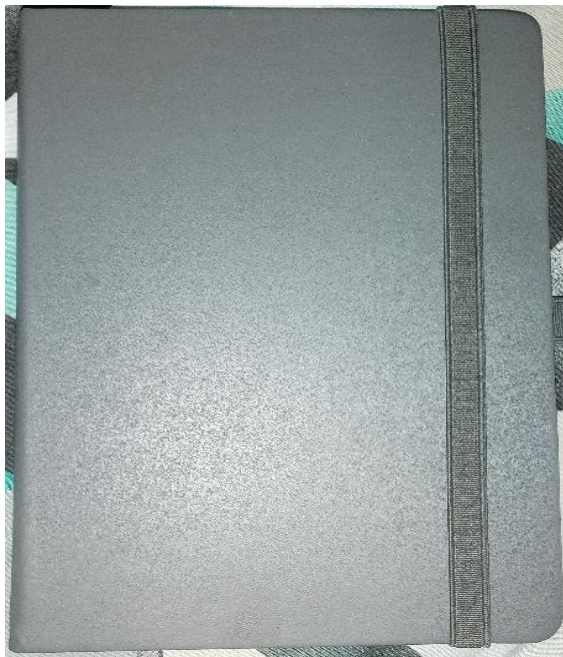
### **3.4.3 *Research journal***

During the data collection stage in this study, I bought a journal online on Takealot to write my self-reflective stories. I kept a research journal in which I wrote about my feelings, emotions, and thoughts during the data collection process. The research journal helped me to record the events and experiences that had happened. The experiences that were included in my journal were those of my schooling journey, my family and my experiences at the IP as a Black male FETP teacher, and the experiences of how I constructed my teacher identity in the IP. It was the first time that I had bought a journal to write my stories. At first, I was not sure if the journal would be useful for my research because I am a person who does not write about personal

stories. I remember having my journal and a pen in my hand and wondering how I should begin writing reflective stories. I started to write a paragraph about myself. When I was writing in my journal, I felt like I was exposing myself to the world. I did not feel comfortable at first when I started writing. I then spent weeks trying to find a way to start with my data generation. I then went on to the focus, purpose, and research question. After revisiting the purpose, focus, and research question, I started to write my self-reflective stories.

**Figure 2. 7**

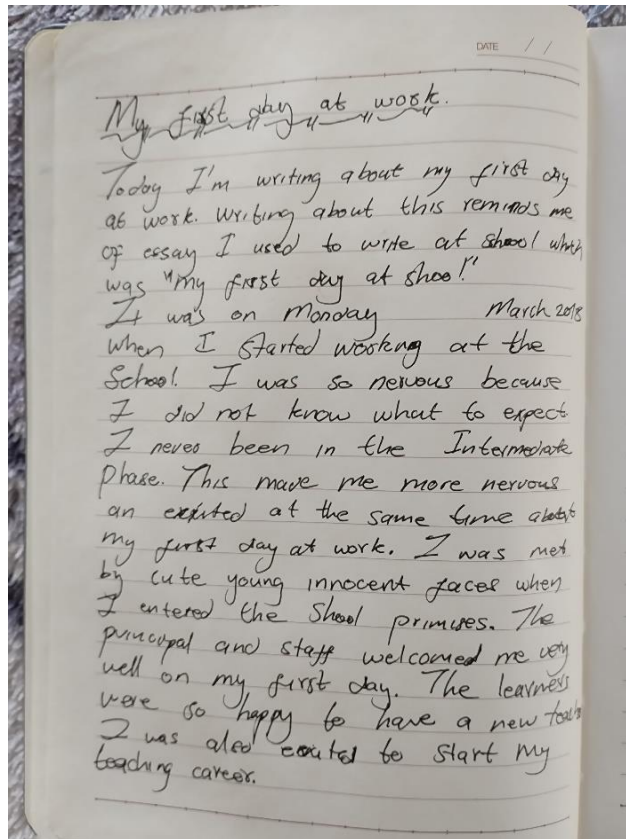
*The Journal I Bought to Write Self-Reflective Stories*



I always carried my journal with me during the course of the study. When something came up in my mind, I would write it in the journal. This helped me not to forget my thoughts when I was writing my stories and I would always start reading what I had written in my journal. My stories were not in sequential form whenever I asked myself or reflected on my experiences, I would simply pick up a pen and start writing on a blank page.

**Figure 2. 8**

*Self-Reflective Story Written in my Journal*



**3.5 Selection of Participants for my Study**

**3.5.1 Myself as the sole participant**

In autoethnography, the researcher is at the centre of the investigation as the subject when they carry out the study and the object when the researcher is the participant who is investigated (Ngunjiri et al., 2010). The researcher does not separate from the study by being objective or subjective. The study I was investigating was not about others but only about myself as the sole participant. I explored my own teacher identity in this research as a beginner FETP Black male teacher in the IP.

### **3.5.2 Choosing co-constructors of knowledge**

When choosing my co-constructors of knowledge, I selected people who influenced my teacher identity. Co-constructors as a concept means learning from each other and expanding knowledge in cultural and social space (Brown et al., 1989). Choosing co-constructors helped me to understand the experiences I had had when constructing my beginner teacher identity as a Black man. In choosing the co-constructors I wanted to understand both the positive and negative influences they had on me. I chose friends, former teachers, colleagues, and family members who were my father- James Sibeko, mother- Jane Tsotetsi, sister Tshepiso Tsotetsi, and my fiancée- Kgomotso Senoamadi.

I contacted my co-constructors by telephone and WhatsApped them to ask them if they were interested in participating in the study. I explained to them what the research was about and thereafter I sent them an invitation to participate. After they read the invitation and were willing to participate, I sent them a consent form to sign. After they had returned the signed consent form, I started communicating with my co-constructors about the stories I had written.

Once the co-constructors were chosen, I sent the stories that I had written to them via email or WhatsApp. Sending them the stories was to validate that what I had written was true, and they were able to give me more information about what was missing in the stories. My co-constructors did not understand what was supposed to be written on the verisimilitude letter. To assist them, I used verisimilitude letters that had been written for other research as an example to my co-constructors. In Table 3.1, I list my co-constructors of knowledge and the reason I chose them to be in this study.

**Table 3. 1**

*My Co-Constructors of Knowledge and Reason for Inclusion in the Study*

| <b>Co-constructors of knowledge</b> | <b>Reason for inclusion</b>   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. My father                        | He has been in my life and supported me in the journey of my teaching career. |
| 2. My mother                        | She has been part of my journey since day one when I was born.                |
| 3. My sister                        | We spent most of our childhood together.                                      |
| 4. My fiancée                       | She has been there since my teacher education training.                       |
| 5. My friend                        | We attended school together and they were part of the event I experienced.    |
| 6. My colleague                     | A person I am working with and has been there since day one at my work.       |
| 7. My former teacher                | They motivated me to do well and influence my life at school.                 |

**3.5.3 Critical conversation with co-constructors**

During the data collection and analysis of this study, I had critical conversations with my co-constructors. The conversations were about how they should write the verisimilitude letters. My co-constructors had little knowledge about autoethnography research. I had these conversations via WhatsApp, telephone, and face to face. I met a few times with my friends for lunch on Saturdays to talk more about the way should they write the verisimilitude letters. Some of the co-constructors were extremely



interested in my study and specifically in how the autoethnography study would be conducted. We sometimes had long chats about how far I was with my studies.

I had to sit down and explain to my parents that I was authoring stories about my life which they were a part of. I had an informal conversation with my mother about my childhood. My parents did not understand what the research was all about. Before writing the stories, I had to make sure that they understood what I was writing about and how they were involved in this study as co-constructors.

### **3.6 The Process of Data Analysis**

As indicated earlier in Chapter 1, my data analysis used for this study was thematic analysis. The thematic analysis method directed the process of analysing my data. By employing this method, I was able to identify relevant themes for my study. I also incorporated the verisimilitude process for quality measures.

#### ***3.6.1 Overview of the data analysis***

Qualitative research was the methodological approach for this study. Qualitative data are usually grouped into themes or categories, and each is assigned a name (Maree, 2020). Analysing my data was not an easy process. I had to make sense of my stories and produce themes and sub-themes. In autoethnography studies, it is important to identify the key themes and discuss them in writing (Stahlke-Wall, 2016). The key themes identified in this study are discussed in Chapter 5. Before I could start with the process of analysing the data, I read many dissertations that had been written using an autoethnographic approach to see how the data were analysed. After reading examples and studies about data analysis, it became clear what I should do, and I started writing.

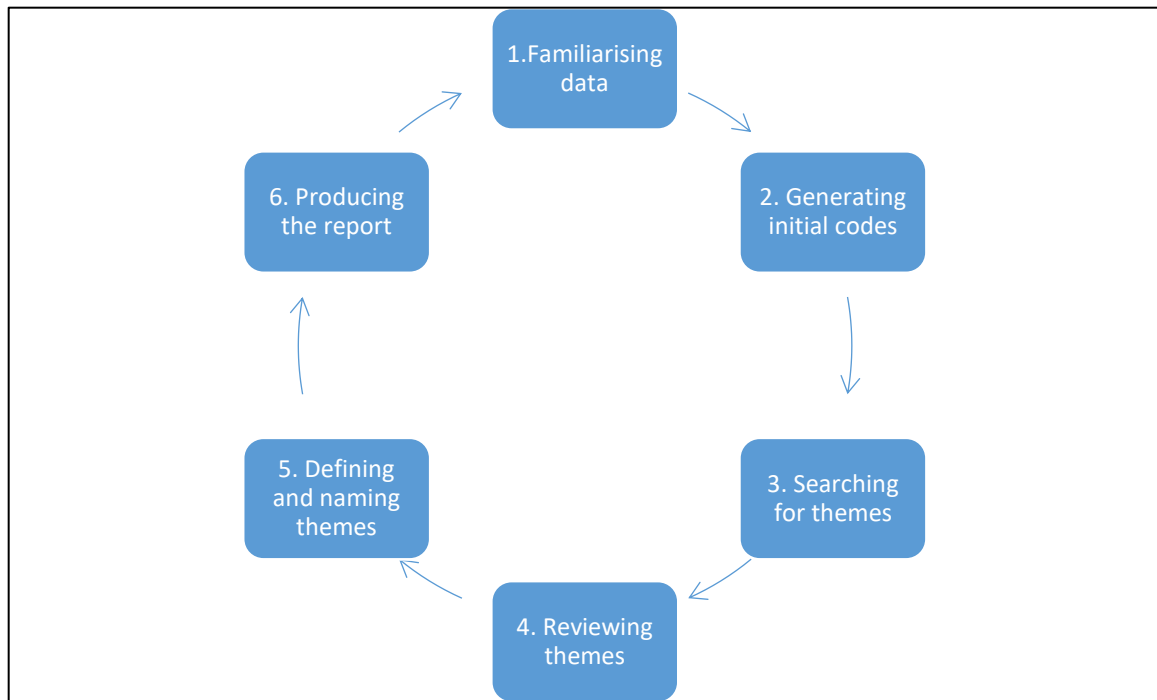
### **3.6.2 Thematic analysis**

I chose the method of thematic analysis for my data analysis to identify themes and sub-themes in my data and to respond to my research questions. Thematic analysis is the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Herzog et al. (2019) reason that thematic analysis “helps researchers to establish what research participants (for example, authors of texts or interviewees) consider important, how they categorise experiences and perceptions, what related attitudes they hold, and how various categories are associated with each other” (p. 9).

I followed Herzog et al.’s (2019) six steps of thematic data analysis. Using this method, the researcher needs to constantly reflect on the themes and sub-themes (Nowell et al., 2017). The method is not linear, and it needs a continuous looking backwards and forwards when the data is analysed (Nowell et al., 2017). When I was analysing my data, I looked backwards and forwards to see that I did not leave out any important information that might have been used in the themes or sub-themes. The six steps I used were: (1) familiarising yourself with your data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the report. These are illustrated in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3. 1**

*Data Analysis Process (Herzog et al., 2019)*



These are the steps I followed in analysing my data:

(1) Familiarising yourself with your data

I started to familiarise myself with the data during the stage of data collection. When I was writing the narrative stories, I was already looking for possible themes for my data analysis. I had a notebook in which I did my data analysis. The data corpus instrument used in this study was a notebook. I broke down the data on the data corpus, read the data, and actively engaged with it by searching for patterns of meaning. I added some patterns that I had already noticed during my data collection.

(2) Generating initial codes

I labelled the data following the research questions and organised it into meaningful groups. The data code carried out in the analysis was theory driven. The data code was done manually without the use of the software. I had a notebook where I wrote all the codes I had organised into meaningful groups.

### (3) Searching for themes

After the data had been coded, I then proceeded to search for themes and sub-themes. I asked myself what does and does not count as a piece of important information in my data. I re-read the data and constructed themes and sub-themes.

### (4) Reviewing themes

After searching for the themes and sub-themes in step 3, I had to make sure that the searched themes and sub-themes were cohesing together meaningfully. This was where I grouped the themes and sub-themes into categories, abandoned other themes, and renamed some themes.

### (5) Defining and naming themes

I specified the names of each theme and sub-theme according to the essence of each theme. I then looked at the themes and asked myself what the themes told me about the research questions. After I was satisfied with the themes, I then finalised the themes for the report.

### (6) Producing the report.

The final step was writing up the themes from the data analysis. Even though I had already started writing the themes in step 1, this was for the final product of the theme writing in this research.

## **3.7 Quality Measures of the Study**

The quality measures in this study that were used were trustworthiness, transferability, authenticity, confirmability, and verisimilitude. The different elements that constituted trustworthiness were validity, transferability, conformability, and credibility (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The criteria of trustworthiness is where the

researcher asks questions to identify whether the research findings can be trusted and are true as can be (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

### **3.7.1 Credibility**

Credibility is a factor that is significant for the results and credibility of participants and readers (Maree, 2020). The researcher's credibility in a qualitative study is when they describe their experiences and then confirm the research findings with the participants (Cope, 2014). Justifications are provided for whether to use a qualitative or quantitative approach (Connelly, 2016). I followed all the procedures for conducting qualitative research in this study. The credibility of the study was reinforced by the multiple data collection methods such as self-interview, memory work, and external data.

### **3.7.2 Confirmability**

The neutrality or degree of the findings of the research should be consistent and repeatable (Connelly, 2016). A researcher in qualitative research keeps detailed notes of all their decisions and their analysis as it progresses in the research (Connelly, 2016). All the findings of this research were saved and used in the progress of the analysis of data. Confirmability of qualitative research means that the results may perhaps be confirmed and corroborated by others (Moon et al., 2016). I hope that the findings of the research will remain the same even if the data is collected using a different methodology, research design, or data collection for a similar research study.

### **3.7.3 Transferability**

Transferability “does not involve generalised claims but makes connections between the elements of study and the co-constructors of knowledge own experiences” (Athanasou & Maree, 2012, p. 124). Athanasou and Maree (2012) further

explain that “the complete picture of the study must be provided to the co-constructors of knowledge to make it transferable to their context” (p. 124). Willis et al. (2007) explain that “transferability as the situation where results and findings of one study can be used for future research in another study with a different context” (p. 222).

In autoethnography, the researcher is the main participant in the study, therefore, it might not be easy to use this study for future studies. The autoethnography is written from the self-narratives which are the true feelings of the participant. However, the results of this study might be a motivation for future research studies in the same context.

#### **3.7.4 Authenticity**

A researcher in an autoethnography needs to “describe” and “investigate” the authenticity of their experience (Edwards, 2021, p. 3). Ademowo (2023) describes authenticity as “the ability to be true to oneself and one's experiences, without trying to conform to dominant cultural norms or expectations” (p. 164). This ability in authenticity involves being focused, and identifying and separating norms. In this autoethnographic study, I attained authenticity through narratives in which my feelings and thoughts were shared. The feelings and thoughts in this study are a true sense of me, since I am the sole participant. I show the authenticity of this study through the honesty of the self-reflective narratives I have written.

#### **3.7.5 Verisimilitude**

Verisimilitude is “to produce text that can ‘simulate’ the social worlds being researched” (Gibson, 2021). Verisimilitude is the central validity criterion for self-study (Mlangeni, 2019). Verisimilitude is an important principle in judging the worth of a narrative inquiry. To apply verisimilitude in the study, I requested that my friends,

family, and colleagues wrote letters that would validate the quality of the study since they were close to me and had seen my life as a beginner teacher. Verisimilitude was used as a validation criterion for this study. The verisimilitude helped in the understanding of the construction of my beginner teacher identity.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

Doing an autoethnography study means that you are letting yourself emotionally open the doors of hurt that were closed. An autoethnography can also lead to opening old wounds in the participants. It is important to follow and observe ethical considerations such as context, accountability, community, and truthfulness in autoethnography studies (Forber-Pratt, 2015). Autoethnography is a study that deals with stories that contain other people's information (Aboo, 2021).

#### ***3.8.1 Basic ethical considerations***

In this section, I elaborate on the ethical considerations that I had to follow before I conducted the fieldwork of the research study. Once I had defended my research to the Faculty of Education Committee and passed the defence, I was granted permission to apply for ethics clearance. I applied for an ethical clearance certificate from the faculty before I could start collecting data for the study. The ethical clearance application was approved. I was the sole participant in this study and my family and friends were the co-constructors of knowledge. Before they could be my co-constructors, I had to ask them each to sign a consent form. The consent form was to make sure that they understood the purpose of the research and that they were volunteering to be co-constructors. The consent form stated that they could withdraw from the study at any time they felt the need to do so and that they can choose whether their identities should be protected by using pseudonyms instead of their real names.

### **3.8.2 Informed consent**

Before I applied for my ethical clearance certificate, I had to write a consent form detailing all the ethics that the study would follow. When the ethical clearance was approved, I sent an invitation letter to people I thought could be my co-constructors. I explained to them that they were not participants in this study but would be co-constructors of knowledge. I explained the procedure and process of research ethics. I used simple and understandable language when explaining it to them so that they would not be confused by some of the terminology used on the consent form. I also explained the background, purpose, and focus of the study. They signed the consent forms once they understood and agreed to be co-constructors.

### **3.8.3 Potential for harm**

To avoid potential harm to co-constructors in this study, the researcher should use pseudonyms to protect the identity of people in their life (Cooper & Lilyea, 2022). I did not have a problem using my name as the sole participant in this study. I feel comfortable being known around the world through this study. When I was writing my stories, I focused not only on the potential harm but also on the potential good (Foster et al., 2006). I balanced my stories on both sides; the stories did not have to be too good to be true. Honesty was applied in drafting the stories. In writing my self-narratives, I made sure that I kept the stories from being harmful. If I felt that the story might lead to harm, I changed it to keep it on the good side, while keeping it honest.

### **3.8.4 Honesty**

Autoethnography is a study that focuses on the self, allowing the researcher to share their narrative with the world. Stories must be told in honesty to provide credibility for the study (Lapadat, 2017). When the researcher writes stories about the



self, they need to be honest (Foster et al., 2006), however, the researcher may choose what they want to share through their self-reflection stories. I have written my stories honestly. Verisimilitude letters were used to confirm the validity of my self-reflective stories.

### **3.9 Additional Ethical Principles When Doing Autoethnographic Work**

An autoethnographic study comes with specific ethical considerations as the self-reflective written by the researcher includes others as role players and has a direct influence on the role players in the study (Sikes, 2015). I had to be cautious not to damage the self-image of the role players who were mentioned in this study.

#### ***3.9.1 Caring for my co-constructors***

In this study, I protected my co-constructors by explaining to them what the purpose of the research study was. My co-constructors were asked to sign consent forms and I informed them that their identities were going to be hidden. In my stories, I used pseudonyms for my co-constructors, and I asked my family members if they wanted to remain anonymous or if they were free to be identified using their real names in the study. They agreed not to remain anonymous and use their real names in the study.

When I was writing the self-reflection stories, some people affected my personal and teacher identity in positive way but also in a negative way. The goal of the study was not to seek revenge on those who had negatively affected my teacher identity construction. I explained to my co-constructors of knowledge that the study was about my understanding of my teacher identity construction and how they had been role players in the construction process.

### **3.9.2 *Caring for myself as the main participant***

In autoethnography, the researcher is the sole participant who is vulnerable in the study (Ngunjiri et al., 2010). I faced many vulnerable moments when writing my self-reflective stories. Some of the self-reflective stories were hurtful and I had to relive the memory I had closed in the past. I opened old wounds when I was writing my stories. There were times when I did not want to write about myself in this study. I did not know how I was supposed to write about what was hurting me. The autoethnography study has been an eye-opener for my personal and professional identity.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

This section covered the research methodology and design of this study which included the paradigm stances, research data collection, and data documentation. It looked in depth at the research design of autoethnography as the chosen design and the instruments that were used to collect the data. The instruments for data collection included memory work, self-interview, and external data such as photographs, letters, and others. The conclusion of this section covered the data analysis and interpretation; thematic analysis was chosen for the study. The following chapter consists of my stories which were written in the form of self-reflective narratives.

## **Chapter 4: My Autoethnography Stories**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In Chapter 3, I discussed the research methodology and design of the study and my reasons for choosing autoethnography as the research design for my study. In this chapter, Chapter 4, I write my autoethnography stories which are analysed and interpreted in Chapter 5.

I am the sole participant in this study. The study focus was to explore my teacher identity construction as a Black male beginner teacher in the IP. The study purpose was to understand and make sense of my experiences as a beginner male FETP teacher in the IP. Data was generated through a self-reflective story. I used the techniques I mentioned in Chapter 3 to generate my self-reflective narratives using various techniques, such as memory work, self-interview, external data, and a research journal.

In this chapter, I begin by introducing myself and my family members who play a huge role in my life and teaching career. I then introduce my memories which span my schooling years to my first year of teaching.

### **4.2 Introducing Myself and My Family**

Stories make us who we are in life. They are the life experiences of individuals that are shared with other people. We share or tell our lived lives through storytelling and writing. People's memories are also made up of stories. I believe that my memories have made me the person I am today. A story can be about the past, present, and what we want to be and become in the future. A story makes us who we are and defines our identities as human beings. In writing my stories for this study, I start by introducing myself in the form of a life timeline. The timeline includes the

important years of my schooling and personal life. I then continue to write about my family members and the important periods of my life. I am writing this autoethnography to share my story of how my beginner teacher's identity has been constructed. I also introduce others who have influenced my stories.

**Figure 4. 1**

*Research Journal Entry 4*

**Research journal entry 03 March 2023**

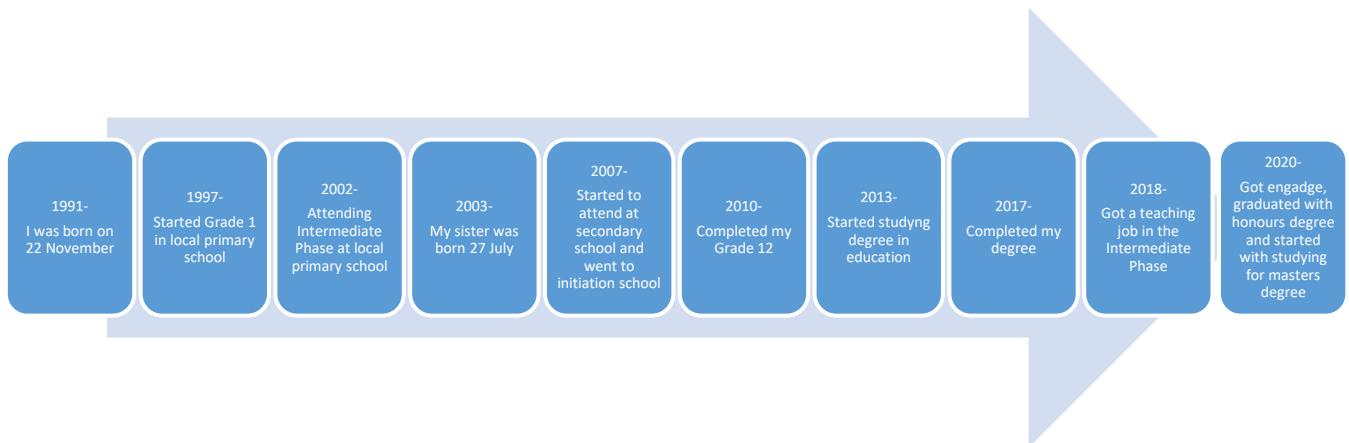
Today I started to introduce myself and my family in my autoethnography study. I felt emotional about writing about my personal life and family. I felt like I was exposing myself to the world. I did not know how to start to write my autoethnographic stories. One of the things that hurt me is that I was not able to talk much about my biological father. It has made me sad that my biological father never took part in my life. At the end of my thoughts, I realise that I have someone I call father and who has accepted me as his child.

### 4.2.1 Introducing myself

The figure below is a timeline representing my life from my birth to graduation.

**Figure 4. 2**

*My Life Timeline*



My name is Sibusiso Michael Moriye, but I am well known as Sbuda or Sibudu. I am a 31-year-old Black South African male, a Sepedi language speaker. The name Sibusiso is a Zulu name which means blessing. Even though I have a Zulu name, I refer to myself as a Pedi person. I was born and raised with the maternal side of my family and have adopted their Sepedi language and culture. I teach in a rural school that goes from Grade R to 7. The school only has Black teachers and Black learners. The African languages that are offered at the school are IsiZulu and Sepedi.

I am the firstborn child on my mother's side, and I have one sibling – a sister. I am short in height and have dark skin. I consider myself a shy person. I am an introvert. I met my fiancée at the university and we have now been engaged for a year and a couple of months. We decided to move in together after our lobola negotiations and now live together in our home in the rural area where I am currently working.

I was born on 22 November 1991 at a place called Pieterskraal, around the KwaNdebele area in Mpumalanga province. I use my mother's surname because my parents were never married. I am a Sepedi speaker as my mother is a Pedi, even

though my father is a Zulu. In Sepedi culture, they say that ngwana ke wa kgomo, which translates to a child belonging to the cows. This means a child belongs to the maternal side of the family if the father did not pay mahadi or hlaolo. Hlaolo is a traditional practice where an amount is paid to the woman's family by the man for impregnating their daughter out of wedlock (Moosa & Bhana, 2023). To pay damage money gives a man full control over their children in terms of performing traditional rituals. However, even if the biological father of a child does not pay hlaolo or mahadi and the child takes their mother's surname, this does not mean that the father can forego his responsibilities to support his children.

### **Figure 4. 3**

*A Picture of Me as a Baby*



I began my schooling at Buthelalani Primary School, which teaches from Grade R to Grade 3, then I moved to middle school, which was close to my primary school. This was Vusa Junior Primary School where I attended Grades 4 to 6. I attended secondary school at Madlayedwa Senior Secondary School for Grades 7 to 12. Based

on my matriculation results, I managed to obtain admission to a bachelor's degree. After school I took a gap year after which I applied to study for a teaching degree in the following year. To fund my studies, I applied for teaching bursaries at the provincial and Funzalushaka offices. I did not get a bursary to study for the degree but my studies were funded by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme. I was accepted and so I moved to Pretoria to study for a four-year Bachelor of Education degree. After I had completed my bachelor's degree, but I did not secure a teaching post in the FET Phase as I had wanted, so I extended my search, and eventually got a teaching post for the IP. I am now a teacher in the IP.

Two years after completing my undergraduate degree I pursued my postgraduate studies by studying for a BEd Honours in Teacher Education and Professional Development. A year after completing my honours degree, I again wanted to continue with my studies, so I applied for a master's degree in Curriculum and Instructional Design and Development. Unfortunately, I was not accepted as the supervisor did not have the capacity to take on more students. However, I did not give up and applied for the following year (which was 2022) and was accepted. I have future goals for my education such as obtaining a Doctor of Philosophy in Education and producing research papers to solve challenging issues in education.

My hobbies are music, gardening and travelling. I loved gardening because one of my subjects at school was Agricultural Sciences. In this subject, we learned about plants and animals. In Grade 10, we had a practical where we planted vegetables in the school garden and trees in the schoolyard. I fell in love with planting; in fact, I even considered a career in horticulture. I started a small garden at home where I spend most of my time whenever I want to have peace of mind. At university, I made time to visit the botanical gardens where I would go around and check out the different plants

and trees. It refreshes my mind to be around nature. Now I use my garden to refresh myself by watering the plants. The part I love most about gardening is harvest time. After many months of watering and pruning the plants, harvesting is the reward.

#### **Figure 4. 4**

*My Vegetable Garden*



Even when I was not yet qualified to teach, I needed to change my current situation in order to be successful in life in the future. I used a vision board to visualise my success. To create my vision board, I collected magazines and newspapers. Unfortunately, living in the digital world meant that the old-school system for creating my vision board was not successful. I then went to the internet to search for ideas to create a vision board digitally. At first I encountered challenges using the website when starting to create my vision board but I ended up creating something that had meaning to me, even though I felt like I did not creatively draw my vision board as I would have done using magazines and newspapers.



**Figure 4. 5**

*My Vision Board*



On my vision board, I have words and pictures to explain my future self. A home represents building and having a wonderful house where I will have a garden. A doctoral degree picture has been added to my vision board because I plan to continue with my studies. I also have a picture of a child learning, which represents my workplace in which the children I want to teach are learning and focusing on their studies. A family picture represents a happy family. My friends picture represents spending time with close friends and being there for them. The money picture means that I plan to have money that will be enough for me to reach and take care of my goals. I also included words like focus, learn, dream, and do it. The word “focus” means that I need to focus on myself, my family, and those who are close to me. The word

“learn” motivates me to learn more about life, in my career, while the word “dream” means that I should not stop dreaming, I should continue having dreams. The last words “do it” mean that I need to do whatever my plans, dreams, and goals are.

#### **4.2.2 My Father – James Sibeko**

I will refer to my biological father as “Biological father” and my stepfather as “Father”. My biological father was never around but that did not stop me from having someone I call father. It was very painful not having a father figure as I was growing up. I remember there were times at school when the administrator would come to the classroom and ask each of us whether we were living with both parents or whose parents were deceased. I only answered that I had my mother. I did not like to be asked questions about my biological father. I did not know his whereabouts and I only saw him maybe once in three years. During Father’s Day month, which is the last Sunday of July each year, at primary school we would be given pages to write a Father’s Day card. I did it because it was instruction from the teacher, but after that I would just tear the card up and throw it in the bin. Writing the card brought me many hurtful emotions. That was when I asked myself many questions about my biological father. When he eventually did come to visit me, he was always visited empty-handed. Not a toy, clothes, or gift did he bring for me. I never had a conversation or asked my mother about my biological father's whereabouts. Time went by and I was able to cope, no longer having many questions.

They always say that it is not easy for a man to love children who are not his. However, for me, it was different. I met my stepfather. In this narrative, I call him “father” because I feel so blessed to have met a man who sees and loves me as his son. I call my biological father by “biological father”.

I first met my father when I was in Grade 10. I used to call him Malome, a Sepedi word that means uncle, to show him respect because he and my mother were not married at that time. In our culture when a man marries a woman who has children, the children belong to him as his own. In Sepedi, they say, O e raka le dinamane, which means that children belong to the man who marries the mother.

When I was in my first year at university, my mother married my stepfather. I changed from calling him uncle to calling him father. Even though I was not forced to call him father, I do refer to him as a father. In fact, I usually prefer to call him by his clan name, Maziya, because calling a man by his clan name shows a great deal of respect in our culture.

We would sometimes have a beer together and have a conversation about soccer, cars, marriage, and things that are stereotypically related to men. I remember one of our conversations about not being a weak man in the house. He advised me that a man should be strong and be able to protect and take care of his family. After I got engaged, he advised me that now I had a fiancée and a stable career, I should start my own family.

My father, Maziya, is my pillar of strength. When I have problems or challenges in my life, he is the person I talk to. Sometimes we talk on the phone about the solutions to my problems. In everything I do, I ask for his guidance and advice. Thus, I have never felt that a father was missing from my life. For me, his presence means a lot and I have learned that the father–son relationship is not about blood but the love that one receives from the other.

## Figure 4. 6

*Picture of My Father at Military Camp*



My father worked in the military for 20 years. When I first met him, he was working part-time as a trainer. He left the military with the rank of corporal but he could not continue with his military career after he became very ill. We used to talk about military training, work, ranks, and other things. I remember when I took a gap year, I went to him to ask for advice about a military career and careers in the military. I learned a lot from him about the military and that it is not only about shooting, killing, or preparing for war. I was considering going into the military when I got a letter that I was accepted to study teaching.

When I told my father that I had decided to choose teaching as a career, he told me that teaching was a career made for women. He said that I should go for a career in a male-dominated field, like engineering. We even talked about teachers' salaries which are not enough in the world of today. We talked about how disrespectful learners of this generation are. I was not happy because I felt like I was making the wrong decision in choosing teaching as a career. I remember he advised me that learners

can sometimes make a teacher lose their temper. He said that most men would not tolerate the behaviour of this generation of learners.

He mentioned that as corporal punishment was no longer implemented in schools, it was hard for teachers to discipline learners. A few weeks previously, there had been an article about a learner stabbing a teacher at the school. He showed me the article in the newspaper and said that these young children were into drugs and that teachers should be trained themselves in schools. Uhm, maybe he said this because he was a soldier. Protecting himself and others was a priority for him. For him, it was not something that a man should do – be with young children, that is. I told him that I would apply for the FETP and teach mathematics to secondary school learners because of the way I saw my secondary school mathematics teachers. My father agreed that it was better to work with teenagers rather than young children because he believed that the young ones were very disrespectful.

My father has many skills, including building houses, plaster work, and woodwork. This was his job after retiring from the military. When I was younger, I sometimes went with him on weekends to help him when he had a project to build a house. When I was home during my gap year after matriculation, I decided to work with my father. As a young man, I did not want to ask my parents for money for things like airtime. I had to hustle for myself to buy what I needed. My father would say that a man should have a plan to feed his family and that a man without a skill would make his family go to bed hungry. In fact, he would say that a man should have multiple incomes or skills that would generate money for the family. I worked with my father for a year, and I was able to save the money that I used to apply for my university application. I remember, I even bought myself some clothes and a cell phone.

### **4.2.3 My Mother – Jane Tsotetsi**

My mother was born in August 1965 in Mamelodi. She is the firstborn child of my grandparents and the only girl child on the maternal side of my family. She has five brothers. When she was young, about the five years of age, she moved to Pieterskraal with my grandmother to go and live with my grandfather. She attended a primary school there but did not go on to secondary education. She told me that she dropped out of school to take care of her siblings. As mentioned, my mother is the only girl child of my grandparents. She used to tell me that her dream was to become a professional nurse or a teacher. However, as she did not have a formal qualification to be a nurse, my mother worked as a domestic worker and cashier. She raised me as a single parent without my biological father until she met my stepfather, whom I refer to as father.

Most of the time, my mother was away from home due to work but she would come home at the end of the month. I therefore spent most of my childhood with my grandmother. I was always very happy to see my mother after she had been away for some time. I remember she used to go without saying goodbye to me because I always cried when I knew that she was going back again. I remember visiting my mother at one of the supermarkets that she was working at. I also remember that I once went to visit my mother when she was a domestic worker in Pretoria. I was always excited about my visits to Pretoria because I would come home and tell my friends about the visit.

## Figure 4. 7

*Picture of My Mother Taken When She Was Working at the Supermarket*



After a few years, when I was around 13 years old, my mother stayed at home a lot more and no longer spent all her time at work. As always, she was supportive of my education and she made sure that during the December festival season, when we bought Christmas clothes, she would also buy my uniform. I used to spend time with my mother before school opened in January. She taught me how to cover my schools books and I would help her. She started telling me that I needed to learn to do things as I was going to have a little sister. I also needed to learn to take care of myself so that one day I could be a better man. My mother taught me how to cook at the age of 10 years. I always helped her with the peeling, slicing, or grating of the vegetables when she was preparing dinner. She taught me how to wash my clothes and clean my room. Even though she was not earning enough from her job, she always made sure that I would get pocket money. And when we had school trips, she would give me the last of her money to go on school trips.

#### **4.2.4 My Sister – Tshepiso Tsotetsi**

My sister was born when I was 13 years old. It was Sunday evening when I received the good news that I had a baby sister. I was so excited because I had spent many years being the only child in our house. I spent a lot of time babysitting my sister. She attended all the schools I had attended. When I was in my first year at university, she was in Grade 6. We spent time together when I was home for recess.

#### **Figure 4. 8**

*Picture of My Sister*



Being a brother in our culture means being a deputy parent. This means that the responsibilities of my parents are also mine. When I started working, I was responsible for my sister's needs such as school clothes, trips, and other things because both my parents were not working permanently. I made sure that my sister had everything she needed, especially her school needs. Many people call this responsibility a “black tax”.

I became a role model to my sister. She would say that when she completed her matriculation, she also wanted to further her studies at the same university I attended. She is currently in Grade 12. Her dream is to be a Grade R teacher in the



FP. Most of the time we talk about universities and the education course. We sometimes spend lots of time talking about the learners that I am teaching. She used to say that I am a soft person and the learners were going to play with me and not take me seriously. Her advice was to not be too soft to the learners because I would lose respect from them because of my character.

#### **4.2.5 My Fiancée – Kgomotso Senoamadi**

I met my fiancée at university; it was her first and my final year of study. She was studying for a BSc in Biochemistry at our main campus. We started out being friends and after a couple of years we decided to be in a relationship. After a year in a relationship, I decided to take our relationship to the next step by asking her to be my fiancée. Unlike what you see in Western movies where a man kneels with a ring and asks his girlfriend to marry him, I had to sit down with her and ask her if she was ready for the next step. She said yes! I then told my parents; they called my uncles and a letter was written to my fiancée (then my girlfriend) to set a date for lobola negotiations.

A man who wants to have a wife in an African culture needs pay a lobola to their girlfriend's family. A lobola is a traditional African societal practice where a man pays a bride price to bring the two families of the bridegroom and bride together to extend a family and forge a new relationship (Chisango et al., 2022). Chisango et al. (2022) add that a lobola is charged as an affordable token that cements the bond between the bride and the groom. I paid the bride price, and we were officially allowed to stay together after the lobola negotiation.

We are currently living together in our new home in Limpopo. I decided to build a house close where I was working to save money on transportation and renting costs. Our house has a kitchen, bathroom, dining room, bedroom, and garage. I decided on a small house although we are still looking for a better place in the nearest town where

service delivery like water is available. My fiancée has completed her BSc Biochemistry degree. She is currently unemployed and looking for a job in her field. She is also planning to be a mathematics and life sciences teacher by studying for a Post Graduate Certificate in Education FETP. She fell in love with teaching during her time at university because she worked as a tutor from her second to her final year. Her duties were to tutor the first-year chemistry students. Her long-term goal is to become a specialist in chemistry education.

**Figure 4. 9**

*Picture of Me and My Fiancée Wearing Sepedi Attire*



#### **4.3 Looking Back at Life (My Self-reflective Narrative)**

In this section, I reflect on my journey from primary school to my workplace. I include personal reflection on my narrative.

#### **4.3.1 Story One: Life at school**

I started my schooling journey at our local primary school when I was five, almost six, years of age where completed Grades R to 3. I remember the first day my mother took me to school to start Grade R. I was not excited and cried because I did not want to go to school. However, I came across other learners at the school assembly who I knew and had played with so I stopped crying.

In Grade R, I was taught by a female teacher. At the end of my Grade R year, we had a graduation ceremony and I remember my mom telling me that one day she wanted to see me wearing the gown when I grew up. We were given certificates and we were all ready for Grade 1. In Grades 1 and 2, I was also taught by female teachers. Having been taught by female teachers, I thought that teaching was for only women and was, therefore, surprised when I started Grade 3 to find out that men could also be teachers. That was the first time I had been taught by a male teacher.

In the IP, I remember we were asked about our career choices. My first career choice was teaching. This was because of my Grade 3 male teacher in the FP. Also, at that age, I had not personally experienced any professions other than teaching. I knew there were careers like being a soldier, policeman, and doctor. But I loved the way my teachers taught us and the way they were respected by my family and the community. In Grade 3, the male teacher became a role model for me. My teachers had cars, I knew that when I became a teacher one day, I would also own a car. I knew where teachers worked and how they did their jobs. At home, sometimes I would play “school”; I would write on the sides of the shacks that were built for the fireplace in which my grandmother was cooking. Sometimes I would pick up pieces of chalk at school to play “school” at home. I remember one day my mother bought me a mini-board that had chalk in a box. I was imitating my teachers when I was playing “school”.

Most of my classmates also chose teaching but they also other careers such as policeman, nurse, doctor, and traffic cop. These were careers that were popular in our community. I believe that most of us chose these careers because many people in the community were in the fields we chose. I also have a memory of my mother telling me that I should go to school and become a teacher or a doctor.

My love for teaching developed when I was in Grade 3 when I encountered a male teacher for the first time. It was a wonderful feeling to be taught by a male teacher. Owing to my father's absenteeism, I saw my Grade 3 teacher as a father figure. I wanted to be like him and give children whose fathers were absent love. The teacher made sure that he motivated us and showed us love. He was not as strict as men were expected to be with young children. We used to get sweets when we performed well on our tasks. From that moment, I chose teaching as my career of choice.

When I was in the IP, we were taught about role models. My role model was my former Grade 3 teacher. I always mentioned him when I was asked about my role model. This was because of the role that the teacher played in my early life as a boy. At that time, when I was in primary school, I had never experienced or had an opportunity to receive love from a male person.

My first love for mathematics started in Grade 4. I remember we were introduced to fractions. I understood fractions and I was excited to see that numbers could be written in fraction form. My love for the subject grew when my teachers, mother, and learners told me that I was clever because I could understand a difficult subject. I would always practice mathematics problems at home to keep up the good marks in the subject. I became interested in natural sciences and technology in Grade 8 when we were taken to a science expo where we were learned about astronomy. I

researched astronomy and other space science careers like astronauts, cosmologists, and others. That was when my passion for space science started. I began watching science fiction films and shows that were space science-related. Mathematics and natural sciences became my favourite subjects at school. In Grade 9, I was one of the few learners who understood the topic of angles. I was able to name and calculate angles. My teachers advised me to take the science stream in Grade 10.

In Grade 10, I had to choose between the commerce and science streams. The commerce stream had mathematical literacy as one of the subjects and the science stream had pure mathematics. Since my passion was in the mathematics and natural science subjects and careers, my teachers, advised me to choose the science stream. In our first term in Grade 10, we wrote our first tests in all subjects. I was one of the top learners who obtained high marks in mathematics and physical science. In the May-June examinations, we wrote papers 1 and 2 for mathematics, physical science, and other subjects. It was the first time I had written two papers on this subject. In Grade 9, we had only written one paper for each subject except the languages. In Physical Science, I enjoyed paper 1 (Physics) which had more calculations than paper 2 (Chemistry) which had a lot of theory. I would always be prepared for the mathematics topics because I spent my time doing calculations in the textbook.

For my Grade 10 final results, I obtained top marks in mathematics. In Grade 11 my teacher asked me to assist my classmates with mathematics. I would do some sums while the teacher was in class if my classmates did not understand what the teacher was teaching. I did not do this every day but I enjoyed being in front of my classmates and solving mathematics problems. This gave me confidence and I was always prepared for our mathematics lessons.

In Grade 12, my friends (who were also my classmates) and I formed a study group. We asked to study at our primary school which was the central venue for all of us. The principal permitted us to study in the afternoons. Our sessions started around 16h00 and ended at 18h00 Mondays to Fridays. On Saturdays, we had two sessions, the first session was from 9h00 to 11h00 and the second session was from 12h00 to 14h00. In this study group, we checked our individual abilities in all subjects. I was chosen to lead the mathematics subject in the group. My classmates shared the other subjects. We focused on mathematics, physical science, life sciences, agricultural sciences, and english. When it was the day for mathematics, we would sit down and solve mathematics problems; we had chalk and chalkboard. I would prepare a lesson and I would teach a certain topic on that day. Teaching and helping my friends with mathematics gave me a good idea of what my teaching career would be like. It was nice being in front of them. I felt that one day my learners would understand the way my classmates did. I always had new sums to challenge them and we would work together in solving mathematical problems.

#### **4.3.2 Story Two: From Boy to Man**

My mother taught me how to cook at a young age. This has given me a love of cooking. My plan for my side hustle was to have a catering company. I could then cook at weddings, funerals, and other functions. I was, therefore, also interested in pursuing a career as a chef. Currently, I am looking for a culinary school where I can enrol part-time for a cooking course. As we live in a rural area far from town, it is not easy for me to enrol for a course in cooking. I spend most of my time watching cooking shows, reading, and looking at recipes on social media. I always want to try new recipes. I find them interesting to cook. On most weekends, I cook for my fiancée. I also cook when I want to take a break from something. On Christmas Day, or any holiday that I spend

with my parents, I always cook for them. I get excited to try the recipes I have learned, and to know that I have mastered them.

In most African cultures in South Africa, like Ndebele and Pedi, when a boy reaches a certain age, he is initiated to become a man. At the age of 16, my uncles took me to initiation school where I learned to be a man. I spent about two and a half months there. The initiation took place during school time from about May to mid-July. At initiation school, we were taught about customary rituals, manhood, identity, and folklore. This was the step I took to transition from being a boy to being a man. Transitioning from a boy to a man meant that I had to leave all the boy stuff behind. This was the first step towards being a responsible person in my family and community. Some examples that showed that I was now a man included being able to sleep in a back bedroom alone without being scared and even walking around at night.

**Figure 4. 10**

*My Mother, My Sister, and Me During My Welcome Home Ceremony*



On the night that I was taken to initiation school, my uncles were playing a kgati, which is stick fighting. The stick fight was also played when I returned home from initiation school. This was a way of celebrating and showing masculinity. A stick fight is only played by initiated males. I was very scared and nervous about going to initiation school. I did not know what to expect and what was going to happen to me. I spent at least two months there. During my stay, I missed home very badly. I missed the home-cooked meals, watching television, and also taking a hot bath. After spending time at the initiation school, we returned to our homes and celebrated with homecoming festivities. I was over the moon because it had finally happened – I had done the initiation. Well, now I am a young man.

After the celebration, I felt grown up and realised that as a young man I had to take on more responsibilities at home and in the community. There were changes in my life; for example, young men do not play with toys. I was no longer a boy but a man who had been initiated to be a man.

#### **4.3.3 Story Three: Life at the workplace**

After signing the employment contract on a Friday, I was requested to report for duty the following Monday. I was very excited about starting my teaching career. I remember making calls to my friends and family telling them that I finally had a job. Since the school was far from home and in another province, I had to arrange transport to take a few of my things to my rental room. On a Sunday afternoon, I arrived at the room that I had rented and started to prepare for the following day, which was my first day at work. I was excited about my first day at work. I wanted to prepare but, unfortunately, did not have any resources for the IP; I only had FETP resources on my laptop. I remember I spent a lot of time calling my friends who were teaching in the IP asking them to please share their teaching resources. I went to sleep early after making



calls to my parents, my friends, and my fiancée (who was my girlfriend at the time) to tell them that I had settled in and was ready to start work the following day.

On Monday morning I woke around 05h00 to prepare for the big day. I had been told me that school started at 7h45 but the teachers needed had to arrive around 07h30. I arrived early at the school wearing formal clothes. Using my laptop, I printed out the resources I had collected from my friends. Around 07h30, we had a morning devotion at the assembly. I was standing to one side. The school principal announced to the learners and teachers that they had a new teacher who was joining the school and I was called to the front of the assembly where the principal introduced me to the staff and learners. I was welcomed by applause from the learners. After the morning devotion, which took about 15 minutes, a male teacher approached me and greeted me. He told me that he was happy to have a male teacher at the school as he was alone, surrounded by females. I was taken to the school staff room, and they showed me a table where I could sit and a cupboard where I could store my belongings. I was called into the office by the school management team (SMT) for subject allocation. When I arrived, there were three other teachers present, an FP Departmental Head (DH), an IP and SP DH, and the school principal.

They told me that I had been allocated seven subjects to teach: mathematics, natural sciences and technology, and social sciences to Grade 4, economic and management sciences and life orientation (LO) to Grade 7, and sepedi home language to Grades 4 and 5. This came as a shock to me because I had been expecting to teach only the two subjects which I applied for. I was also given a Grade 4 class to manage as a class teacher. After finding out that I was going to teach seven subjects, I was shocked and frustrated. In my mind, I started to ask myself whether I had made the right choice by taking the post. I asked myself how I could teach seven subjects. I was

afraid to ask the principal and members of the SMT in the subject allocation meeting we had. The DH told me that the school needed to draft a new timetable but for now we were using the old timetable and it was a mathematics period for Grade 4. The DH took me to the Grade 4 class. It was the first period and my mathematics period. The DH showed me the classroom and introduced me to the learners as their classroom teacher. There were 58 learners. To me, the classroom was overcrowded. The learners were making a noise and I had to ask them to keep quiet. I spent almost five minutes walking around telling learners to sit down and keep quiet. After they finally kept quiet, I asked the learners their names, where they lived, and what they wanted to do after completing school and I asked what they knew about the subject of mathematics. I could not give them any activity on mathematics to do that day.

During the break on Monday, I was told that I needed to be with the Grade 4 learners and give them the food that had been prepared for them by the kitchen staff. I was shocked to learn that every day I needed to be with the learners in the classroom. I was not ready for such a task. I did not feel comfortable giving them food. I felt like I was babysitting them rather than being their teacher. When I arrived at the classroom with the bowl of food, the learners rushed to form a line; they were making a noise. I could not take their noise anymore and I asked them to keep quiet. I then felt guilty about keeping them quiet, and I also felt that maybe I was being too strict with them. I remembered that it was break time next and they needed to socialise with their friends.

Then school was over. I had had a long day, and I was tired and still shocked about my subject allocation. I remember calling a few friends and telling them that I was given a lot of work. One of my friends told me that it was too much, and it was because I was a beginner teacher but that I should not complain. I should give myself time to adjust and then, if I saw that I could not cope to try and transfer to another

school. Another friend told me that it was what most schools did to beginner teachers. They gave the beginner teachers a great deal of work. I only had a few free periods during the day and sometimes I would go the entire day without a free period. I was always in class, especially the Grade 4 class. I would attend all the Grade 4 subject from morning until afternoon. This made me to spend time with the Grade 4 than other grades.

One day, one of the teachers asked me how I was settling in. In the middle of our conversation, we talked about the school subjects. I told her that I was not coping and was not comfortable teaching seven subjects, especially when they were subjects that I did not specialise in. I remember her answer was that subjects like EMS, NST, and LO were only two hours a week and sepedi home language was multigrade. Another answer was that the school enrolment was around 280 learners, so the teacher–learner ratio was affecting the school. I recall that after some time I confronted the SMT and complained about the workload of teaching seven subjects. I mentioned that I thought I would teach only the subjects that I had been appointed for. I asked them to change the EMS and SS subjects.

Unfortunately, I not only had seven subjects, but I also had a multigrade class. I had never been in a multigrade classroom before I started my career. I was told that for Sepedi lessons Grades 4 and 5 shared a class as a multigrade. It was the first time that I had taught a multigrade class. During my teacher training, I had not been trained to teach in a multigrade classroom. I had heard about multigrade classes on media, in books, and elsewhere, but being in a multigrade class challenged me emotionally and mentally. I was extremely frustrated for a few weeks about the multigrade classroom. I did not know how to teach two grades in the same classroom. The multigrade class that I was teaching was Grades 4 and 5 for the subject of sepedi home language.

For a few weeks, I was confused. I would teach one grade for 30 minutes, give them work to do, and then teach the other grade. There were about 50 learners in that multigrade class. Managing the noise while switching or teaching one grade at a time was difficult. I felt lost most of the time teaching a multigrade class. I asked in a meeting why the school had multigrade classes and why not separate the grades to form a single classroom. The answer was that the number of learners and teachers influenced the formation of the multigrade classroom. I was encouraged to do my best and try to find strategies to teach in the multigrade classroom.

At some point, the multigrade class demotivated me to be in a rural school. When I asked my friends who were working in other provinces, they replied that they had never had a multigrade class. I researched on the internet how to teach a multigrade lesson and managed to find a few resources about multigrade classroom teaching. I also had conversations with the IsiZulu Home Language teachers at the school about how they taught and managed their multigrade classes. I remember the time when I was at a Sepedi workshop and asked our curriculum advisor about drafting a multigrade lesson plan and which teaching method was best for a multigrade class. The conversation and advice that I received from my curriculum advisors were very helpful in getting me to understand how a multigrade classroom should be managed.

After spending months at the school, I always had questions in my mind. I sat down in my room with a heavy heart and exhausted body. I remember I was playing soft music. I could no longer complain to my friends. I needed to take all the pain and questions I had about my current situation as a male beginner teacher in the IP. My questions are now presented as the following poem:

**What am I doing here?**

After working for months

I now sit alone under the tree asking myself

What am I doing here?

I was supposed to be at the FETP, that was my answer

Am I at the wrong place at the right time?

Or am I at the place at the right time?

What does it mean for me to be here

What difference would I make in this place

Am I supposed to stay or leave?

Does my gender matter in this place?

After writing this poem, I felt like the all the questions needed only my answers. I told myself that this was what God had given me and I should do my best as a teacher to teach the learners. I told myself that I would grow and achieve more in this phase.

I realised then that I did not know the subjects because I had specialised at school, I had done a science stream, but that, at primary school level, there was no specialisation. Teachers were expected to teach more than three subjects, especially if they were not on the SMT or were a senior teacher. I wanted to give up the post, but I told myself that I needed to man up and try to cope with the work. I said to myself that God and my ancestors had blessed me with this job. My family was very happy and proud that I had found a job and I should not disappoint them by quitting. In this country, the unemployment rate is high, so I considered myself one of those blessed to have a job.

Despite teaching all day, Wednesdays were my favourites. On Wednesdays at our school, we had sports activities. At 1:00 pm, the lessons stopped so that the

teachers could use the remaining half an hour to train the learners in different sports codes. The activities took about an hour and a half. The school only played soccer and netball. A male teacher was the soccer coach, and a female teacher was the netball coach. I was, therefore, expected to assist the male teacher with soccer. One of the female teachers said to me that the male teacher would now have an assistant coach, but soccer was not one of my favourite sports. I just went there to assist because I was following an order from my senior. I told her that I did not have any experience in coaching soccer. I then chose to coach cricket because it did not have a coach heading it up. Heading up cricket gave the learners an opportunity to choose or participate in various sports rather than having only one option. The learners at the school knew the basics of cricket as they had played it as part of the life skills physical education activity.

During the Winter Games, the learners participated in circuit-level selections. Even though I had little knowledge about the sport of cricket, I was interested in heading the cricket team at the Winter Games. I remember asking a colleague from another school to help me with the rules of the game and was given a book to read. I also sought out videos online. I felt very happy and proud of myself when the learners won the circuit-level selections and they proceeded to the cluster-level selection. The winners at cluster selection then proceeded to the district level.

**Figure 4. 11**

*Picture Taken at the Cricket Cluster Competition With Learners*



After some time heading the cricket team, I decided to introduce the game of chess at the school. I had learned to play when I was about 11 years old. I used to play it with my uncle. Unfortunately, I did not play chess at school because the school I attended did not offer it. The SMT was excited to have a teacher who could train learners in chess as most of the schools in our circuit did not have chess as one of their sport codes. The learners at my school were now able to participate in the game of chess. I continued to play chess using the games application on my phone when I was away from home. I also taught some of my friends to play chess, which became one of my hobbies. I asked the school sports leader to buy a chessboard so that I could start training the learners. Two chessboards were bought and chess is now one of the sports activities that we participate in at the Winter Games. The chess club has more boy learners than girls. All the girls at the school play netball which is headed by a female teacher. The girls do not participate in sports that are headed by male teachers. Well, I have never seen women play chess in the movies. You usually only

see gentlemen in suits, drinking their expensive whisky playing chess. For me, I think that not having a girls' club is as a result of my gender. This is not a surprise, as even our national women's soccer teacher is headed by a woman.

#### **Figure 4. 12**

*Picture of a Chessboard*



I first fell in love with computers when my late uncle gave me an old laptop when I was in Grade 9. My uncle showed me how a computer works. He showed me his PowerPoint presentations, Word documents, and others. I enjoyed the PowerPoint presentation software. After my matriculation, I enrolled in a two-week computer course in our neighbouring village. In my first year at university, I advanced my computer literacy knowledge doing the Academic Information Management modules. In 2017, when I was doing my teaching practice, I was fortunate to do my teaching practice at a school where they were introducing teaching with a smartboard. I had the privilege to attend the workshops where the teachers were trained to use the smartboard in their classrooms. I installed the software on my computer, and used it for my lessons. This allowed me to integrate technology into my subject for my classroom visit by a university lecturer.



**Figure 4. 13**

*Pictures of a PowerPoint Presentation and an Educational Game*



After a few months at my workplace, I discovered that the school had a projector and a movable whiteboard. I went to the office and asked if I could use the equipment for one of my lessons. I prepared slides and a game. I was so excited that I was going to teach the learners who had never had a lesson that was presented using technology. My first lesson using a laptop, projector, and whiteboard was the subject NST. I then continued to use the laptop and projector in my lesson. The learners had fun and I also enjoyed using ICT in the classroom. This allowed me to be close to my learners. It meant a lot to me to use technology in classroom because the learners had never had the experience of being taught using technology tools. The majority of the learners did not have a computer at home. It was wonderful for me to be the one to show and teach them about technology. This reminded me of myself being taught about the computer by my uncle but not at school level. I wanted to make a difference and bring 21st century education into the rural classroom. Some of the learners asked

me if I could teach them how to use a laptop as they did not have computers or laptops at home. I tried to raise the question at the office of buying at least five laptops for the school that would be used to teach the learners computer literacy in the afternoons. The school did not agree because of the cost. There was not enough to buy the laptops and also the problem of crime meant that the laptops might be stolen.

Using ICT in the classroom allowed the office to ask for my assistance whenever they had a problem with a computer such as using Excel. Since then, I have been nicknamed the “IT Technician” of the school. When there are documents that were sent to the WhatsApp groups, I was asked to print out copies when the administrator of the school was not available. I was nominated for the SACE coordinator due to my ICT skills because the position needed someone who knew technology. The duty of this position is to update the SACE points of school professional development workshops for school staff.

Even though it was not an easy job for me to be in the IP, I had a lot of joy and smiles from the children I was teaching. They would ask me what kind of cell phone I was using. How many children did I have? And they would also ask me to take pictures with them. I used to take selfies with my learners after a lesson. It was not easy for me to be comfortable when I was asked by a girl learner to take a selfie with me, but the learners did not have a problem with it. They looked upon me as their elder. As a male, I was afraid to be labelled as a man who was preying on young girls. Within this society that we are living, men are not trusted around young girls. I have seen on the media where male teachers have been arrested or fired from school due to suspicions that they were dating or sleeping with young girl students. I did not want to be painted as such or give the wrong impression to the community and my colleagues by taking selfies with girl learners. With the high number of incidents of GBV in our country,

being a man around girls, we are mostly seen as predators who want to take advantage of the girls. I felt that some might see taking pictures with the girl learners the wrong way. I always wanted be on the safe side.

When a learner had a birthday, they would come and tell me that it was someone's birthday, and they would like to sing for them. I noticed that they liked birthdays and enjoyed singing for each other. I set a reminder for my learners' birthdays on my phone. Most of the time my first teaching periods were in my Grade 4 classroom. I would announce that was someone's birthday and ask them to sing for the birthday boy or girl. I always made a birthday card and gave it to my learners. The learner birthdays are close to my heart because I know and understand that many learners are living with single parents, and it is not easy for them to have a birthday party or sing a happy birthday song at home. I did not want the learners to feel lonely when it was their birthday, especially for those who did not have someone at home who would sing a birthday song or wish them a happy birthday.

It gave me joy to see the first of the learners receiving the cards, especially as a male teacher. I felt that many of the learners were living without their fathers at home. Growing up without my father meant that I understood how important their birthdays were to them. Even though it was not easy for me to buy them gifts, the cards and birthday songs meant a lot to all of us. This brought a lot of smiles to the learners when they were given the card by me and even when they sang the birthday song.

The environment in the IP is very different from the FETP. The learners in the IP were very young and loving. They always asked too many personal questions such as how many children I have. I have seen a great difference in the IP. In the FETP, I never experienced the love the learners have for their teachers. Wherever I was, the learners always wanted attention.

The school had only ten teachers when I arrived. Owing to the small number of staff, almost everyone was leading or heading something at the school. I was chosen as a site chairperson for our union at the school. I did not serve for a long time as a result of COVID-19. I did not do my duties because of the pandemic and everything was paused for almost two years. After the pandemic, a new site chairperson was elected. I was called to the principal's office and was asked to attend a workshop on SACE coordinators. The workshop stated that the school should select a person who was technology wise. Because of my computer skills, I was the right candidate to be sent to the workshop. I was then selected as my school's SACE coordinator. My role and duties were to capture points on the SACE system for school-initiated activities such as school meetings and professional development workshops at the school.

#### **Figure 4. 14**

##### *Library Bookshelves*



In 2022 I was asked to be part of a literacy programme. This was a project to build libraries at rural schools around our district. Only a few schools were selected for the 2022 project. Our school was one of the chosen few to be part of the programme to have a library. I then became a teacher-librarian. My duty was to make sure that

the books we received were labelled, classified according to their categories, and put onto the shelves. I had to make sure that I submitted a monthly report to our sponsors of the checkout that the learners made in a month. I also got the opportunity to engage with the learners in the FP. I now had a full picture of all the learners in the primary school. The FP learners always called me Ma'am. I would laugh and correct them, telling them that I was not Ma'am, and they should call me Sir or Mr Moripe. This is what the Grade 4s always do in first term. They refer to us male teachers as Ma'am. The reason for this is that they have spent four years from Grade R to Grade 3 being taught only by female teachers.

LO was not one of my electives at university. Due to the non-specialisation in primary schools, I was given subjects I did not specialise in, such as LO. I was allocated to teach LO to a Grade 7 class. In LO one of the topics is the development of human sexuality. I found this a very sensitive topic to teach, especially when I was about to teach about the stages of a girl's puberty. Growing up, I was taught that as a man we never talk about women's "stuff". However, delivering the lessons was part of my job and I had to navigate between my role as a teacher and a man, and my belief about the topic. It was not easy for me to talk about menstruation and changes in girls in front of all the learners.

I had always expected that primary school would be a female-dominated field. The primary school that I had attended was dominated by women and I only had one male teacher. But it was not a surprise to me to find more males in primary school as during my teacher education programme at the university, more men were specialising in the Senior and FETP than in the IP and FP. All my male friends at the university were enrolled in FETP. However, my expectations were proven right when I arrived at the school. The female teachers outnumbered the male teachers.

At my school, most female teachers had problems with the Grade 7 boy learners. I and the other male teachers were always asked by the female teachers to talk to and discipline the boys in Grade 6 and Grade 7 because we are men. The female teachers would say that they were blessed to have two men at the school to discipline the boys. In most of our conversations with the boys, some would keep quiet at first when we asked them why they were disrespecting their female teacher. We would give them time to calm down in the staffroom. I usually called a learner who was behaving to the staffroom rather than trying to discipline them in front of others. I asked them what their problem was and they would open up to me. For example, they would say that the female teachers were shouting at them and treating them like children. Some of these boys were even taller than most of the teachers. They wanted to be treated like adults and not be shouted at, especially in front of their fellow learners. Most of the learners in these two grades had already attended initiation school, so when they came back, they regarded themselves as young adults since initiation school was their transition from boys to men.

When I started my teaching job, my father was a retired soldier working casual jobs such as building, plastering, and others and my mother was unemployed. My sister was in Grade 9. It was a relief for my family and me to secure a teaching job. I had always heard that teachers were not well paid in our country. I was worried about the salary and whether it was going to be enough for me to take care of my family and myself. However, the salary was not bad as people had said and I could take care of myself and my family by sending grocery money to them at home monthly.

I had plans for when I got a salary. With my teaching salary, I was able to buy myself land on which I have built a home. I was able to save and pay a lobola to my fiancée (then girlfriend). Receiving a salary monthly in my bank account meant and

still means a lot to me; it is a blessing to me and my family. For me, it is a decent salary even though I cannot do all the things I wish with it. I remember my father mentioned that a teacher's salary was not enough but I have done a lot with that salary.

I always had a plan to further my studies. After a year in my teaching career, I registered for a Bachelor of Education in Teacher Education and Professional Development. In the programme, there was a module called Professional Development. In this module, we had an assignment on a professional development action plan in which we had to write down our goals (see Appendix D) and evaluate our strengths and weaknesses. I understood my weaknesses as a teacher in the IP. My weaknesses were that I was not confident to teach the curriculum of the IP as I was trained in the curriculum of FETP. The subjects that I did not specialise in gave me problems because I did not know the content. There are always learners who come from the FP who cannot even write their names. I never had training as to how I should teach a learner who could not write. Nevertheless, I was able to write an action plan to change my weaknesses into strengths. This was very helpful to my career.

#### Figure 4. 15

*Certificate for IP Curriculum*



I participated in the professional development online course offered by the ETDP SETA. The course was training teachers to use English across the curriculum in all phases. I enrolled for IP but also participated in other courses that were offered online and face-to-face for my continuous professional development. The course was an eye-opener for me in terms of delivering the curriculum in the IP.

There were times when I felt that IP teaching was not for me. I kept asking myself whether I had made the right choice by taking the IP post. I remember in my first year during the mid-year examinations. The learners had performed very badly in mathematics and I was called to the office to account for their performance. I explained that I had done my best for the learners but I remember one of the SMT members saying, “He cannot teach these young children, because he is a man. He needs to be moved to the SP or be transferred to FETP.” This made me feel sad. I then went home and started to question my decision to accept a post in the IP.

During the school holidays, I started to search for vacancies in FETP mathematics and/or Sepedi. Again, I failed to secure a post in the FET Phase. I then prepared myself for the next term of school. I watched videos on YouTube to get some ideas on teaching methodologies for teaching learners, especially in the IP. This gave me the opportunity for self-professional development. At the end of my first year of teaching in the IP, I had many challenges in school and was aware that I was not coping with the many subjects and the learners. Owing to the complaints that I received during the year, I was offered a transfer to the FETP in which I was going to be placed on the rationalization and redeployment policy which state that the last person to be employed in a school that has more teacher is the first person to be deployed to another school. As a result, I was not the only teacher being hired at the



school. I had a right to reject or accept the offer. I rejected the offer because I felt like moving to FETP again was going to be too challenging for me. I decided to continue my self-professional development by reading articles, watching videos, and having conversations with my colleagues.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have written my self-reflective story which was derived from memory work, self-interview, research journal, and critical conversations with my co-constructors. I have written my story in a logical and clear way. I included photographs to make clear the meaning of the narratives that I have written. In the next chapter, which is Chapter 5, I analyse and interpret the data collected in terms of emerging themes and sub-themes to respond to my research questions.

## **Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Interpretation**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In Chapter 4, I told my story as a Black male beginner teacher in the IP. I have written about myself as a Black man in a South African context. My research questions are (1) How did I construct my identity as a Black male beginner teacher in the IP? and (2) Why did I construct my identity as a beginner male FETP teacher in the IP in this way? The research questions provided a direction for my data analysis and interpretation. While I was analysing and interpreting my data, the main purpose was to provide a response to my research questions and, in so doing, make meaning of my findings. The stories included my lived experiences at my primary and secondary schools. I have also included the context of my workplace which is the primary school where I am a teacher. The stories in Chapter 4 are rich with data but the data means nothing without being analysed and interpreted (Mlangeni, 2019).

In this chapter, I present the themes and sub-themes of the findings that were generated through the analysis of my self-reflective stories written in the previous chapter. When analysing my data, I looked at the literature and conceptual framework of my study to make sense of my data analysis and interpretation. The conceptual framework was created by merging two theories, possible selves theory by Markus and Nurius (1986) and social role theory by Eagly (1987).

### **5.2 The Process of Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

The process of my data analysis and interpretation started when I was writing my narrative stories in Chapter 4. While I was sitting and writing my data, I was thinking about possible major themes of my data. According to Chang (2013), in generating the data, various sources are used such as “memories, memorabilia, documents about themselves, official records, photographs, interview with others, and ongoing self-

reflective and self-observation memos” (p. 108). In this study, I made use of photographs, self-reflection, and memory for my data collection. I wrote stories using the data generation method. At first, the narratives were not organised. I had to group them into themes to start the data analysis.

The aim and purpose of the analysis and interpretation are to respond to the research questions. I employed the method of the thematic analysis for the interpretation of my data (Herzog et al., 2019). I used the process of coding, grouping, and regrouping my data into important themes of this study (Chang, 2013). I identified themes that were relevant to my teacher identity construction as a Black FETP teacher in the IP. My ethno (culture) is considered as the actions, beliefs, and the conclusion of the auto (self) (Chang, 2016). I then interpreted my data and analysis from my personal life to my workplace life as a teacher in the IP. In the next section, I state and present the themes that I identified in my narrative, clarify the section above, add extra sub-headings, and write it up in a systematic coherent, logical manner.

### **5.3 The Emergence of Themes and Sub-themes**

The emergence of major themes from my self-reflective narrative included the past influences on my teacher identity construction, my transitioning of teacher identity within the IP, and the factors influencing my current teacher identity construction. I used thematic analysis in the process of data analysis and interpretation of this study. I also referred to my conceptual framework, which is the combination of possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and social role theory (Eagly, 1987), as to how the theories represented themselves in the data. The themes and sub-themes emerged from the data collected revolved around the components of culture, gender identity, and gender role as a Black male beginner teacher. The themes are discussed

in the next section with the relevant sub-theme of each major theme. The following table presents the themes and sub-themes. The themes and sub-themes are discussed in the next section.

**Table 5. 1**

*Emergent Themes and Sub-Themes*

| THEMES   | SUB-THEMES  |
|--|---|
| 5.4. Theme 1: Past experiences influencing my beginner teacher identity                          | 5.4.1. The role of significant others in constructing my beginner teacher identity<br>5.4.2. Experiences of my background as influences on my beginner teacher identity   |
| 5.5. Theme 2: Intrinsic perceptions and experiences contributing to my beginner teacher identity | 5.5.1. My own perceptions of my initial beginner teacher identity<br>5.5.2. My perceptions of a Black male in the IP<br>5.5.3. My expectations of teaching in a specific phase  |
| 5.6. Theme 3: Experiences of my beginner teacher identity in a state of transition               | 5.6.1. A reality check: Disparity between training and the real-world teaching<br>5.6.2. Working the workload: Managing the challenges faced by beginner teachers<br>5.6.3. The constant battle: Experiencing fear of failure   |
| 5.7. Theme 4: Experiencing of my emergent teacher identity as a fluid state                      | 5.7.1. I am a Black teacher: Culture as a key influence on my emergent teacher identity<br>5.7.2. I am a male beginner teacher: Gender as an inseparable aspect of my emergent teacher identity<br>5.7.3. I am a teacher in a rural area: Contextual factors influencing emergent beginner teacher identity |

## 5.5 Theme 1: Past Experiences Influencing My Beginner Teacher Identity

During the stage of my data analysis, it was clear that my past experiences had influenced my teacher identity construction and are influencing my current beginner teacher identity. I identified a major theme that constituted two sub-themes which are: the role of significant others in constructing my beginner teacher identity and the experiences of my background as influences on my beginner teacher identity.

### ***5.5.1 Role of significant others in constructing my beginner teacher identity***

In constructing my teacher identity, others have played an important role. This includes my family, friends, teachers, and colleagues who have been there when I constructed my teacher identity. As mentioned by Humayon et al. (2018), friends and family influence our career choices. In our interactions, we construct our identities narratively through speech (Lojdová & Nehyba, 2021). My family and friends played a huge role in the construction of my teacher identity and also my self-concept. My father became supportive when I started my teaching career. He told me that I was soft which was a good characteristic to have when working with children. I felt like I was not male enough because of my character of being soft. On the other hand, this made me feel that I would enjoy working with children. When I was young, my mother also said encouraging words, that teaching would be a good career for me.

During my secondary schooling, I taught my friends mathematics, which influenced me to choose mathematics as one of my elective school subjects at university. As I mentioned in my story, I was good at mathematics so when my classmates and I formed a study group, I was responsible for helping them with mathematics. My mathematics teacher would ask me to show my classmates the mathematics problems I got right when none of them had got it right. This made me

confident in wanting to become a mathematics teacher. They played a role in choosing the subject I specialised in due to their compliments when I assisted them with mathematics. When they told me that I was good with mathematics, it made me want to be a secondary school mathematics teacher.

I attended a primary school which was a female teacher-dominated and where I had only one male teacher in Grade 3. This made me believe that primary school was only suitable for women. In primary school, I never had more male teachers than in secondary school. Male teachers sometimes experience social exclusion from their female colleagues and they are also at risk of alleged sexual abuse, as stated by Yang (2018). Observing my primary and secondary male teachers created the ideal teacher in which my teacher identity was created. Good teaching comes from the observation of one's own school experiences and representations and images that are given (Hahl & Mikulec, 2018). In my primary school years, I imitated my teacher when I was playing school. In my stories, I mentioned that I had played school by writing on the iron of my grandmother's shack. I would write what the teacher had taught us that day. This gave me an idea and image of what it was like to be a teacher. My primary school male teachers became my role models and I hoped that one day I would become a teacher just like them.

My secondary school teachers also had an influence on my teacher identity construction and, therefore, in my career choice. I was encouraged by my mathematics teacher to be in front of my classmates and show them how I had solved the mathematics problem. Seeing my secondary teachers made me choose the FETP and also specialise in mathematics. Parents, friends, and teachers can influence career choices as explained by Humayon et al. (2018). For me, it is clear that my teachers influenced my choice of my mathematics and FET Phase teaching degree.

I applied for a degree that specialised in FETP because of my observations of my secondary school teachers. I compared my experiences of primary school and secondary school. I then decided to study a teaching degree in the FETP. It was clear that I was more comfortable being a secondary school teacher than a primary school teacher. Thus, my teachers influenced my choice of career and hence the construction of my beginner teacher identity. Significant others also played a role in the construction of my beginner teacher identity.

### ***5.5.2 Experiences of my background as influences on my beginner teacher identity***

I was raised by a single parent, my mother, until she married when I was in the 10th Grade. During my childhood, my mother worked in town so I spent more time with my grandmother who took care of me. Many boys whose grandmothers raise them end up misbehaving by being involved in drug abuse and criminal activities and they also drop out of school. Mayeza and Bhana (2017) report that taking drugs, smoking and drinking, and engaging in fights are the actions of men. I did not take the path many boys take especially when they come home from initiation school. These boys disrespected their teachers and other learners at school. Attending initiation school made me understand my gender roles as a man, like protecting the family. I was fortunate because I did not associate with that kind of boy in my teenage years. I believe that this has been a good influence on me now as a man.

With the absenteeism of my biological father, I did not want to grow up and have children growing up without me in their life. I always told myself that I would be a present father in their lives. For me to have my family with me by my side required me to make sure that I did things in the right way, such as by paying a lobola to my girlfriend.

I did not grow up in a family of educated people. However, this did not make me to be uneducated myself. I wanted to be educated and achieve more than what my mother had not been able to achieve due to the situation she was facing when she was young. I believe that she was never allowed to pursue her dream job because she was taking care of her younger brothers. I saw my mother working hard and spending time away from me. When my mother spoke about her dreams, it made me realise that education was the key to better jobs and opportunities. I told myself when I was at school that I wanted to change my home situation. I kept my promise by doing well at school and I completed my matriculation with an admission to a bachelor's degree. I spent four years studying for my degree. After completing my degree, I applied for teaching posts in the FETP, although I did not have luck in securing a post. degree. With no luck in the FETP, I extended my search to the IP where I got a post, and I was very excited that my dream of becoming a teacher had come true. However, my dream did not stop there; I kept applying for teaching posts until I secured the IP post. I then applied for my honours degree in which I did well, and I applied for a master's degree which I am completing now.

## **5.6 Theme 2: Intrinsic Perception and Experiences Contributing to My Beginner Teacher Identity**

The second theme of my research findings is the intrinsic perception and experiences contributing to my beginner teacher identity. The theme is elaborated on in the following sub-themes: My perceptions of my initial beginner teacher identity, my perceptions of a Black male teacher in the IP, and my expectations of teaching in a specific phase.



### ***5.6.1 My perceptions of my initial beginner teacher identity***

My perception of my initial beginner teacher identity was that I wanted to be a teacher who could influence learners positively. I had seen how problematic some of my peers were for the teachers in secondary school. Most learners never had a support system from home. Therefore, I wanted to be a mentor, particularly to boy learners, because the majority of boy learners may grow up without their fathers, which has an influence on their identities as boys. This is because I have seen many children have absent fathers in Black communities. My goal was to make boy learners feel like they mattered.

As a mathematics teacher, I wanted to rationalise the things I did, and I also to emphasise the importance of what the learners learn. I value my knowledge in my subject. I wanted my learners to relate every aspect of mathematics to everything that they did in their lives. I wanted to be a teacher with enough knowledge of my subject that learners would ask for advice, and anything related to mathematics.

As a future teacher, I hope to make a difference in all the lives of my learners. I not only want to make a difference in the classroom but in their lives and far beyond the classroom. I want to make learners feel free to come and ask for advice on anything related to their lives. I also hope to be involved in the community as a whole.

### ***5.6.2 My perceptions of a Black male teacher in the IP***

I was first taught by a male teacher in the FP in Grade 3 then in the IP in Grade 6. I was thus taught by two men. However, I did not see those IP teachers as teachers who could work with young children. They were very strict. We all knew that when the teachers were present we would not be able to go outside and play. Our female teachers were always threatening that they would call the male teachers when they had

problems with us. Even though they were strict, I saw the male teachers as father figures to all the learners.

Yet I thought that these men in the primary school were not real men as many men in my surroundings were working at so-called hard labour, like building, working in factories, mines, and other jobs that needed strength. Xu (2020) support the statement by stating that “men are expected to take responsibility for manual labour” (p. 115). Men in primary schools, particularly the FP, are seen as weak and wanting to be women (Msiza, 2022). I thought that men in the IP were not as tough as men in the FETP and that men in the lower phases were not strong enough to deal with teenage learners in the FETP. I realised later that teaching was not only meant for women, particularly in primary school.

Another perception about Black male teachers in the IP is that they are the managers of the school. As I mentioned in my stories, the school had a male principal. During my IP schooling days, I had a male principal. I have even seen other primary schools around that have principals who are men. I always thought that male teachers were employed in the primary schools only to take management roles. I thought this was because the management has more money than being a teacher.

### ***5.6.3 My expectations of teaching in a specific phase***

As Edwards and Edwards (2017) state, prior life and personal history shape the beliefs and expectations about teaching. Before I became a teacher, I had expectations that FETP teachers earned more than teachers in other phases. New teachers entering the field of education with unrealistic expectations can yield negative experiences (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017). My unrealistic expectation was that I would find out that money was no different in the education field. I realised this when I was talking to friends about wanting to leave the IP because of the pressure. The money

issue was mentioned by my friends who said that the salaries were the same in all the phases and securing a post was not as easy as I expected. My expectations were realistic for the phase that I wanted to teach in. I expected that it would be easy for me to secure a job in the FETP because of my subject specialisation. This was a real expectation because of the shortage of mathematics teachers in our country.

I had expected to only teach two or three subjects in the FET Phase. I have seen many teachers in the FETP teaching only one or two subjects in which they have specialised at university. I expected to be a specialist in my subject and also get an opportunity to be a marker for Grade 12 learners. I have seen more FETP teachers getting more opportunities than teachers in other phases. For me, I wanted to gain pleasure in teaching the subject I enjoyed most at school.

### **5.7 Theme 3: Experiences of My Beginner Teacher Identity in a State of Transition**

The third theme focuses on the experiences of my beginner teacher's identity in a state of transition. This theme has three sub-themes which were a reality check: first, the disparity between training and real-world teaching; second, the workload and managing the challenges faced by beginner teachers; and third, the constant battle when experiencing fear of failure. These sub-themes are discussed next.

#### ***5.7.1 A reality check: Disparity between training and real-world teaching***

Teacher training was theoretical until I reached my teaching practice in my final year. I did not do practicals for the first three years of my education course and what I found was that what I had learned in the textbooks was the opposite of what I experienced in the real world. I did my teaching practice in the FETP in which I gained practical knowledge about what classroom life was like.

The practical knowledge I gained during my teaching practice in the FETP was very different from when I started my teaching career in the IP. The first thing I experienced in this phase was the age difference of the learners. This was a new world to me as I had been preparing to teach in the FETP for four years of my initial teacher training. I was not trained to deal with learners who were aged 9 to 14 years.

I experienced a gap between my training and the real world. As I mentioned in my narrative stories, my first day was not what I expected because I did not know how to approach the classroom of 4th Graders. I also mentioned that some learners were slow when they were writing. I was never trained to teach learners how to write in my training. My training prepared me to teach learners who knew how to write and read. In the phase in which I was trained, I had to teach more complex problems.

### ***5.7.2 Working the workload: Managing the challenges faced by beginner teachers***

As mentioned in my stories, I was initially given seven subjects to teach in the IP. This was the workload I faced during the first year of my teaching career. The workload was too heavy for me. As a beginner teacher, I accepted all the seven subjects that were assigned to me because I did not want to be seen as a person who was not following orders from my superiors. However, there were times when I wanted to leave the school because of the workload.

In their study, Räsänen et al. (2020) state that beginner teachers often leave the teaching profession due to the workload being too heavy. Furthermore, Räsänen et al. (2020) add that the extent of the workload intrudes unacceptably on the teacher's private life. I did not have much time in my private life. I was always indoors preparing for the next day, marking, and sometimes resting. During this period, I thought that

continuing my postgraduate studies would be the end for me. I therefore took a gap year from my studies until I was released from teaching seven subjects to five subjects.

### **5.7.3 *The constant battle: Experiencing fear of failure***

Being in a phase that I was not qualified to teach created a fear of failure in me. I have always wanted to do my best and was triggered by the fear of being a bad beginner male teacher. As mentioned in my stories, there was a time when I wanted to quit in the middle of the year because of the changes that I was facing in the IP. I have also always had a fear of not being able to perform well in my duties because of my gender and phase specialisation. In the self-narrative stories, I mentioned that I was called to the office after the mid-year examinations when my learners had failed and there was a comment stating that I could not teach my learners because I was a man and I needed to be moved to a secondary school. This created more fear in me, and I had a constant battle with myself about doing my best in this IP. Fortunately, this fear made me curious about learning more about the phase and also made me try to do my best in my work.

For me to face my fear, I read and watched videos about the pedagogical content of the IP. This has allowed me to face my fear positively. Luckily, I knew people who had specialised in the IP degree at university. These people shared their resources with me and I was able to gain confidence in what I was doing in the IP. I also had informal conversations with my colleagues who advised me on how to teach, cope, and maintain discipline in the classroom. Not all my colleagues were willing to help though, and some thought that I was not ready to be a teacher since I was struggling in the IP. In the self-narrative stories, I mentioned that one of the SMT members said that I should move to the FETP in another school because of my gender. For her, my gender was a problem in the IP.

During my first year of teaching in the IP, I admit that I had challenges. However, my family and friends were there to support me emotionally. The conversations I had with them made me realise that it was God's plan that I be given a post in the IP. They encouraged me to not look for an FETP post because teaching young children was not that much more difficult than teaching teenagers. Later, I registered for a professional development course on the SACE website in which I found more content for IP. I was able to obtain knowledge and certificates of participation in these courses.

## **5.8 Theme 4: Experiencing My Emergent Teacher Identity As a Fluid State**

The last theme in this section was experiencing my emergent teacher identity as a fluid state. Here, there are three sub-themes: first, I am a Black beginner teacher which meant that culture had a key influence on my emergent teacher identity; second, I am a male beginner teacher, thus gender had an inseparable aspect of my emergent teacher identity; and third, I am a teacher in a rural school which means that contextual factors influenced my emergent beginner teacher identity.

### ***5.8.1 I am a Black beginner teacher: Culture as a key influence on my emergent teacher identity***

Culture is a key influence on my teacher identity. I am a Sepedi Black man; I was raised and groomed in Sepedi culture. As mentioned in my literature review, culture is defined as a social order which shapes attitudes and behaviour (Groysberg et al., 2018). My culture influenced my teacher identity by creating a barrier between me and girl learners. Growing up it was rare to see a male father or father figure being around more girls than boys. This made me think that as men we are not supposed to spend more time with girl children. This statement is supported by Gosse (2011) who states that male teachers are fearful of possibly being accused of sexual abuse. This is because many men are accused of the sexual harassment of their daughters. I also

mentioned in my self-narrative stories that I was not comfortable being around girl learners in private, for example, being alone with a girl learner in the staffroom. Cruickshank (2019) states that male primary teachers cannot comfort children like female teachers or parents can without putting themselves at risk.

As stated in my narratives, I went to initiation school to transition from boyhood to manhood. This was where I was able to understand the different roles of culture and gender in our culture. I learned that a man should be strong and be the head of the house. Men who were considered to be weak were not considered to be the heads of the house. To be the head of the house meant that the man was the only one who took on the responsibilities of the household. African men are taught gender duties, responsibilities, and roles. I mentioned in my narrative stories that I paid a lobola to my then girlfriend. This was because I was taught that a man should be responsible for paying a lobola to his wife-to-be or pay an inhlawulo when he impregnated a woman out of wedlock.

### ***5.8.2 I am a male beginner teacher: Gender as inseparable aspects of my emergent teacher identity***

Gender roles influenced my identity in my emergent teacher identity. According to social role theory, there are expectations that are deemed suitable for individuals adopting certain social roles (Kaur et al., 2023). My role as a Black man is to take care of my family, meaning that I am the breadwinner and I must be strong. During my teenage years, I went to initiation school which was my transition from boyhood to adulthood. This was where I started to take on my gender role as a man. I started to do odd jobs with my father in order to have some money to take care of my needs. At this stage, my parents were only providing food in the house.

My gender was a barrier between me and the female learners. It was easier for me to communicate with the boy rather than the girl learners. I was not ever called on by other male teachers to discipline the female learners in the school and no girls took part in the sports codes I was leading. This was because of my gender as a male and the stigma that girls are not that safe around men. When I saw a girl learner crying, it was not easy for me to comfort them because I was scared to be seen as a man who abused the girl learners. Instead, I would go to the staffroom and ask one of the female teachers to attend to any girl learner who seemed to have a problem.

As I mentioned in the self-narrative stories, the male learners who misbehaved or disrespected the female teachers were brought to us male teachers. This was different from when a girl learner was misbehaving. I was only called when the boys were misbehaving in the classroom. This created a greater bond between me and the boy learners.

When I started to work at the school, only soccer was played and headed by a male teacher. I was asked to be a soccer assistant coach to help the male teacher. I was never asked to choose whether I wanted to assist with soccer or netball. This was because of the gender roles in which society believes that men are better soccer players than netball players.

### ***5.8.3 I am a teacher in a rural school: Contextual factors influencing emergent beginner teacher identity***

I did my teaching practice in a town in an urban area. I never expected that the school in which I was going to start my career was going to be in the IP and also in a rural area. Urban areas have good schools with facilities such as libraries, computer laboratories, and playing fields. I wished to work in an environment that was similar to the one where I did in my teaching practice.



However, the school where I got my post was in a rural area with mainly low- and middle-income households. Many of the learners at the school had single parents or were living with guardians. These households depended on social grants. This is where most of the learners came to school without a pen, wearing torn shoes. When you asked them why they did not have a pen, they said that their mom said she would buy them one when she had collected her social grant money.

Service delivery in the rural area of the school where I am currently teaching is very poor. There is no water and some of the houses do not have electricity. The learners live in houses that do not have electricity and thus the majority do not do their homework as they complain that they cannot write in the dark. Some learners go to the forest to fetch wood in the afternoons to make a fire so that they can cook. Some go to the community water tank to fetch water. The roads are not in good condition. When it comes to the school, the school's infrastructure is in poor condition. Some of the windows are broken.

Another factor that has influenced my beginner teacher identity is age. The community used to have female teachers at the school; the male teachers were old and not as young as me. When I started teaching, I saw that some of the parents treated me as their child rather than as a professional teacher. I had to draw a line between my age and my profession.

My cultural background also influenced my teacher identity construction. I was fortunate to teach in a place where most of the community has the same culture as mine. This made me feel more relaxed regarding the culture of learners in the school and community. I understood the learners and the parents' cultural practices.

## 5.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, Chapter 5, I have discussed the data analysis and data interpretation of my research. I looked at four major themes and their sub-themes. The themes and sub-themes were formed around my teacher identity as a teacher in the IP. The themes and sub-themes contributed to responding to my research questions. The first research question was: How did I construct my identity as a Black male beginner teacher in the IP? My first theme was of past experiences influencing my beginner teacher identity which contributed to responding my first research question. This included the sub-themes of the role of significant others in constructing my beginner teacher identity, experiences of my background as an influence on my beginner teacher identity, and the experiences of my beginner teacher identity in a state of transition. Also, the third theme contributed to responding to my first research question. these sub-themes included a reality check: the disparity between training and real-world teaching; the workload and managing the challenges faced by beginner teachers; and the constant battle of experiencing fear of failure.

The second research question was: Why did I construct my identity as a Black male beginner teacher in the IP in this way? The second and fourth themes contributed to responding to the research question. Theme 2 was the intrinsic perception and experiences that contributed to my beginner teacher identity. This theme included the sub-themes of my own perception of my initial beginner teacher identity, my perception of being a Black man in the IP, and expectations of teaching in a specific phase. The fourth theme, which also responded to the second research question, was experiencing my emergent teacher identity in a fluid state. This theme included the sub-themes of culture as a key influence on my emergent teacher identity, gender as an inseparable aspect of my emergent teacher identity, and contextual factors

influencing my emergent beginner teacher identity. The next chapter, Chapter 6, is the final chapter of my study in which I conclude by discussing the research study overall. The chapter includes recommendations for future research studies.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion, Recommendations and Limitations**

### **6.1. Introduction**

In Chapter 5, I discussed the findings of this study through thematic analysis. The findings were interpreted in the previous chapter. In this chapter, Chapter 6, which is the last chapter of my study, I review all the chapters of this study, reflect on the methodology chosen, and revisit the research questions. I also make recommendations for future research studies which are based on the findings. I also discuss the challenges I have encountered while conducting the study. The chapter ends with the reflection and conclusion of this study.

### **6.2 Review of the Study**

I now explain how each chapter in this study has unfolded. In Chapter 1, I provided an overview of the study. I introduced it by placing myself as an insider in this study. Then I shed light on the background and South African context of this study from the perspective of a Black male beginner teacher. The rationale and motivation of the study were explained in detail. This included my professional, personal, conceptual, and scholarly justifications. The purpose and focus of this study were presented in this chapter. I introduced the research questions that guided the study and clarified the concepts that were used. The research questions I asked in this study are (1) How did I construct my identity as a Black male beginner trained in the FETP teacher in the IP? And (2) Why did I construct my identity as a Black male beginner FETP teacher in the IP in this way? The overview of the research methodology and conceptual framework were explained. I also stated the quality assurance and ethical considerations. I then presented what each chapter entailed in this study.

In Chapter 2, I included the relevant literature review of current and previous studies and the theoretical framework chosen for this study. I discussed the literature

using themes. The themes in the study are the construction of teacher identity, multiple identities, the factors influencing a teacher's identity, and male primary school teachers. The themes looked at the international and local perspectives. I also discussed the conceptual framework of the study in which I used possible selves theory by Markus and Nurius (1986) and social role theory by Eagly (1987). I explained how the theories were merged and how the conceptual framework relates to my study.

In Chapter 3, I discussed the research methodology and design of this study by looking at its ontology, epistemology, and paradigm. Autoethnography, as the research design chosen for this study, was explained in detail, including the type of autoethnography used in this study which is analytical autoethnography. The advantages and disadvantages of autoethnography were discussed. I investigated the instruments I used in data generation which were the self-interview, memory work, and external data. I explained the data generation method. Lastly, I discussed the data analysis, quality measures, and ethical aspects used in this study.

In Chapter 4, I provided the readers of this study with my story in the form of self-reflective narratives to understand my analytical autoethnography. The stories were generated from my experiences in which data generation tools such as assorted photographs were used. The stories I told were from my experiences and emotions which gave meaning to this autoethnography study from a personal view which provided an understanding of my teacher identity construction as a Black male teacher.

Chapter 5 presented the findings of this study. Relevant major themes and sub-themes were identified from the data analysis section. The data were discussed, represented, analysed, and interpreted. The findings and interpretations were supported by the literature and the conceptual framework related to this study.

### **6.3 Reflection of the Study**

In this section, I reflect on the methodology and theoretical framework of the study.

#### ***6.3.1 Methodological reflection of the study***

The methodology that was chosen for this study was autoethnography. I did not know about autoethnography research design in qualitative research methodology when I was applying to study for my master's degree. I initially wrote my research design as a case study in which I was going to investigate Black male beginner teachers who were qualified in the FETP but teaching in the IP. However, my supervisor asked me to explain my study to her and when I told her about my personal experiences, she sent me articles about autoethnography to read and check if the research design would apply to my research question. I then decided to change the research design to an autoethnography after reading other autoethnographical studies.

At first, I felt that an autoethnography study was easy to do. I thought it was about writing stories like in an autobiography. However, when I began writing my stories and reading more about autoethnography, I realised that it was much more than writing stories. Writing my stories in the autoethnography study meant that I was exposing myself to the public. At first, it was not easy to write my stories, I sometimes felt that I should change my research design for this study. I talked to a few friends who had researched autoethnographic studies. They responded that in an autoethnographic study one needs to dig deeply into their thoughts and feelings. I then told myself that I could do this study. My family knew that I was registered for master's studies. I told them that my research methodology was autoethnography which was a self-study in which I would write personal stories that would include them. At first, they

did not understand why I was writing about myself. After explaining it to them, they started to show an interest in what I was writing. This made it easier for them to write their verisimilitude letters.

### **6.3.2 Reflection on the theoretical framing of the study**

I framed my study using a conceptual framework in which two theoretical frameworks, namely possible selves theory by Markus and Nurius (1986) and social role theory by Eagly (1987), were merged. I created a diagram to merge the two theoretical frameworks in which all the aspects of both theories were included in the conceptual framework. Possible selves theory is the representation, images, and thoughts of self in the future (Faure & Ziad, 2019). Possible self-theory also examines the past and current self-image. This theory has helped me to understand the influence of my past experiences on my teacher identity construction but also the influence of my emergent teacher identity and future thoughts on my current teacher identity construction.

Anglin et al. (2022) state that role theories “examine how individual behaviour is shaped by prevailing social roles and provide insights into how behaviour is perceived by others in light of such roles” (p. 2). Social role theory helped me to understand gender roles in constructing my teacher identity. This theory also helped me to understand my perceptions of other male teachers before I started teaching. I wanted to understand the gender roles in teaching particularly in the IP. This was influenced by my lived experiences of being a Black male teacher in the IP who was trained in the FETP. I wanted to understand how my gender role influenced my beginner teacher identity.

## 6.4 Personal and Professional Reflections on the Study

Reflection is “an active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” Dewey and Zugsmith (1933, p.9). Lincoln (2005) states that reflectivity forces researchers to critically reflect on themselves as researchers, on the choices they make on the particular type of theories and research problem, and on the type of methodology chosen for the study. In this section, I discuss my position in this research through my personal and professional reflections. Throughout the writing of this reflective section, my goal is to make my research process open and transparent.

### 6.4.1 *A qualified Black male FETP teacher*

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, I am a qualified Black male FETP teacher. I was born in Mpumalanga where I started primary school and completed secondary school. I then moved to Pretoria to study for my education degree. During my honours degree, I began to have an interest in the fields of men's studies, gender studies, professional development, teacher identity, and African studies.

In pursuing my MEd studies, I wanted to explore the experiences of other Black male FETP beginner teachers in the IP. I had always wanted to know if they had similar experiences to me. I then realised that it should start with me. That was when I was introduced to autoethnography by my supervisor. I thus approached this dissertation using autoethnography methodology.

To understand my experiences as a Black male FETP beginner teacher I had to include co-constructors of knowledge who were part of my experiences. In having conversations with my co-constructors, I used a vernacular language. This made us understand what we were having a conversation about. I did not want to make my co-



constructors feel uncomfortable using English when we had the conversations. Using our vernacular languages made my co-constructors feel free to speak and me as a researcher to understand them. I did not want them to feel as if I was more educated than them. In the next section, I discuss how my identity as a master's student influenced my research process.

#### **6.4.2 *Being a master's student***

Having conversations with my former teacher, friends, and colleagues and telling them that I was conducting master's research on my teacher identity construction made them interested in this study. They wanted to know what master's studies were and what challenges and knowledge were gained from the programme. This allowed me to even reflect on my school years with my teacher. Their words of encouragement gave me hope that what I was doing was not for just academics but also something that we would be learning from. My former teacher is proud of me, as I am now a master's student. He even encouraged me to pursue doctoral studies. As for my colleagues and friends, I have now gained more respect from them. It was not easy being a student and working full-time. I did not have much time for things like attending church, weddings, and so on.

#### **6.5. Discussion of Key Findings: Responding to My Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to understand and make sense of my experiences as a Black male beginner FETP teacher in the IP in the way I did. The purpose of the study gave rise to my research questions:

- How did I construct my identity as a Black male beginner teacher trained in the FETP teacher in the IP?

- Why did I construct my identity as a Black male beginner FETP teacher in the IP in this way?

In analysing and interpreting my data, I identified four themes that responded my research questions: my past experiences influencing my beginner teacher identity construction, intrinsic perception and experiences contributing to my beginner teacher identity, experiences of my beginner teacher identity in a state of transition, and experiences of my emergent teacher identity in a fluid state. I now respond the research questions by understanding the purpose and focus of the study, and then link my responses to the literature review and the conceptual framework.

In analysing my data, there were key findings that influenced my beginner teacher identity. My past, present, and future are the main key findings that influenced the construction of my beginner teacher identity. In the analysis, it was clear that my background influenced my teacher identity. Being raised by a single mother, I always wanted to change my life situation both for me and for her. My mother's influence on my past experiences influenced my teacher identity.

During my childhood, I saw myself as a teacher. My possible future self also influenced my beginner teacher identity. I imitated my teachers when I was playing school at home. This made me construct my beginner teacher identity at a young age. The choices I made for myself in the past thus created a positive future self.

## **6.6 Recommendations Based on the Study**

The recommendations of this study are divided into three sections: policy recommendations, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for future research. My recommendations are as follows:

### **6.6.1 Recommendations for policy**

- The government should recruit more men to qualify as teachers in primary schools. The majority of men do not want study for a teaching career and those who do study choose to specialise in secondary rather than primary school teaching.
- Continuous professional development opportunities should be given to beginner teachers by the Department of Education. Continuous professional development will motivate teachers to stay in the teaching profession rather than wanting to leave the profession in the first five years of starting their careers.

### **6.6.2 Recommendations for practice**

- Male FETP beginner teachers should be given support in the IP at the SMT, circuit, and district levels. Male beginner teachers are left unsupported as it is believed that if they are qualified teachers then they should know what to do, even in a phase they are not trained to teach.
- Induction programmes should be implemented at schools to coach beginner teachers for at least two years so that beginner teachers get a chance to develop their identities. Beginner teachers need to be supported in the early stages of their teaching careers.
- Beginner teachers should have a mentor or coach for at least a year in their beginning years of teaching. Having a mentor would allow the beginner teacher to share their experiences with a veteran teacher which will help them to face challenges.

### **6.6.3 Recommendations for future research**

- Investigate other Black male FETP beginner teachers who are facing similar situations in transitioning and teaching in the IP. This investigation can include other research methodologies.
- Investigate how female teachers who are trained to teach FETP in the FP and/or IP construct their teacher identity in the two phases where they are not qualified to teach.
- Conduct a comparative study between male- and female-trained FETP Phase beginner teachers in the IP and FP on how their teacher identity construction is similar or different.
- Include research on other races such Indian, Coloured, and White male FETP beginner teachers trained in the IP on how their race influences their teacher identity construction in a phase they are not qualified to teach.
- Investigate the influence of contexts such as townships and farms on male FETP teachers on their teacher identity construction.

## **6.7 Challenges Experienced During the Study**

During my study, I had to do a lot of reading about autoethnography research since it was a new methodology I had discovered. Reading about autoethnography sometimes made me ask myself if I had made the right decision to approach my study from a self-perspective. I also had to decide which autoethnography I should choose for my study, analytical or evocative (Ellis et al., 2010). I chose analytical autoethnography because I wanted to understand my experiences as a Black male beginner teacher in the IP.

Staying in a rural area was a challenge for me in conducting my study because of poor network coverage. Sometimes we lost a signal for between one and three days

which was a setback for the reading and writing of my research. I was not able to search for articles when the network was off.

I set my computer to autosave the Word document which saved my work to my cloud drive. Autosave meant that my work was safe and had a backup if I lost my computer or if it crashed. This also allowed me to work anytime on my research because I was able to open the document on my cell phone to read and edit what I had written when I had free time on the road. The network problem cost me a lot of time because sometimes on weekends I had to travel to the nearest town for network coverage to continue with my research in a restaurant.

Another challenge I had during my study was load-shedding. I experienced load-shedding at the time when I had time to sit and write. This was mostly late in the afternoons; I made time for my studies in the afternoon because during the day and on weekdays I was always at work. It was difficult to push on with my dissertation during load-shedding because sometimes we had stage 6 of load-shedding when we did not have electricity for four hours at a time. This stage would sometimes continue for three days.

In the first year of this study, my fiancée fell pregnant with our first child. We were looking forward to starting our own family and to having our baby at my graduation for my MEd qualification. Unfortunately, during the first trimester of the pregnancy, which was around August, my wife had a miscarriage. This was a very painful and emotional time for both of us. I had to be strong and support my partner in our loss. Emotionally I was so drained that I was not able to focus on my studies for weeks.

During the data collection stage, after I had written my stories, I had to send them to my co-constructors of knowledge for them to write verisimilitude letters. It was

not an easy task for my co-constructors to write these letters because they did not know what was expected of them. After I discussed this with them, they were able to understand and they wrote the letters which were sent to me to be verified.

## **6.8 Reflection of Study and Conclusion**

I started the journey of this study not knowing much about autoethnography. I was always keen to know and understand the research methodology. I did have some fears about continuing the study using autoethnography which I communicated to my supervisor and colleagues in academics, but I was able to be freed of my fears and to apply autoethnography in my study.

The most challenging part of this study was to recall my past experiences. It was not easy for me to write about myself. Writing my stories forced me to recall both the pleasant and unpleasant moments in my teacher identity construction journey. I remember during the story-writing stage of the data collection I spent a lot of time not knowing exactly how to write my stories because of the vulnerability of exposing myself to the world. I was scared of being judged and criticised by the outside world and also scared of talking about my experiences as a beginner teacher at the school where I was working.

## **6.9 Conclusion**

The autoethnography study for my dissertation has changed the way I saw things before. I was able to understand my experiences as a Black male teacher and my personal life through writing self-reflective narratives. When I thought that being in the phase that I was not qualified to teach was the fall of my teaching career, it actually became a blessing in disguise for my career and personal life. I now understand more about how children younger than 15 years behave and are. This has prepared me to

be a good father one day. This study has made me look at the objective of executing my gender roles as man. I hope that this research will inspire the newly qualified teachers who are trained in the FETP Phase only to find themselves teaching in FP or IP.

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## Annexures

### Letter of Invitation to Co-Constructors



Dear: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Invitation to co-creator of my autoethnography

I Sibusiso Moripe am currently enrolled in the Master of Education in Curriculum and Instructional Design and Development at the University of Pretoria, and I am conducting research about my own experiences with regards to my beginner teacher identity construction. You have been identified as a co-creator of my study, and I am inviting you to assist me in this endeavour by corroborating my memories.

### The research title

Teacher identity construction of a Black male beginner teacher in the Intermediate Phase

### Research purpose

The purpose of my study is to understand my teacher identity by looking at past events that occurred during my life journey. This is to enquire and explore how these events influenced my journey toward my teacher identity.

## Ethical considerations

As the principal researcher of this study, I have gained ethical clearance from the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria (Certificate number: xxx). I may only start with data collection once all co-constructors understand the purpose of my study and have given their informed consent. Below I have applied the inform consent process accepted ethical principal:

### 1. Autonomy and voluntary participation

Throughout this study, it is your decision whether you want to participate or not. You are allowed to withdraw at any point through this study for any reason without any consequences.

### 2. Full disclosure

As the researcher of this study, I will provide you with full information in the consent letter about what my study is about. I will also give you details of what will be required of you in as your role of a co-constructor. You are welcome to contact me on my contact details that are provided in this letter of invitation.

### 3. Confidentiality

This study does not require any personal information about you but is solemn information that involves me and events that have occurred with me and allowed me to develop and create a professional identity. You as the co-constructor of this study have the right to privacy and I, therefore, need

to take this into consideration and provide anonymity at all times. The information I gather or generate will be anonymous in the form of pseudonyms. Unless you are a family member, you may be recognised in this study. I would like to also inform you that if you played an important part in my life and someone who knows me personally, may identify you in this study even though I have used pseudonyms.

4. Safely in participation of the study

Throughout this study, I will take responsibility that you will not be placed in any harm, may it physical or psychological. This means that I will try my best to make sure that you are not placed in a stressful situation or feel embarrassed, where you will lose your confidence or self-esteem.

5. Trust The information that you provide me with through the study will be presented in an academic style. The information I describe will be presented truthfully and not be manipulated in any way.

**Participation and estimated timeframe of the study**

The research will consist of short stories generated by me. To get a better understanding of these events, the co-constructors will have to peer review my short stories and provide comments on the event. If this is not enough the co-constructor will be interviewed and this interview will be recorded and transcribed for analysis of the data. This will take place from March 2023 to May 2023. Your participation in this study will be highly appreciated and be most valuable to the completion of this study. I look forward to your response

in being a co-constructor of this study. Please feel free to contact me for more information.

Please feel free to contact me for more information.

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## Letter of Consent Co-Constructors



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Letter of consent to the co-constructor in the study entitled, **Teacher identity construction of a Black male beginner teacher in the Intermediate Phase**

This is to state that I, \_\_\_\_\_  
a co-constructor of the identified study, has fully understood the nature of the study and is willing to participate in the study conducted by Sibusiso Moripe from the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education.

#### ❖ **Purpose of study**

The purpose of my study is to understand my teacher identity by looking at past events that occurred during my life journey. This is to enquire and explore how these events enhanced my journey toward my teacher identity.

#### ❖ **Procedure**

Short stories will be written by myself as the researcher. Once these short stories are completed, they will be sent to the appropriate co-constructor of the

study via email. The co-constructor will be requested to peer review the short story/stories. This means that as the co-constructor of this study, you will be asked to comment on the accuracy of my memories shared in the story and provide your view of the event that took place. You will be requested to be completely honest with your comments and can even disagree with what I have mentioned in the short story. If I have any questions, I as the researcher will arrange a meeting with you as the co-constructor and interview you with a few questions to understand the event better. The interview will be recorded and transcribed thereafter for fruitful data. Therefore, your role will be to comment honestly on short stories or be interviewed for a better understanding. Once you have read the story, you will be provided with a letter of verisimilitude in which you confirm that the events shared in my stories are accurate and honest.

❖ **Important note to co-constructors of knowledge in my study**

An autoethnography is a very personal study and in this study, I am being exposed and want to understand situations better, therefore your honesty will be highly appreciated.

❖ **Conditions**

1. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study without negative consequences or penalties.
2. I may do so by informing the researcher telephonically or via email.
3. I have the right to ask further questions relating to queries of the study.
4. I understand that my participation in the study is completely

CONFIDENTIAL.

5. I understand that the findings will be disseminated in an academic style. We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes and for the presentation of papers. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

I have carefully read the above information and understand this agreement. I, therefore, agree to participate voluntarily in this study.

Name of participant (PRINT): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature:


Contact no(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_


Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed at Pretoria

Signature of Researcher: Sibusiso Moripe



Signature of Supervisor: Dr Yolandi Woest



### **Letter of Verisimilitude from Father**

I hereby confirm that I have read Sibusiso Morige stories. His stories are true and very touching. I never thought that I had played an important role in his life as a father to him. I met Sibusiso when he was around 16 years of age. He showed respect towards me even though I was not his biological father. I am glad that we got along in life. I am very proud of him as a father for the man he is today. I wish him all the best in life.

Sibeko James

## **Letter of Verisimilitude from My Mother**

**Sibusiso Morige is my firstborn child. I raised Sibusiso as a single parent until I met my husband, who then took the father figure role. Growing up my son was a very shy person. I never imagined him as a teacher one day because of his shyness. He loved school with all his heart I remember when he was late, he would cry. I am proud of his achievements in life and for continuing with his education. He is a very supportive person in the family in terms of helping us financially and supporting his sister. I did not doubt that my son would be a great husband and father because he is loving.**

**Jane Tsotetsi- Mother**

## Letter of Verisimilitude from Sister

Sibusiso is 12 years older than me, and we have a good relationship since I grew up having him as a brother. He is the only sibling I have, and our growing up years were challenging. Growing up my brother always felt a need to get educated and be independent. He liked school and he performed well academically. After his matric, he went to further his studies at the University of Pretoria where he did his Bachelor of Education with the specialization in Mathematics and Sepedi. Sibusiso motivated me to do better at school so that one day I can study and pursue a career.

Sibusiso is a very caring and loving brother who takes care of us at home. He always puts people around him first especially his family. Since he started working as a Primary School teacher, he made sure we are well taken care of financially. He also supports me academically by applying for me at higher institutions because he wants me to be a better version of my self and be independent like him.

I look up to my brother, he is my role model as he always strives for a better life. He believes in education, and it has already started opening doors for him. I wish my brother all the best and a brighter future ahead.

From Tshepiso

## Letter of Verisimilitude from Fiancée

I met my fiancé in 2017. It was my first year of study for my BSc Biochemistry in university and it was his final year. I was struggling a lot in adjusting to university life, most especially in my academics. He supported me emotionally and academically. He asked his former classmate who was doing BSc Chemistry to assist me with the first-year chemistry module. We became friends for years until 2020 when we decided to be in a romantic relationship.

After a year of us being in a relationship, we decided to take our relationship to the next level which is getting married. He sent a letter to my family asking to marry me. A date was set for lobola negotiation where my family and his family met. We are currently staying together and planning to do a traditional wedding and start a family.

My fiancé is a loving, caring, and supportive partner. He takes care of people around him, especially his family. He is very smart and career driven. His goal is to further his studies and grow in his career. He motivates me to be a better version of myself and to further my studies.

Kgomotso Senoamadi



## Letter of Verisimilitude from a Friend/ High School Classmate

I have been privileged with the opportunity to meet and become friends with Sibusiso Moripe. I know him since grade 7. He was an incredibly quiet young man, not easy to be friend. He was smart and focused on school. In class he always topped his grades in most of the subjects we did.

Sibusiso and I became friends in grade 10 when I decided to ask him to assist me with mathematics as I was struggling with it. We then became friends and study partners for life. Sibusiso instilled a "can do attitude" in me through advice and empowering my math knowledge. He was enthusiastic about becoming an astronomer. He was a top learner in our school with Mathematics and Science he became a peer educator assisting fellow classmates with Mathematics. In grade 12 we formed a study group with him and other peers, we successfully made it through grade 12 with the effort and knowledge he instilled in us.

Mr. B Mbonani

## Letter of Verisimilitude from Colleague

525 Gwebu street  
Kirkvorchfontein "B"  
Dennilton  
1030  
15 October 2023

Dear Reader

I hereby acknowledge that I have read the autoethnography of my colleague Mr S Morige and I am content that it fulfils the requirements.

I met Mr Sibusiso Morige at the school where he was appointed. Who was a newly appointed educator. He appeared to be a diligent person who works hard and pays impeccable attention to details. What I have learned from him during my teaching practice in his school is that building a positive relationship with work colleagues at all levels using crucial and creative thinking is essential. After reading his story I can say I am very motivated and driven to further my studies as a young educator. He had always been enthusiastic and ambitious and thus has come this far, for I give him a great level of respect and admiration.

It is an inspiring and motivating story that can build and mould the identity of an educator.

Ms. P Macu

## Letter Verisimilitude from Former Teacher

EMIS: 800011338  
ENQ: MR MSIZA P  
TEL: 0828243377  
Email: [madlayedwaschool@gmail.com](mailto:madlayedwaschool@gmail.com)



MADLAYEDWA S SCHOOL  
P.O. BOX 215  
SIYABUSWA  
0472

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To whom it may concern

It is with great pleasure to have an opportunity to talk about Sibusiso Moripe, one of my best learner. I taught him from Grade 10 to 12. He was shy, not talkative but brave enough for challenges. I met him years after matric and told me that he is a qualified teacher. I knew him to be committed to his school work. I always believed in him that greatness will come from him. He was doing the Science Stream and that class was destined for the best.

I met him again, as usual, a teacher is a teacher, I encouraged him to assist the learners to his best knowledge and use some new teaching strategy and method. My last word was ‘keep studying, you are still young you can make it to the top’

Wishing him the best in his studies.

Yours

Msiza P (former Teacher)

## Professional Development Plan

### 7. MY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN (8)

| SMART Goal(s)                                | What are you going to do? (actions)                              | What will you need to do it? (resources)   | Start date      | End date         | Milestones/ Deliverables  | Where & how (e.g. mode online etc.) | Measure of success            |
|--|--|--|-----------------|------------------|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| SMART Goal 1:<br>Obtaining a master's degree | Work hard, do a proposal, and obtain data for my research report | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bursary/Money</li> <li>Supervisor</li> <li>Information Communication technologies</li> <li>Books</li> <li>Articles</li> </ul> | 01 March 2022   | 30 November 2023 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Submitting Assignment</li> <li>Reading books</li> <li>Attend classes</li> <li>Participating discussions</li> </ul> | Online                              | Obtaining the master's degree |
| SMART Goal 2:<br>Getting married             | Pay lobola to my in laws   | Money  | 29 January 2022 | 29 January 2022  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Love</li> <li>Happiness</li> </ul>   |                                     | Be with the woman I love      |

|                                  |  |   |              |               |  |                                 |  |
|----------------------------------|--|---|--------------|---------------|--|---------------------------------|--|
| SMART Goal 3:<br>Becoming a HOD  | Do my work<br>Apply for the post<br>Do short courses | Honours degree  | January 2022 | December 2028 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply for posts advertised</li> <li>Read more about the duties of HOD</li> <li>Act/volunteer on the post</li> </ul> | posts                           | Becoming a HOD                                 |
| SMART Goal 4:<br>Obtaining a PhD | Obtain my Master of Education degree                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master of Education degree</li> <li>Money</li> <li>Time</li> </ul> | January 2024 | December 2025 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attending seminars</li> <li>Attending conferences</li> <li>Participate in discussions</li> </ul>                    | Online<br>Face-to-face sessions | Obtaining the PhD<br>Putting Dr before my name |