IMPROVING CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL TEACHER DEVELOPMENT IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE: A SUBJECT ADVISOR'S SELF-STUDY

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DECLARATION

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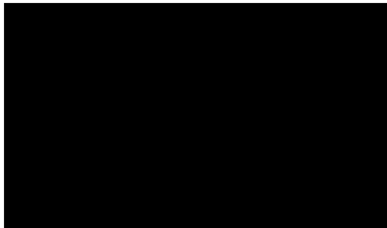

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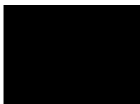

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANA	Annual National Assessment
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement
CES	Chief Education Specialist
CPTD	Continuous Professional Teacher Development
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DCES	Deputy Chief Education Specialist
DoE	Department of Education
DP	Deputy Principal
ECD	Early Childhood Development
FAL	First Additional Language
FP	Foundation Phase
GET	General Education and Training
HoD	Head of Department
IQMS	Integrated Quality and Management System
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LoLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
MEd	Master’s in Education
NEEDU	National Education Evaluation and Development Unit
NPDE	National Professional Diploma in Education
PDP	Professional Development Programme
SACE	South African Council for Educators\
SASAMS	South African School Administration and Management System
SES	Senior Education Specialists
SGB	School Governing Body
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SMT	School Management Team
UK	United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

I am a subject advisor in the Foundation Phase (Grades R–3) in the Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. For this study, the focus was on my practice and learning as a subject advisor concerning the continuous professional teacher development (CPTD) programmes for teachers conducted by subject advisors. I looked into how I, as a subject advisor, could better support teachers. This study was located within the methodology of self-study of practice, where I used an arts-based self-study approach. Since I was looking at myself in practice, I was the main research participant. The other participants were three other subject advisors and 13 teachers from three different primary schools. Three research questions kept me focused in this study: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of subject advisors in relation to CPTD? What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development?* And *How might I use insights into subject advisors' and teachers' lived experiences and perspectives to improve my understanding and practice of CPTD?* I used multiple methods to generate and analyse data, including audio recording of discussions, reflective journal writing, self-portrait drawing, and collage. Throughout my self-study journey, I learnt from a sociocultural theoretical perspective and social constructivism. A sociocultural perspective assisted me in understanding teachers' and subject advisors' learning backgrounds. In understanding social constructivism, I discovered that teachers and subject advisors learn better if they interact as they construct knowledge together. Self-study enabled me to change as I had to go deep and examine my own practice and reconstruct my thinking about how I have conducted CPTD. I gained confidence and valuable insights into my practice as I came to understand more about teachers' and subject advisors' experiences of CPTD. This thesis demonstrates the power of self-study to facilitate a process of learning, whereby improvement in practice can be achieved as we discern context-appropriate ways of bringing about changes in offering CPTD in challenging circumstances. The study also demonstrates how we can start to value teachers' voices and input in planning and facilitating CPTD programmes that are more inclusive and participatory, and that address teachers' genuine concerns.

CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

1.1 My personal and professional reasons for performing this study

I am a subject advisor in the Foundation Phase (FP) (Grades R–3), in the Department of Education (DoE), KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Province, South Africa. I started my career as a teacher in 1985 after obtaining a Primary Teachers Diploma at Indumiso College of Education. I worked as a primary school teacher for 11 years. I taught Bridging class (now called Grade R), Sub-standard B (now called Grade 2), Standard 1 (now called Grade 3) and Standard 2 (now called Grade 4).

During my years of teaching, I registered as a part-time student and upgraded my teaching qualifications. The reason for this was that I wanted to gain more understanding and knowledge of dealing with learners who had barriers in learning. I obtained a Special Education Diploma in Remedial Work, a Bachelor of Arts degree and later a Bachelor of Education degree. These qualifications enabled me to deal with the learners better, and I was able to develop other teachers in specific issues like how to deal with discipline in the classroom. The principal allowed these opportunities for me to work with other teachers and assist their learners when they experienced learning difficulties.

In 1995, through a promotional post, I was appointed to work as an FP Mathematics teacher educator at Indumiso College of Education, where one of my responsibilities was to train students who wanted to be qualified teachers. I performed this role for six years at the college.

I joined the FP advisory services as a subject advisor with the Department of Education in the year 2001. In my understanding, subject advisors are supposed to be experts in a particular subject or phase and to have been in service as a teacher for more than seven years. Therefore, they have experienced some of the challenges facing the delivery of the prescribed curriculum as teachers. They are now on the other side of the fence, advising teachers on curriculum implementation and facilitating continuing professional teacher development (CPTD).In 2003 I was then promoted to Deputy Chief Education Specialist, where I guide and lead other Senior Education Specialist subject advisors. In this capacity, I have worked with teachers and subject

advisors for 21 years. I have conducted numerous CPTD programmes for FP, such as Mathematics, Languages, Life Skills including Assessment. In this thesis, when I refer to CPTD programmes, I refer to workshops for teacher development.

The focus and purpose of my Master's study were to better understand and improve my own practice concerning preparing teachers for the implementation of the Foundations for Learning in the FP (Makhanya, 2010). In focus group discussions with teachers during my Master's study, teachers criticised the poor CPTD workshops conducted by subject advisors, which they complained had no impact on their teaching and learning. This led me to question my position and practice in advisory service, as I learnt that teachers were not developed much by attending CPTD programmes.

Furthermore, in informal gatherings with teachers, I have listened to their concerns and frustrations. These informal gatherings included Wellness Awareness Day, where subject advisors play games like netball and female soccer with teachers of different schools to build our relationship, and during our end of each year functions organised by social partners.

When I visited some schools after training had been done, to support and guide teachers in teaching and learning, I observed that some teachers were not implementing the curriculum policy as they were supposed to have been trained to do during CPTD programmes. That was of grave concern to me, as I felt that it impacted negatively on the performance of the learners. I wanted to find out the underlying reasons for the poor implementation of curriculum policies. I wanted to help teachers to gain content knowledge and perform well in their classrooms. Therefore, in conducting this self-study, I aimed to improve my practice as a subject advisor by engaging teachers in dialogue using different art-based activities to discuss their lived experiences of CPTD.

The KZN Province has 12 DoE District Offices. Hence, in my study, I also involved three subject advisors from three different Districts. It was challenging to get all subject advisors at the same time (see Chapter Two). We discussed our lived experiences of planning and conducting CPTD programmes.

In this chapter, I explain my personal and professional rationale for undertaking this self-study of practice. I briefly explain what subject advisors do in relation to CPTD. I explain the

structure of the FP, for the reader to understand the structures of how teachers are supported. I want the reader to understand my position in the context of what I do with the teachers. I aim to give a clear understanding of what teachers teach in the FP, including the different languages used in the Province of KZN. I also explain the key concepts, theoretical perspectives and research questions that support this study.

1.2 Focus and purpose of the study

For this study, the focus was on my practice and learning as a subject advisor concerning the CPTD programmes for teachers conducted by subject advisors. I intended to find out the challenges and hindrances that both teachers and subject advisors encounter regarding CPTD programmes. I believed that listening to teachers' and subject advisors' concerns would assist me in identifying the gaps and establish platforms to enhance my practice.

I aimed at looking into how a subject advisor, such as myself, could better support teachers in dealing with the professional problems they experience in their daily teaching. By doing this, I wanted to find ways that would help teachers maximise their professional growth through attending effective CPTD programmes. This, in turn, could provide opportunities for teachers to implement the curriculum well using practical examples, including a variety of resources that improves on their learning and the academic performance of learners.

The low academic performance of learners has been an issue in most South African schools. It has been highlighted by the diagnostic report on the Annual National Assessment (ANA) (Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2014). In South Africa, the DBE introduced the ANA as an assessment instrument that was intended to enable a systemic evaluation of education performance and thereby enhance learner achievement (DBE, 2011). These tests were conducted yearly from the FP to the Intermediate Phase and focused on Languages and Mathematics. This was a result of the DoE's realisation that although numerous CPTD programmes were offered, teachers were not performing as expected (KZN DoE, 2012).

However, the ANA as a programme is no longer conducted in schools. Teachers complained about the workload of marking the ANA Language and Mathematics assessments. They were supported on this by our social partners (unions), as they saw the programme as putting more work onto the teachers, with less support from subject advisors. However, the issues of poor

performance, both in Mathematics and Language, which the ANA was trying to address still exist.

I decided to engage in this self-study of practice to improve my professional practice and perform better as a subject advisor. My aim was to learn how I might better support teachers and other subject advisors to progress in their scope of work, including facilitating CPTD programmes better. It was vital for me to revisit and reflect on my role and responsibilities as a subject advisor to understand my practice. Furthermore, I anticipated that if I involved subject advisors and teachers in my journey of learning about my own practice of CPTD, this self-study research would allow me to learn from others, to reflect, and to carry out self-introspection (Lapadat, 2009).

1.3 Rationale

As an FP subject advisor (Grades R–3), my responsibility is to develop teachers through ongoing professional development. CPTD activities and processes are supposed to develop "the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes of educators so that they are able to improve students' learning" (Moletsane, 2004, p. 203). Because CPTD is essential for an educational effort to improve teaching and learning (Ono & Ferreira, 2010), subject advisors must be well prepared and confident in facilitating CPTD. They must develop their CPTD capacity so that teachers can be appropriately equipped to meet the growing needs and challenges of learners (Steyn, 2010). Subject advisors must demonstrate their expertise and knowledge by actively engaging teachers during CPTD sessions.

As indicated earlier, my professional and personal decision for undertaking this self-study of understanding CPTD was prompted by the findings of my Master's in Education (MEd) self-study research (Makhanya, 2010). In my Masters study, I looked back at events and experiences that have shaped my thinking as a teacher and as a subject advisor, the choices I have made, and what informed those choices. Through revisiting those events, experiences, and decisions, I gained a deeper understanding of my professional practice and of the curriculum reform concerns of teachers that I work with. This further raised concerns about my role and responsibilities as a subject advisor concerning teachers' learning, teachers' attitudes and behaviour, and teachers' understanding of their practices.

During my Master's study, teachers complained about the poor workshops conducted by subject advisors. Teachers also complained about the lack of support and guidance from the subject advisors. As a subject advisor, I realised that some teachers were demotivated and failed to follow during CPTD sessions. The outcry about poor workshops, as highlighted by teachers, was of great concern to me. Similarly, Steyn (2010) endorses the concerns of South African teachers about CPTD programmes presented by the DoE having little or no impact on their work in schools. Teachers described these programmes as being "too theoretical in nature with little practical value for them" (Steyn, 2010, p. 356). It was clear that these teachers did not feel that they were much 'developed' by attending CPTD programmes.

Teachers frequently complain about poor planning and timing of CPTD programmes by subject advisors. When teachers are called to attend during their instructional time, they indicate that classes are disrupted. However, when the CPTD programmes are planned during holidays, very few teachers attend. Therefore, I feel that teachers and subject advisors should see CPTD programmes as a partnership, where both teachers and subject advisors learn and develop our identities as teachers.

In general, in my experience, as subject advisors responsible for explaining and shaping the CPTD programmes, we do not necessarily look critically at our own practice to see if we are effectively and proficiently engaging teachers in CPTD (Bantwini, 2011). As someone who has worked with teachers for 21 years and listened to the things they shared, and what they had experienced during CPTD programmes, I had attempted to develop teachers in their various areas of work. However, at times I questioned my position and the contributions I had made to the lives of teachers. I knew how important it was for teachers to have adequate support structures and systems. I imagined the frustrations, fear, and uncertainty of not having the support they needed from people like subject advisors and others, who had to give guidance, mentor, induct and support teachers in their teaching and learning.

I started questioning whether or not I was doing justice with my work as a subject advisor. I asked myself if teachers were receiving appropriate support from the people who were responsible for conducting CPTD programmes (Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). My professional engagement with the teachers and my academic studies made me realise that this field of CPTD needed to be relooked at, and something had to be done.

The aim of this self-study research was to help me to reflect on and improve my practice. Austin and Senese (2004, p. 1241) emphasised that through self-study research, "teachers are recognizing the importance of reflecting on their experiences and analysing their practice, of creating a new principle for professional development that embraces personal growth and reinventing themselves". Similarly, as a subject advisor, I anticipated that this self-study research would assist me in identifying challenges and finding ways to improve my understanding of guiding and facilitating teachers' CPTD programmes effectively in the FP (Grades R–3).

1.4 Structure of the Foundation Phase in the District

It is crucial to explain the structure of the FP to clarify my position as a subject advisor, including my involvement with FP teachers. The focus of this study was on FP teachers, especially with Grade R teachers, as that is where my line of duty falls.

The structure in the FP (Grades R–3) has a Chief Education Specialist (CES) who leads and manages the General Education and Training (GET) band (Grades R–9). The Districts have their own internal arrangements because of the shortage of human resources in terms of allocating officials to different positions. In my District, as a Deputy CES (DCES), I had trained teachers in the FP. I am now in charge of Grade R, but also working very closely with subject advisors for the FP. We share our work plans because we deal with the same schools, teachers, and Heads of Department (HoDs).

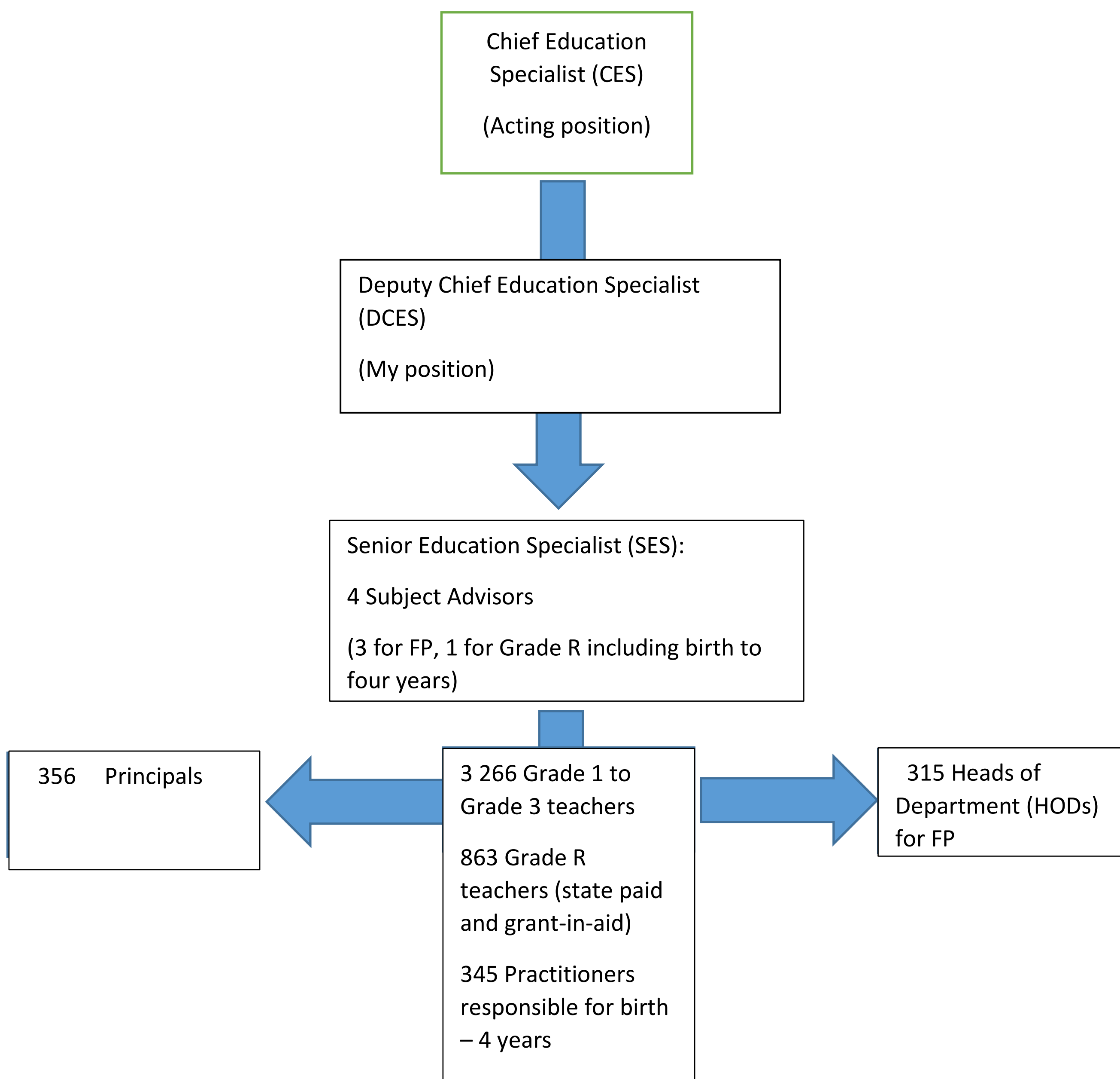


Figure 1.1. ***Organogram of the Advisory Service in the District.***

The above structure shows the two levels of responsibility that I take care of in the professional development of teachers. These are the designation of District officials (as from the level of DCES, they are referred to as subject advisors). My responsibility involves capacitating other subject advisors (DCES and Senior Education Specialists (SES)) on curriculum imperatives.

Under the CES is a DCES accountable to the CES, then the SESs who are accountable to the DCES. All of these subject advisors (CES, DCES, SES) are office-based personnel responsible

for curriculum development, management, delivery and support, including management of learning and inclusive education (KZN-DoE, 2012). Subject advisors have to support teachers in different schools on curriculum matters.

There are 356 primary schools in the Districts of KZN, with only five subject advisors supporting the FP. The internal arrangement is that three subject advisors deal with Grades 1–3. Two subject advisors (including myself) deal with children from birth to 4 years of age, including Grade R. In Grade R, we have state-paid teachers that receive full benefits and grant-in-aid teachers that only receive a salary subsidy from the DoE; they are paid through the same system as other state-paid teachers. Grant-in-aid teachers have a full workload but do not have full benefits like a pension fund, housing allowance, and medical aid. They also do not earn a full salary. Yet, 90% of these teachers are qualified, while some are working towards obtaining their qualification.

The number of teachers (see Figure 1.1) shows the extent of the workload that the subject advisors have, to train, support and guide teachers. Principals have raised a concern about the lack of subject advisors in supporting teachers at the school level (Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018). However, it is impossible to make regular follow-up visits to guide teachers in schools because of the shortage of human resources.

Subject advisors have roles and responsibilities to take care of the professional development of teachers. The level of advisory services is complex. The DCES subject advisor must train, guide and manage the SES subject advisors. After conducting CPTD programmes all the advisors, including the DCES, do school visits to monitor and support teachers. They must make sure that School Management Teams (SMTs) are capacitated to help monitor, support and guide teachers at the school level. Subject advisors must ascertain that HoDs receive intensive training in the management of the curriculum. HoDs must mentor, coach, guide and support teachers from Grade R to Grade 3 at the school level. In my observation, this is not happening in some schools, as some of the HoDs lack subject content knowledge. The subject advisors have to "provide an enabling environment for education institutions to do their work in line with education law and policy while improving the quality of teaching and learning" (KZN DoE, 2012, p. 10). Subject advisors must be experts in their field of advisory work and show competency when guiding the FP teachers.

1.5 What is a subject advisor?

For this self-study, the definition of a subject advisor is as stipulated by the KZN DoE, 2012, p. 1) in the South African context: "A subject advisor requires an incumbent to be a phase / or subject specialist in his/her field, demonstrating both depth of content knowledge as well as its pedagogy". Subject advisors must enable curriculum delivery and offer guidance to schools on policy implementation. Dilotsothle, Smitt and Vreken (2001, p. 307) explain that subject advisors' function is "to train, coach and guide teachers on content problem areas". Similarly, the Performance, Administration and Management document (DoE, 2016, p. 98) specifies that subject advisors must "guide, support educators in effectively delivering the curriculum in the classroom".

In South Africa, it is the responsibility of the Government to use internal structures such as subject advisors in conducting professional development programmes (PDPs). Subject advisors start their careers as ordinary teachers, and then through promotion become subject advisors. The promotion process involves a teacher applying for the job, being selected based on his/her expertise and then going through the interview process.

Rumahlatu, Huliselan and Takaria (2016, p. 5662) explain the curriculum is "like a compass in guiding the ship to sail the world of education". It is supposed to help teachers to organise and select relevant learning activities. It should also allow teachers to select relevant teaching materials. It is thus crucial for subject advisors to conduct effective PDPs so that teachers gain knowledge and understanding of how to mediate the prescribed curriculum in context-appropriate ways.

All public schools in South Africa use the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) from the Grade R–12 curricula. This curriculum uses the outcome-based approach, which is learner-centred (DoE, 2011b). Amongst other responsibilities, the subject advisor is expected to train, monitor, guide and support teachers in the implementation of the prescribed curriculum. The DCES has to visit a minimum of 8 schools per month, while the SESs are expected to visit a minimum of 18 schools per month. After each school visit, subject advisors are supposed to identify the needs of teachers per school. There must be a Professional Development Plan developed by subject advisors, based on the analysis of results per year (KZN-DoE, 2012). The Professional Development Plan must address the challenges faced by

teachers in each school. Each school must have its School Improvement Plan (SIP) developed by teachers, which much show how they will improve the results of the learners.

In South Africa, the subject advisor "plays a fundamental role in the success of the implementation of new mandates and reforms" (Bantwini, 2011, p. 2). As subject advisors, part of our core duties is facilitating continuing professional development for the teachers we work with. However, this is not an easy process (Bantwini, 2011). South African teachers have raised concerns about a lack of understanding and support from subject advisors (Bantwini, 2011; Makhanya, 2010). Teachers complained that subject advisors are hardly ever seen in some of the schools, and that even if school visits are done, neither guidance nor mentoring is offered, other than demanding teachers' planning files for report purposes (Kunene, 2009; Makhanya, 2010). Teachers also point out that they are often expected to implement a new version of the official curriculum after just a few days of training (Makhanya, 2010). It is clear that teachers need more time for training to understand the curriculum.

My Masters of Education study (Makhanya, 2010) highlighted the significance of open and supportive communication between subject advisors and teachers. I found that it is essential that advisors give support and guidance when doing school visits and that teachers must be allowed to voice their classroom challenges. Also, my study revealed that subject advisors must not undertake school visits to inspect, but instead, they need to open up lines of communication. Similarly, Robinson (2009) insists that teachers need to feel that they are appreciated for the work they are doing and that they must be made to feel invaluable. Bantwini (2011) further elucidates that if subject advisors have negative assumptions about teachers resisting change, this harms the support that teachers receive. Thus, subject advisors must open channels of communication, develop an effective working rapport with teachers, and concurrently ascertain that teacher learning and change and working conditions are attended to on an ongoing basis (Bantwini, 2011).

It is important to note that it is not only the subject advisors that are involved in the development of teachers. We have other units in our education system that also help in the professional development of teachers in one way or another. For example, the Governance and Management wing is also responsible for learner and teacher welfare. They also check that the teacher's manner of communication is correct and based on Batho Pele Principles (Public Service Commission, 2008). This means that officials must put people first, for the better delivery of

goods and services. All of us, as government officials, must be humble and transparent as we deliver excellent service to the people. This impacts directly on the teacher's responsibilities and his/her rights. Also, the Teacher Development Unit trains teachers on the professional code of ethics and classroom management. These office-based personnel are responsible for the different aspects of the professional development and growth of all teachers from Grade R up to Grade 12.

1.6 Prescribed curriculum for the Foundation Phase

For this self-study, it is essential briefly to discuss the composition of the prescribed curriculum, including the languages used by different schools for the FP, in KZN Province. The structure of the prescribed curriculum (Curriculum, Assessment and Policy Statement or CAPS) has an impact on the training, development, and implementation of the curriculum (KZN DoE, 2012).

Teachers in the FP do not specialise; instead, they teach all three subjects, i.e., Mathematics, Life Skills, Home Language (English/ IsiZulu/Afrikaans or IsiXhosa) and a First Additional Language (FAL) (IsiZulu, IsiXhosa or Afrikaans). The focus and aims of the prescribed curriculum are to make things easier for teachers. It is designed in such a way that it is meant to be concise for teachers, with less administrative work. Teachers are supposed to be assured of consistency and guidance during contact time. The teaching and learning of Mathematics and Language have specific aims, skills, and emphasis on content areas. This is intended to give teachers a clear indication of the skills and knowledge that learners will gain when dealing with a particular content area (KZN DoE, 2012).

1.7 Issues of language policy in education

The School Governing Body (SGB) plays a vital role in South African Schools. The SGB represents the parents of learners in the school. It looks after the welfare of learners and the effective running of the school. SGBs have the power to determine the language policy of a school (South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996) in consultation with the SMT. In each school – depending on its enrolment – the SMT consists of the Principal, Deputy Principal, and HoDs. The school's choice of the medium of instruction depends on the learner population and decision of the SGB about the language and whether to take English, IsiZulu or Afrikaans as the FAL.

The National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU, 2012, p. 8) expressed the difficulties faced by some of our schools in KZN when implementing the Language in Education Policy as being the following:

- ✓ dialectisation of African Languages.
- ✓ a mismatch between Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in the FP and the Home Language of many learners.
- ✓ the problem of terminology in Mathematics.

In some schools, the issue of language is a challenge, as parents want their children to learn and know English at an early age. Some learners struggle to understand the LoLT – which is English when they reach Grade 4 – because they had learnt all subjects in isiZulu in the FP. The ANA diagnostic report showed the knowledge gaps and weakness learners have in understanding the language (KZN DoE, 2012). The learners show poor performance as they move from FP to Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6) because they switch from their mother tongue to having to learn all of their subjects in English, except IsiZulu.

In Chapter Five, I describe three different schools where my participants were teaching. At Montana Primary School, where they used English as their medium of instruction in teaching and learning, they chose Afrikaans as their First Additional Language (FAL). The case was similar at Abbib Primary (an ex-Model C school), although the school had predominantly African learners. Learners at Udosi Primary School take isiZulu as their home language and English as their second additional language. In all these subjects, continuous assessment forms an integral part of teaching and learning. Subject advisors are expected to train teachers on the CAPS curriculum in all FP subjects, including the FAL, using isiZulu or English. Because some schools use isiZulu or English as a medium of instruction, teachers are trained in the language that they use in their schools. The learners must learn in their mother tongue in the FP.

The ex-Model C schools are those schools that were advantaged, accepting only white learners, before South Africa transitioned into democracy in 1994. All CPTD programmes for ex-Model C schools in our District are carried out in English. This is done irrespective of whether the schools use Afrikaans or English as the medium of instruction. The CPTD programmes for African schools are carried out in IsiZulu, except for English FAL schools, where they are conducted in English. In schools where learners use IsiZulu as their mother tongue in the

Foundation Phase, learning English is challenging. Many parents want their children to learn and know English at an early age. However, many learners at these schools are not in a position to read English with understanding at Grade 3 level, let alone do spelling or writing. Then, in Grade 4, they are expected to do all their subjects in English.

1.8 How do subject advisors know what kind of professional development programmes teachers need?

When CAPS was introduced in 2012, all teachers in my District were trained on all information about FP subjects. The training was for three days and was carried out per ward. Each ward has about 19–22 schools. Grade R and Grade 1 teachers were trained together, then Grade 2 and 3 teachers were also trained on the same days. The CPTD programmes were conducted separately to accommodate the different languages used in schools. In schools where their medium of instruction was Afrikaans, the teachers attended workshops conducted in English. In my District, no subject advisor was proficient in Afrikaans.

When subject advisors had visited schools and identified the teaching and learning problems, their responsibility was to fix these problems through conducting PDPs. Each year teachers are expected to complete the Integrated Quality and Management System (IQMS), where they identify individual areas that need development. The IQMS is also aimed at providing support for continued growth. The school must then compile their School Improvement Plan on how they plan to help the teachers. Teachers have to complete their own Personal Growth Plan, highlighting areas where they need development and how they aim to achieve it. As subject advisors, we look at the SIP and then come up with professional programmes to address teachers' needs. Sometimes teachers do receive professional development from other stakeholders, with social partners (unions), publishers and the private sector also providing professional development training for our teachers.

In my District, we identified the teachers' needs and planned separate workshops concentrating on one specific content area in a subject; for example, in Mathematics, teachers were developed on patterns and algebra, including assessment. This was done to make it easier for teachers to extend their content knowledge; if all information was given at once, teachers would become confused. The workshops were not prescribed, but as an expert in the field, one needs to vary one's strategies and content to be in line with the mandated CAPS.

The IQMS is used by all teachers in schools to identify areas that need development. The aim is to provide support for continued growth and improved learning since the IQMS looks at performance and appraisal of teachers for school improvement (Education Labour Relation Council, 2003a). The only challenge is that IQMS has a monetary incentive, and I have observed that some schools do not do justice to the programme but submit for compliance for teachers to earn a 1% salary increase. I realised this when I asked some teachers to explain how they do their IQMS in their schools.

All schools collect information on the areas of development that teachers have identified and compiled in a SIP. All schools submit their SIP to the circuit, and the circuit develops their Circuit Improvement Plan, which is then sent to the District for all units to look at the needs and to build their District Improvement Plan. Once a year, during the second term subject advisors look at identified areas of development for all of the schools and then prepare a PDP. That helps to plan the CPTD programmes for the following year.

1.9 The importance of continuing professional development for teachers

After the advent of the South African democracy in 1994, there were many changes in the curriculum; one of the reasons for these changes was the complicated terminology that teachers were failing to understand so that they could grasp the content. Teachers had to attend different CPTD programmes and adapt to the new changes in the curriculum. Subject advisors were responsible for conducting CPTD programmes and if these were not done effectively, teachers missed out on necessary curriculum content knowledge that they were expected to learn.

I noticed that when the curriculum was streamlined because of the problematic terminology, it was frustrating even for the experienced teachers. Novice teachers were not inducted properly and they struggled with planning and assessment. The HoDs responsible for managing and guiding teachers on-site had too much on their plates and not enough time to provide proper coaching, mentoring and support (Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018; Van der Berg, Spaull, Wills, Gustafsson, & Kotzé, 2016). HoDs are full-time class teachers and also responsible for the administrative work of both teachers and learners in the FP. They find it difficult to support the teachers fully with the workload they have.

Nowadays, teachers are generally keen on attending PDPs as they accumulate points from the South African Council for Educators (SACE) (2010). The objective of SACE is to see to the

professional development of teachers by ensuring that the courses that are available to them are accredited. Teachers have to earn 150–199 points within a three-year cycle to get a Bronze certificate, 200-299 points for a Silver certificate, and 300 and above points for a Gold certificate in a three-year cycle. Teachers engage in three kinds of SACE-endorsed programmes:

- Type one: Teacher-initiated, attending educational workshops, excluding the employer-driven ones.
- Type two: School-initiated, for the teacher after the IQMS has been conducted, and shows where the teacher needs further assistance and development. The teacher can be engaged in subject cluster meetings.
- Type three: Externally initiated and provided by the approved provider who is registered in the SACE database.

As a subject advisor, my experience in visiting schools has shown me that irrespective of numerous PDPs, many teachers still struggle with some aspects of the prescribed curriculum (Makhanya, 2010). Jita and Mokhele (2014) believe that when teachers are exposed to PDPs they collaborate with each other as they gain content and pedagogical knowledge. However, in my experience, this is not always the case and depends on whether teachers are exposed to effective PDPs that will help them to grow.

The teachers that we support come from different social and cultural backgrounds. Some schools are doing well but complain that CPTD programmes are poorly conducted. Some teachers work at disadvantaged schools where learners come from low socio-economic backgrounds because of poverty and unemployment. Those schools have resources, but some teachers do not know how to use them effectively, even though the resources come with instructions on how to use and integrate them into teaching and learning. In some schools, vandalism leads to materials being stolen, which affects teaching and learning, as well as impacting teachers and learners psychologically.

I encouraged teachers of neighbouring schools to come together and form cluster groups. Clusters are seen as spaces for revisiting curriculum issues that were unclear to teachers. They are intended to provide opportunities for teachers to collaborate and analyse essential aspects that they have difficulty with. As Jita and Mokhele (2014) explained, in clusters, teachers can find the space to explicitly discuss and share content and pedagogical knowledge.

It must be noted that teachers have been trained in different higher education institutions. Some institutions use distance learning, where practicing teachers receive their learning materials through post or download them from the Internet or online learning platforms. They have less practical knowledge, and hence CPTD programmes are essential to breach the gap between theory and practice. In my view, subject advisors must be competent in content and pedagogical knowledge with practical examples to assist teachers in bridging the gap opened by their training.

In South Africa, the area of CPTD has been well-researched. Galane (2016) pointed out the challenges of poor implementation of curriculum policies when workshops were not given enough time, and without follow-up visits to support teachers. Similarly, Khoza (2014, p. 14) highlighted that "workshops are used as vehicles to convey circular changes designed by experts from the Department of Education; teachers as implementers are not consulted to contribute beforehand". Khoza further explained that during these workshops, teachers were not active nor given a chance to ask questions. Likewise, Kalaivani (2016) believed that if teachers were more involved in CPTD programmes, they would adapt better to curriculum transformation. Stroebel, Hay and Bloemhoff (2019, p. 8) conclude that "the irony of having a workshop for a few hours and expecting informed teachers who are capable of applying the newfound knowledge successfully as outcomes are clearly unrealistic". I agree with these authors, because the DoE did not allow subject advisors to take teachers out of school during school hours, and teachers were given too much information at the workshops, that they failed to internalise and put into practice.

I believe that if CPTD programmes were well planned and conducted, this would create effective collaboration amongst subject advisors and teachers. When teachers are involved in professional development activities, it must be with the aim "to enhance teachers' expertise and, at some time, raise their confidence and self-efficacy" (Kennedy & Shiel, 2010, p. 37). Teachers have to go back to their schools well equipped with the knowledge and confidence to assist them in dealing with all of their learners, including the challenged learners.

1.10 How other international countries view professional development

Thinking about professional development in South Africa and continuous engagement in professional development made me wonder what was happening in other countries. I wanted to understand if they were doing something similar or different from what we do in South

Africa. This prompted me to read about other countries and how they offer professional development to teachers.

I decided to create a collage that details my observations from reading about CPTD programmes across various countries (Figure 1.2). I looked at the literature on three different countries, Chile, the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia, intending to understand more about how professional development is conducted. I was interested in understanding various examples of and perspectives on professional development from different contexts. Like South Africa, Chile is a developing country. But it has a different official language and a different sociocultural context. Australia and the UK are developed countries that use English as their official language. These three countries are on different continents.

In this collage, the countries are represented in various corners. Some issues that are common to all countries in the middle. I also decided to create a collage that represents my notes about CPTD in each country.

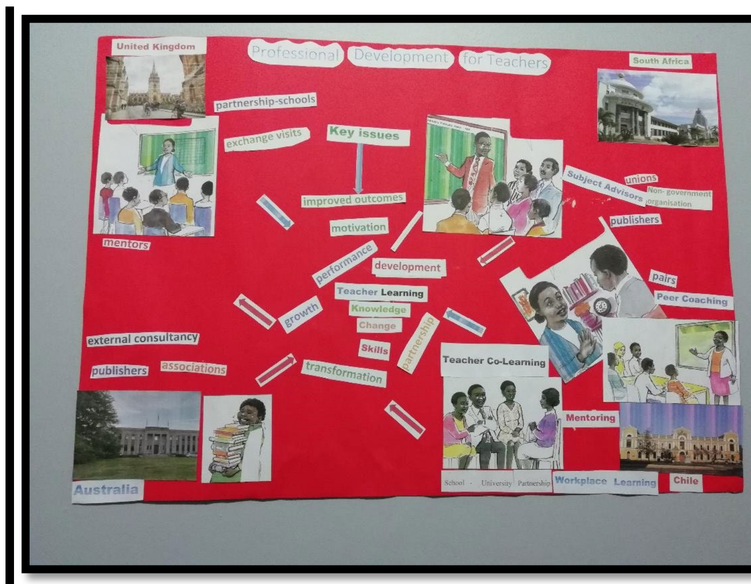


Figure 1.2. ***Collage on professional development globally.***

In reading about Chile (Figure 1.3), I observed that professional development was referred to as “teacher learning, learning to learn” (Avalos, 2011, p. 10). I understood this to mean that during the process of learning, the teacher’s knowledge is practically transformed. I also read about how novice teachers were supported by different structures. The experienced teachers mentored other teachers and were responsible for the induction of novice teachers. And, in

schools, they promoted workplace learning, which happened formally or informally but was not supported by outside facilitators.

Figure 1.3. ***How professional development happens in Chile.***

I noted that in schools, the teachers collaborated with each other as they gave feedback and appraisal that helped in improving students' learning. In Chile, there were also in-school partnerships with universities, where external researchers provided professional development. Avalos (2011) clarified that not all professional development was suitable for teachers; it was essential to consider the educational needs of teachers, their working conditions and whether there was upward mobility for them to improve. It was also vital to look at what works in other countries to enhance teachers' professional development.

In reading about the United Kingdom (UK), I noticed that some teachers liked to attend PDPs as they felt that there was value in exchanging ideas (Figure 1.4). They found it useful for a teacher to talk to another teacher. However, teachers raised the challenge of their PDPs being "too top-down and planned, you don't have an opportunity to give, to share your own ideas" (Taylor, 2015, p. 7).

I noted that, in the UK, they used external consultancy and mentoring programmes for professional development to support individual teachers. Teachers also had the task of visiting

other schools to observe other teachers' teaching. They encouraged partnerships with other schools, which helped them to transform and improve their outcomes. They also encouraged collaboration within the schools, with universities as well as with the teachers' centres. Also, teachers in the UK shared subject pedagogies, where the same class of learners was taught by three different subject teachers.

Figure 1.4. ***How professional development happens in the United Kingdom.***

In my reading about Australia (Figure 1.5), I remarked how, according to Ling and Mackenzie (2015, p. 265), programmes in Australia were described as "dogmatic and prescriptive and [allowing] little or no room for the teacher to interact creatively with the curriculum or pedagogical approaches". These authors explained that the programmes for training teachers were developed in such a way that they used particular published materials, while previously professional development was provided by the employer. Consequently, in the Australian context, publishers, associations and consultants, including universities, were responsible for the CPTD programmes.

Figure 1.5. ***How professional development happens in Australia.***

After looking at the three international countries, I then reflected again on professional development in South Africa (Figure 1.6). In South Africa, occasionally, some subject advisors have the opportunity to be trained by a university, depending on the particular programme offered. In the Province of KZN, the induction of newly appointed teachers is done by the Sub-directorate of Teacher Development. Still, this sub-directorate cannot cover the entire scope and detailed aspects of the curriculum. They concentrate mainly on the code of professional ethics and other CPTD programmes such as the training of the SMT. They also touch very lightly on issues of classroom management, without doing practical demonstration lessons.

Figure 1.6. ***How professional development happens in South Africa.***

From my reading, I became more aware that, similar to what has happened in some other countries, as subject advisors in South Africa, we were planning all our programmes for professional development without giving teachers a chance to share their ideas. We did not seem to see a need to include the teachers during planning. As subject advisors in the province, we used to plan and develop materials for the teachers, not with the teachers, following a top-down approach. There was no formal follow-up by subject advisors to motivate and encourage the teachers. In devising my self-study research, I realised that we still needed to cultivate a culture of sharing and working together with our teachers.

1.11 Research questions

In this section, I outline the three research questions that kept me focused in this study and why I asked these particular questions. I explain how these questions assisted me in exploring my research topic.

1.11.1 Question One

Research question one is as follows: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of subject advisors in relation to CPTD?*

In responding to this question, I started by reflecting on my personal experiences and perspectives (see Chapter Three) as a teacher, teacher educator and subject advisor. When answering this question, I created a self-portrait drawing and a collage about my lived experiences of professional development. This research question assisted me in thinking about and reflecting on the past PDPs I had conducted. It allowed me to do honest introspection, starting with the preparation and planning and including the actual engagement with the teachers in these PDPs. I reflected on the type of resources I brought to the training, and how I used them to help teachers understand the content better. This question facilitated further self-reflection on my competency and professional knowledge. It also supported critical thinking about my role as a leader to other subject advisors. I realised how important it was for me to induct, coach, guide, mentor and prepare other subject advisors before they engaged with the teachers.

I also involved three other subject advisors from different Districts in reflective conversations to share their lived experiences of CPTD (this is discussed in detail in Chapter Four). I could

not get all of the subject advisors to the same venue at the same time but managed to meet with them individually. Our discussions helped us to look at CPTD programmes with a critical eye. I took and implemented some of the suggestions that they shared about what was happening in their Districts, and that they found were working for them. After our meetings, I visited some of the schools where I saw that teachers were doing well, to observe and learn from teachers. I also advised other subject advisors to do the same. The process assisted us as we continued with our workshops.

In my home language, isiZulu, there is a saying "*umuntu, ngumuntu ngabantu*" (a person is a person because of other people). This simply means that you cannot do things alone, but you can manage with the help of others. I learnt that I needed to collaborate with teachers and other subject advisors to make sure that our CPTD programmes were proficient and ran smoothly.

1.11.2 Question Two

Research question two is as follows: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development?*

This question provided me with an opportunity to learn from 13 teachers as they openly voiced their concerns and frustrations about PDPs they had attended. I involved teachers in art-based activities, like self-portrait drawing and collage making, for them to discuss and share their lived experiences of CPTD. Teachers were able to share the good and the bad aspects of PDPs, including their expectations. This assisted me in comprehending teachers' challenges and their needs in terms of professional development. It also helped me in thinking deeply about ways of improving the CPTD programmes.

My involvement with the teachers helped me to understand why some teachers had difficulty in implementing the relevant curriculum and assessment. Answering this question helped me to understand teachers better and think of how I could guide and support them better. More details about this are discussed in Chapters Six and Seven.

1.11.3 Question Three

Research question three is as follows: *How might I use insights into subject advisors' and teachers' lived experiences and perspectives to improve my understanding and practice of CPTD?*

Chapter Nine of this thesis addresses the changes that I incorporated after listening to both the subject advisors' and teachers' lived experiences of CPTD. In understanding and responding to this question, I came to realise the importance of change as I improve on my practice. I listened to teachers and saw a need to involve some teachers with expertise to co-facilitate the PDP. Likewise, Ling and Mackenzie (2015, p. 266) criticise professional development that is a one-way transmission of knowledge. The authors referred to it as being done "to" teachers rather than conducted "by" or "with" teachers (p. 266).

Responding to the third question prompted me to restructure our PDPs with the teachers' needs and strengths in mind. I involved teachers who were doing well in their schools to co-facilitate CPTD programmes in conjunction with subject advisors. We worked collaboratively with teachers (facilitators) as partners in facilitating PDPs. Teachers were invited to creatively share their ideas with other teachers. The intention was to offer professional development as a fun and exciting part of teacher learning. This question also helped me to realise how crucial it is to use concrete resources and practical ideas and to expose teachers to hands-on activities during PDPs.

1.12 Key concept and theoretical perspectives

The focus of this study was on my learning from lived experiences of continuing professional development activities. I wanted to listen to subject advisors and teachers with an open mind and to reflect on how I could improve my practice as a subject advisor. Understanding the concept of continuing teacher professional development from two complementary theoretical perspectives assisted me to better understand how teachers learn and acquire knowledge, and what constitutes their learning development, while thinking about their sociocultural contexts. These perspectives also enabled me to better understand my role and responsibilities concerning CPTD.

1.12.1 Understanding the significance of continuing professional teacher development

The CPTD described in this study was focused on meeting the requirements of the DBE concerning the implementation of curriculum policy (Bantwini, 2011). Evans (2002, p. 341) states that "teacher development [enhances] the status of the profession as a whole [and improves] teachers' knowledge, skills, and practice". This means that when teachers undertake

professional development, they are not only gaining new knowledge and skills, but the standard of the teaching profession is being raised. Bubb and Earley (2007, p. 4) clarify CPTD as "an ongoing process encompassing all formal and informal learning experiences that enable all staff in schools, individually and with others, to think about what they are doing, enhance their knowledge and skills and improve ways of working so that pupil learning and well-being is enhanced as a result." Hence, CPTD is important because teachers need to grow their knowledge and skills throughout their careers.

In my understanding, PDPs refer to the planned, structured activities for teachers to attend for them to gain instructional knowledge and skills to use in their classrooms with the learners. Noonan (2018, p. 1) defines effective professional development "as activities or relationships intended to support and develop teachers' instructional practice". During professional development sessions, teachers get a platform to socialise and share curriculum aspects that are challenging to them at the school level. In so doing, they improve their skills and knowledge as they collaborate during professional development activities. I realised that when teachers participate in professional development, they collaborate while reflecting on their work with other teachers.

Webster-Wright (2009, p. 702) advocates professional development as "enhancing authentic learning rather than concentrating solely on delivering prescribed content". This author suggests the alternative conceptualisation of professional development as authentic professional learning. For my self-study, this conceptualisation highlights the importance of understanding how teachers continue learning through their practice and supporting them to learn in ways that they feel shape their practice for the better.

Subject advisors conduct CPTD programmes to support and enhance teachers' teaching and learning. The main goal is to improve teacher understanding so that classroom activities are more explicit and learner performance improves. Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018) referred to professional development as the key to supporting teachers, especially those who are new to the field of teaching. I believe that even older teachers need PDPs to sharpen their skills and knowledge.

Opfer and Pedder (2011) maintain that CPTD programmes must be pedagogically sound and content-rich, and the facilitator must be a knowledgeable person. That means that subject

advisors must be thorough in their planning and possess content pedagogical knowledge. To ascertain that teachers are well developed, I had to make sure that meaningful PDPs were offered. Richter, Kleinknecht and Gröschner (2019, p. 2) assert that "the positive influence of professional development was evident when training was of high quality". Hence, I realised that if CPTD programmes were planned well with teachers as active participants, teachers would show development and professional growth in teaching and learning.

It was significant that teachers show their understanding of content knowledge in their classrooms. Shulman (1986, 1987, 1992) reminded me of the importance of teachers gaining pedagogical content knowledge to perform better. Hwang, Hong and Hao (2018) highlighted the responsibility of teachers to regulate the learning process in the classroom. The authors expressed the importance of motivating teachers to see value in attending PDPs. In my view, teachers find difficulty in interacting with learners effectively if they lack content knowledge. As a subject advisor, part of my role is to change teachers' attitudes and beliefs positively so that they see PDPs as of great value to them. Jita and Mokhele (2014, p. 2) made it clear that "subject advisors are employed to facilitate subject-specific support for teachers in schools". Hence, subject advisors must come prepared to share their expertise with the teachers during the facilitation of the CPTD programme.

Teaching requires in-depth knowledge, which is continuously updated and widened, and that involves complex skills that need to be continually adapted to new circumstances (Republic of South Africa, 2007). CPTD is thus central to the success of any teacher, school or institution. Teachers are the prime resource of an institution, and better results (whether defined in terms of productivity, examination scores or any other performance indicators), are more likely to be achieved by developing teachers better (Earley & Porritt, 2010). CPTD strives to support teachers to execute their demanding and challenging tasks effectively and continually improve teachers' professional confidence, subject knowledge and pedagogical skills (Republic of South Africa, 2007). When teachers grow in their subject and pedagogical content knowledge, the academic performance of the learners can also develop.

1.12.2 Understanding continuing professional teacher development from sociocultural and social constructivist perspectives

I looked at two central theoretical concepts – the sociocultural and social constructivist perspectives – to assist me in understanding the teachers' and subject advisors' lived

experiences concerning CPTD programmes. I decided to represent these two key theoretical concepts using a collage. Van Schalkwyk views the collage "as non-linguistic mode of expression, images and picture represent embodied meanings" (2010, p. 687). The pictures can tell someone about the collage maker's thoughts and feelings. Van Schalkwyk (2010, p. 690) explained that in creating a collage one has to "contrast images with similar and different meanings (juxtaposing), social and cultural constructions interweave with the medium of expression." I found that explaining the two theoretical perspectives using collage (Figure 1.8) helped me to be more lucid and thoughtful.

Figure 1.7. ***Collage on sociocultural and social constructivist theories.***

As I created the collage, the following keywords that I represented in pictures in my collage, helped me to explain my understanding of the sociocultural and social constructivist theories.

In creating this collage, I was reminded that I also come from a particular context in terms of my cultural background. Sociocultural experiences and expectations had a significant influence

on my personal and professional growth. My own sociocultural experiences had prepared me to think about and facilitate workshops with teachers in specific ways (as discussed in Chapter Three). My own background had an effect on how I responded to teachers when they sought clarity during CPTD sessions. In their use of self-study, Samaras and Freese (2006, p. 42) assert that the "social and cultural influences shape development, and individuals also shape the historical period in which they live". Self-study helps teachers understand how culture and personal history play a role in their development as teachers (Samaras, 2002). The choice of self-study methodology for my research prompted me to consider how my past experiences and cultural background might have shaped my development as a teacher and a subject advisor. In her analysis of self-study methodology, LaBoskey (2004, p. 819) emphasised that "learning is processed through previous experience so personal history and cultural context must be considered; and learning is enhanced by challenging previously held assumptions through practical experience and the multiple perspectives of present and text-based colleagues". As a subject advisor, I needed to challenge my own assumptions by considering the effects of culture and personal history on teaching and learning.

The collage making helped me to think more about how, as a subject advisor, I needed to think about how what teachers know and believe in from their environment shapes the way they think and their development. Bertram (2011, p. 95) contends that "teachers' beliefs about the purpose of education, the role of children in a classroom, the nature of knowledge, learning and teaching influence their practice and the combination of beliefs and experience shape teachers' instructional decisions". This helped me to understand that teachers can reflect on their own cultural backgrounds in relation to other cultures as they support their learning together. Teachers bring their "past experiences and beliefs to their teaching and learning'' (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 387). I anticipated that understanding teachers' cultural learning backgrounds would assist me in selecting relevant approaches and activities during CPTD programmes.

South African schools have different contexts, depending on their geographical areas. Some teachers come from well-resourced schools, whereas others come from rural schools characterised by poverty and a high rate of unemployment. Taking a sociocultural perspective

for this self-study helped me to understand that I should seek to understand the different school contexts that teachers come from, to help them increase their understanding of subject content as I also improve my own practice.

In adopting a sociocultural perspective on teacher learning in conducting CPTD programmes I must consider the local knowledge that teachers can use to understand the content better. Ball (2016) emphasised the importance of programmes that help teachers to deal with diversity and working with marginalised children in different school contexts. I believed that exposing and assisting teachers in understanding various activities that address different cultural school contexts will help them to think critically about what they have learnt, including how and what they do in their classrooms.

In my experience, teachers from well-resourced schools with better socio-economic status often interact well with one another, and their learners tend to show excellent academic performance. Lee (2014, p. 1039) affirmed that "the well-resourced schools are more likely to benefit from higher-quality teaching staff, a technology-rich learning environment". Using a sociocultural lens assisted me in seeing that I should allow teachers from different school contexts to share ideas together during the CPTD training so that they could learn together and support each other.

I realised that not all professional development activities support teacher learning. For that reason, issues like the context of the school where teachers work, teachers themselves and their willingness to learn must be considered. Bertram (2011) explained that when we expect our teachers to learn and develop, we also need to take the context (where they are teaching) of their schools into consideration. The above statement reminds me that during CPTD sessions, it is essential that I prepare and provide an atmosphere that is conducive to teaching and learning, not forgetting the background that the teachers are coming from.

I anticipated that using practical examples during CPTD sessions would support teachers in using different languages in diverse contexts to mediate learning. Meyiwa et al. (2013)

emphasised the importance of considering the local and indigenous knowledge in CPTD activities in rural communities. The rural teachers are heard when they participate in addressing their needs as well as those of their communities, by producing materials that relate to the context of their schools (Meyiwa et al., 2013). I anticipated that the use of practical tools and objects could assist teachers in solving some learning problems as they gain understanding during their participation in CPTD programmes.

I realised that it would be useful during CPTD sessions to redefine resources and create a space for teachers to rethink the use of these resources as they engaged with each other. Cole and Wertsch (1996) asserted that a sociocultural theoretical perspective on learning emphasises how "the use of artefacts shape and transform mental processes". I anticipated if I exposed teachers in using different objects to mediate learning, they could master different concepts more efficiently and with much understanding. I became conscious of the importance of using practical objects that teachers were familiar with in their own cultural contexts.

Adopting a sociocultural perspective on teacher learning reminded me how necessary local knowledge is in shaping our thinking and understanding as teachers and subject advisors. Meyiwa et al. (2013, p. 11) argue that "knowledge, and in turn content which finds its way into school books, is fluid and complex, however, it is essential that it is shaped by local contexts". I became aware that if teachers were supported in making use of indigenous resources, their understanding of content could improve as well as their pedagogic knowledge.

I anticipated that the use of practical resources and were hands-on activities would benefit the teachers during CPTD sessions (as shown in Chapter Eight). I realised that teachers in the FP can learn well when they use concrete, functional materials that are readily available in their communities. Jurasaite-Harbison and Rex (2010) reveal that, from a sociocultural perspective, teacher learning and change occurs in the context of participation in the real world. I anticipated that if I provided practical resources to the teachers, I would be creating a space for teachers to think and grow as they touched, manipulated, and saw the real resources during CPTD sessions.

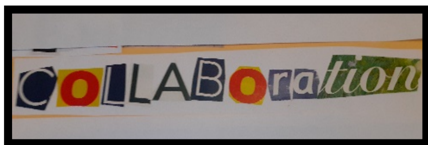
In understanding sociocultural theory, I realised that if teachers are given practical activities and resources to mediate learning, they can create their own understanding of concepts. Kelly (2006), who takes a sociocultural stance, maintained that teachers have an active and productive relationship with their professional knowledge, which they construct in their own way, in their particular circumstances, to address the specific problems they have identified. He argues that expert knowledge and learning are enhanced if teachers are engaged in collaborative problem-solving activities where they can reflect and discuss with other professionals (Kelly, 2006). In understanding the sociocultural lens, I learnt that teachers are unique and come to learn and understand educational issues in their own way. To improve on my role in supporting teachers, I needed to mediate learning in ways that could benefit teachers. I anticipated that, in so doing, teachers could take and use what they have learnt and integrate it into their daily teaching experiences. I expected that teacher learning would happen when the individual teachers came to understand their mediating role and contribution as participants in CPTD programmes.

In my reading on constructivism, I was reminded of Vygotsky (1978), who was known as the father of social constructivism. He believed that the construction of knowledge depends on the interaction of teachers in their learning environment as they communicate with each other (McKinley, 2015; Creswell, 2009). Ultanir (2012, p. 195) asserts that "constructivism is an epistemology, learning or meaning-making theory that offers an explanation of the nature of knowledge and how human beings learn". I realised that it was essential for me to have an understanding of how teachers interact and learn from each other during CPTD programmes.

In understanding constructivist theory, I anticipated that if teachers come together for a purpose, they will gain meaningful knowledge. Similarly, McKinley (2015, p. 1) posits that that "human development is socially situated and knowledge is constructed through interaction

with others". I, therefore, had to plan CPTD programmes in such a way that teachers would have an opportunity to socialise, communicate ideas and interact meaningfully with one another.

I saw it as essential to work closely with teachers and other subject advisors in improving CPTD programmes. Using a social constructivist lens assisted me to realise that when teachers work together, learning takes place, as they can freely use the language that makes sense to them. Every teacher has a different experience of learning; teachers bring their uniqueness as they become active and take ownership of developing new knowledge (Churcher, 2014). When teachers work together and not in isolation, they are constructing knowledge together. Teachers then have an opportunity to analyse and generate information as a group.



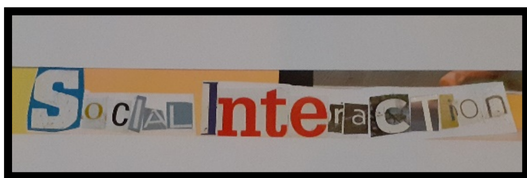
I needed to interact with teachers and other subject advisors so that we could improve our understanding of CPTD. I realised how important it is that teachers collaborate with each other as they construct learning together (Churcher, 2014). Through understanding social constructivism, I realised that it was essential to expose teachers to collaborative exercises that would help them socialise as a group.

My involvement in self-study made it clear that professional knowledge and learning are enhanced if teachers are engaged in collaborative problem-solving activities, as they can reflect together on what they are doing (Kelly, 2006). In this way, teachers have an opportunity to engage with each other and talk about what they are doing. Kalina and Powell (2009) endorse this, stating that from a social constructivist perspective, teachers benefit when "collaboration and social interaction are incorporated" (p. 243). I, therefore, aimed to conduct CPTD programmes collaboratively for the benefit of teachers and other subject advisors in the FP.

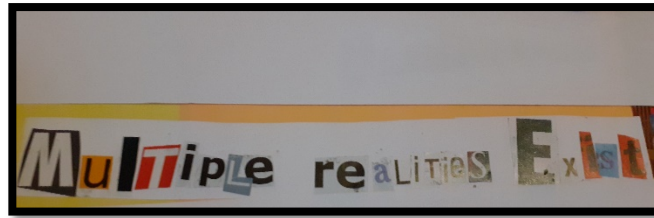
Teachers can gain knowledge through interacting with other teachers. Liu and Chen (2010, p. 65) assert that “constructivism is a theory about how we learn and the thinking process, rather than about how you can memorize and recite a quantity of information”. Considering social constructivist theory made me understand that teachers must be given a collaborative space to construct, discover and generate their own knowledge and meaning (Liu & Chen, 2010).

Through reading about social constructivist theory, I saw it as vital that I collaborate with teachers in planning and conducting CPTD sessions. According to Ultanir (2012), teachers need to be actively involved and construct their knowledge by making sense of what they already know. This gave me an indication that when teachers attend our CPTD programmes, they already have a wealth of experience upon which I, as a subject advisor, must build. My responsibility as a subject advisor is to extend teacher knowledge by providing ample practical learning opportunities for them to develop and grow.

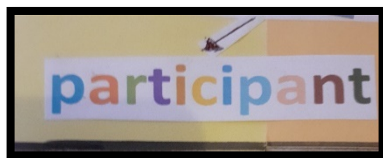
The social constructivist ideas of teacher knowledge highlight that people are continually constructing and reconstructing knowledge in relation to their social world (Bruner, 1990). I came to an understanding that teachers have a lot to offer and share with other teachers. It was for me to provide the opportunity for teachers to collaborate, learn from each other and gain more knowledge. Hence, in bringing teachers together through CPTD programmes I hoped to encourage them to construct knowledge together and learn from each other through collaboration.



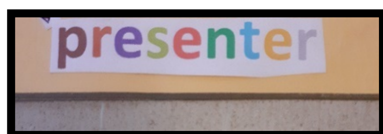
I anticipated that the interaction between myself and other subject advisors and teachers during CPTD sessions would improve learning. From a social constructivist perspective, learning is an active process in which teachers create their own understanding through their involvement and interactions with what they already know and believe, and within social contexts (Bruner, 1996; Richardson, 1997). Kalina and Powell (2009, p. 249) maintain that “knowledge has to be built on existing knowledge and one’s background and experience contribute to the process”. I realised that, as a subject advisor, when I plan activities, I must consider that teachers already have knowledge – my role is to enrich that knowledge so that they unlock their potential.



I also realised that, for this self-study it would be vital for me to play different roles during CPTD sessions to fit into the team. In this study, when I talk about "the team", I am referring to myself as a subject advisor, other subject advisors that I work with, and the teachers.



I realised that, during CPTD sessions, it would be necessary at times that I step back and become a participant. I appreciated the importance of listening to other subject advisors and teachers as they shared information. Before I embarked on this self-study, my tendency was that when another subject advisor was doing her presentation, I became occupied with other things and did not participate nor listen to discussions. Taking a social constructivist perspective helped me to realise that I should play a more purposeful and active role in learning from my colleagues.



I was aware that, as a subject advisor, at times, I needed to be a presenter because I would have to set the scene of what needed to be done. But, I became mindful that I must allow other subject advisors and teachers to contribute their views and give me feedback during and after my presentation without judging them (Samaras, 2011).

At times I would play the role of being a facilitator, because I had to facilitate the session, keeping in mind that facilitation is a two-way process. As a facilitator I should offer strategies and support the teachers to acquire their own understanding of the content (Draper & MacLeod, 2013). I hoped to learn from the FP teachers, and that they could also learn from me as a subject advisor. Given the different roles of teachers and subject advisors, I tried to alleviate the power imbalance. As Robinson and Taylor (2013) cautioned, unequal power relationships can silence teachers' voices as teachers only share what they think someone with more power wants to hear, not their real feelings. Taking a sociocultural and social constructivist theoretical stance helped me understand my power position with regard to the teachers and remember what I was there for. As a Departmental official, I knew that I had power, but I strove to create a climate where teachers would feel that I was one of them because of our informal interaction and hands-on activities. I tried to show them that I was there to learn from them (Ladkin, 2017).

1.12.3 Bringing together the sociocultural and social constructivist theory

Using sociocultural and social constructivist theories helped me to understand that these theories complement each other. Thus, from both the social constructivist and sociocultural perspectives, I had to understand teachers' cultural background and the contexts of their schools. Furthermore, the two critical theoretical concepts reminded me to be sensitive to the cultural diversity and sociocultural contexts of teachers.

Viewed from the social constructivist and sociocultural perspectives, teaching is much more than just the transmission of knowledge (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000). As a subject advisor, it was essential to consider that teachers come with some wisdom from their cultural backgrounds and that this has an impact on who they are as teachers. Teachers' teaching contexts, experiences and biographies can also influence teachers' professional knowledge and practice (Beijaard et al., 2000). I became aware that, during CPTD sessions, I needed to take into consideration the culture of schools and what teachers were bringing with them as we worked together to develop knowledge.

1.13 Methodological approach

This study took the form of qualitative research, which Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 2) define as being "multi-method in focus and involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter". Denzin and Lincoln (1994) assert that qualitative researchers attempt to understand thoughts, feelings, and emotions by getting to know people's values, beliefs, and symbols. In this study, I used qualitative methods to gain insight into the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of subject advisors and the teachers with whom we work. I anticipated that using this qualitative approach could help me to define my role as a researcher as that of a dynamic learner who could understand and tell the research stories from my participants' viewpoints, rather than as a 'specialist' who passes judgement on participants (Creswell, 1994).

As I discuss in-depth in Chapter Two, this study was located within the methodology of self-study of practice (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2009b; LaBoskey, 2004; Samaras, 2011) where I used an arts-based self-study approach. Self-study involves studying one's self as a practitioner to improve one's comprehension of one's practice and contribute new insights to the field of education at large (Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington, 2008; Samaras, 2011). Grossi (2006, p. 9) highlights that self-study research is "valuable to the teaching profession because it ensures professional growth for teachers and can result in new practices which can be invigorating." I anticipated that self-study would afford me great insight into subject advisors' and teachers' lived experiences of CPTD, to facilitate my own improvement as an advisor. I followed the advice of scholars such as LaBoskey (2004) and Samaras (2011), who noted that self-study is initiated by the self.

I chose to use an arts-based self-study approach. This helped me as a researcher to work with my participants to represent and reinterpret, construct and deconstruct meaning, and to communicate through arts-based activities such as collage, self-portraits, and memory drawings (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2009a; Mitchell, Weber & Pithouse, 2009). I anticipated that the use of arts-based self-study would encourage my own self-reflection and that of my participants.

1.14 Conclusion and overview of the thesis

In this chapter, I explained to the reader my personal and professional decision to undertake this self-study. I also described my position as a subject advisor and how it would fit into this

self-study research. I gave a brief background to my practice as a teacher, a teacher educator and a subject advisor in the FP. I explained the focus and purpose of the self-study, outlining the importance of such an inquiry in this field as related to my practice. I shared why professional development was essential for the teachers I support and for me as a subject advisor. I explained my understanding of sociocultural and social constructivist perspectives on CPTD and their importance for this self-study. I infused the chapter with a discussion of relevant literature. The thesis does not have a separate chapter for the literature review. Instead, throughout the thesis, I support and contextualise my arguments with citations from relevant literature. This is in keeping with the personal scholarly narrative style of the thesis (Nash, 2004).

In Chapter Two, I explain the self-study methodology and methods used in generating and analysing my data. I take the reader through my own understanding of the self-study research process and why I chose self-study methodology for this research. I explain the research setting and I describe my participants. I outline the methods that I used in generating data, which included audio-recording conversations with 13 teachers and 3 subject advisors as my research participants, and creating a self-portrait drawing and a collage to explain my lived experience as a subject advisor. I describe how the teachers created their own self-portrait drawings and collages as they shared their lived experiences of CPTD. I also explain how I used a journal to document my personal thoughts and feelings and encouraged the research participants to keep their own journals.

In Chapter Three, I begin addressing my first research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of subject advisors in relation to CPTD?* I outline how I wished to gain a better understanding of how I was shaped by the experiences and circumstances I have come upon in my professional career as a teacher, teacher educator, and subject advisor. I narrate the process of reflecting on my lived experiences of understanding CPTD programmes. In presenting my personal history, I include images that retell a story and allow me to better understand my practice as a subject advisor. I reflect on my own learning, understanding the process of my personal and professional development as a teacher, teacher educator, and subject advisor.

In Chapter Four, I continue to respond to the first research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of subject advisors in relation to CPTD?* I explain how I involved

subject advisors in conversations to detail their lived experiences of CPTD programmes. I discuss the challenges encountered in meeting with other subject advisors within the District, and explain the context of the Districts where these subject advisors were based. I reflect on the discussions with these subject advisors and my learning as I listened to their stories.

In Chapter Five, I discuss how I involved FP teachers from three different schools in assisting me in responding to the second research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development*? I share with the reader why it was essential for this research that rapport was established with the FP teachers. I include teachers' understanding of what continuous professional development meant for them and definitions from teachers' original writing about professional development. I explain how the teachers and I came up with our working definition of 'professional development' after looking at similarities and patterns from teachers' explanations.

In Chapter Six, I continue discussing how I involved FP teachers from the three different schools in responding to the second research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development?* I describe how I started by demonstrating my own self-portrait drawing so that teachers could be open and honest in talking about their own lived experiences. To acquire more information, I asked teachers to do their own self-portrait drawings that describe how they viewed the PDPs that they attended. I reflect on my learning from the discussions of teachers' self-portrait drawings. My intention was to understand the teachers' thoughts and feelings as they reflect on their lived experiences of CPTD programmes.

In Chapter Seven, I narrate how I continued generating data for my self-study research journey as I involved teachers in discussions and doing art-based activities in response to the second research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development?* I describe how I involved teachers in collage making. I reflect on the teachers' discussions regarding their experiences of how CPTD programmes had previously been conducted.

In Chapter Eight, I respond to the third research question: *How might I use insights into subject advisors' and teachers' lived experiences and perspectives to improve my understanding and practice of CPTD?* I reflect on the Home Language Grade R workshop that I planned and

conducted with the help of other subject advisors and educators as facilitators. I explain how I relooked at the previous set-up of PDPs, to change and improve my practice. I tell how I gained valuable insight during the planning and facilitation of a CPTD programme on Home Language with other subject advisors and teachers, where I noticed the difference that this made. I share some of the feedback received from teachers after the workshop was conducted.

In Chapter Nine, I review my thesis by referring back to the main points of the previous chapters. I explain my own learning throughout this research journey. I provide details of how my personal-professional learning changed my educational practice. I describe what I learnt about my methodology and research practice. I discuss my theoretical learning and how it assisted me throughout this self-study. I also offer a statement on the contribution and the way forward for this self-study.

CHAPTER TWO:
SELF-STUDY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the purpose of engaging in this study as a way to reflect on and re-examine the lived experiences of CPTD to improve how I conduct CPTD programmes. I chose a self-study methodology as I anticipated that it would help me to improve my practice in a manner that would contribute positively to the way I perform my duties as a subject advisor (Feldman, 2003). I defined the rationale for this research as necessary for my own learning and professional growth.

In Chapter Two, I explain the research methodology that underpins this study and offer my reasons for choosing the self-study methodology. I give the reader my understanding of self-study methodology and describe how it supported me throughout this research journey. I describe the research settings and the participants involved in the study. I explain how I used artistic representations to generate, represent, analyse and interpret data as I communicated the process and results of my self-study (Weber & Mitchell, 2004). To ensure trustworthiness in my study, in writing this chapter, I was guided by what Samaras (2011) emphasised about the transparent and systemic research process: a researcher needs to be "free, honest and be a reflective practitioner" (Samaras, 2011, p. 80).

2.2 Research methodology

I understand the self-study methodology as a form of qualitative research, which Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 2) define as "multi-method in focus and involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter". Denzin and Lincoln (1994, 2005) assert that qualitative researchers attempt to understand thoughts, feelings and emotions by getting to know people and their values and beliefs.

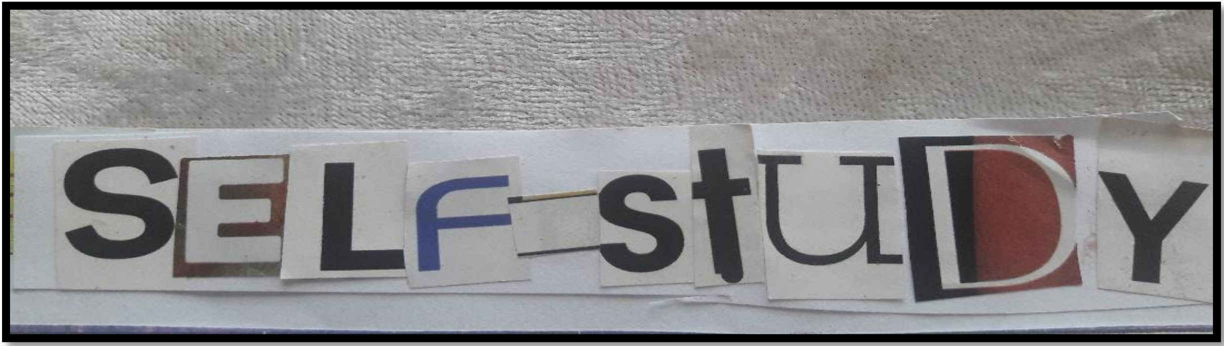
I used qualitative methods to gain insight into teachers' thoughts, feelings and lived experiences of how CPTD programmes were conducted. Using this qualitative approach helped me to define my role as that of a dynamic learner who can understand and tell the stories that emerge from the research from my participants' and my viewpoints (Creswell, 1994). This self-study opened a new chapter for me to come to understand my professional roles and responsibilities concerning teachers' experiences during CPTD sessions.

As a subject advisor, my core responsibility is to provide support for the professional growth of FP teachers (KZN DoE, 2012). Therefore, for this journey my main objective was to reflect on and improve my practice; hence I chose self-study as a valuable methodology that would allow for my own professional growth and development (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2004; Hamilton et al., 2008; LaBoskey, 2004; Samaras, 2011). The methodology of self-study involves studying oneself as a practitioner to enhance understanding of one's practice and contribute new knowledge to the education field at large (Hamilton et al., 2008; Samaras, 2011). LaBoskey (2004) explained self-study as transforming ourselves first to help transform others. It was my intention to come to know and understand myself and my lived experiences through self-introspection. The study was self-initiated because I wanted to interact with teachers effectively to profoundly improve my practice (LaBoskey, 2004; Samaras, 2011).

Hamilton et al. (2008) assert that self-study focuses on the self as one reflects on what one experiences through interaction with others, and thus improve one's practice. Using the self-study methodology assisted me in listening to and examine teachers' and subject advisors' lived experiences of CPTD programmes without passing any judgement. This self-study methodology provided me with insight into subject advisors' and teachers' lived experiences and perspectives of CPTD, thus improving my understanding of CPTD.

In the following section, I present to the reader my understanding of self-study, why I chose it as a methodology, and how it helped me to carry out inquiries and look at lived experiences (Hamilton et al., 2008). I discuss my understanding of self-study concerning my research journey and explain some characteristics of self-study that assisted in clarifying why I preferred to use this methodology for this research.

2.2.1 My understanding of the self-study methodology



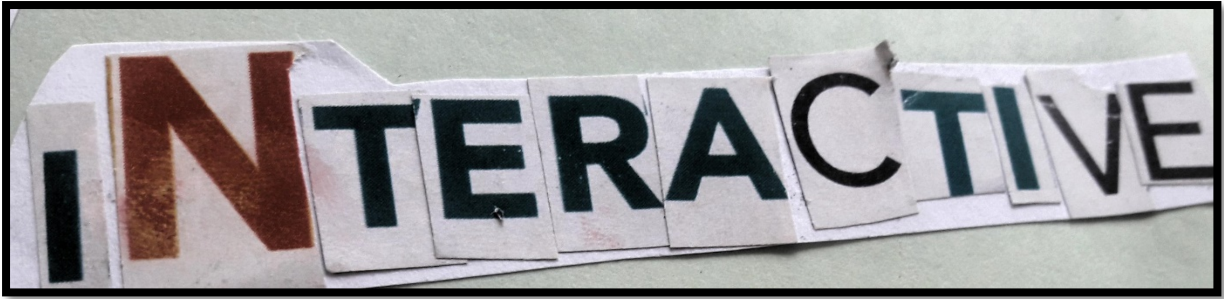
I chose a self-study methodology to improve and perform better as a subject advisor. I believed that if I developed my practice, teachers would benefit and could do better as they interact with their learners. Whitehead, Delong, Huxtable, Campbell, Griffin and Mounter (2020, p. 2) argue that it is the professional obligation of teachers to engage in self-study research "to ensure they are creating an energizing, life-affirming educational climate where learning and learners can thrive rather than simply survive". Similarly, I saw it as my professional responsibility to use the self-study methodology to look critically at the lived experiences of CPTD programmes to improve my practice.

As Samaras (2011, p. 15) says: "Self-study places individual researchers at the centre of their own inquiries". I engaged myself in this journey using self-study methodology because I wanted to understand my own learning, my own teaching and teachers' learning through CPTD programmes. As Samaras and Freese (2006) point out, self-study is a personally situated inquiry into something or a situation that is of concern to you and that you want to know more about and do something about.

I engaged in self-study because I wanted to be professionally accountable for what I do and how I do it. This view was shared by Samaras (2011) when she explained that teachers were responsible for their own students' learning and that they learn more when they ask questions about their own practice. Hamilton et al. (2008, p. 17) refer to the methodological approach of self-study as "a look at self in action, usually within educational contexts". As a subject advisor, it was essential for me to look at myself in action concerning CPTD.

Self-study is about your own inquiry about the challenges that you have experienced in your professional practice. You have questions about things that are not clear to you or that do not make sense to you, and you share those questions or concerns with others to get clarity. In my case, as a subject advisor, it was about my inquiry into conducting CPTD. That is why this self-study was about my personally situated research because it involved my own context and the things that I experienced with others (Samaras, 2011).

I became involved in self-study to reflect on my own work and to change and perform better. Samaras and Roberts (2011) emphasise the importance of motivating and encouraging teachers to take charge of their learning and improve their practice. Likewise, my engagement in this self-study was aimed at improving my own practice; I needed to grow and be competent in my work of providing advisory services. I anticipated that if I were to lead as a model for teachers to improve my learning, their practice as teachers could also improve



Self-study encouraged me to work together with others, not in isolation, to collaborate with others and reflect on my practice. Through this process, I identified my strengths while I also received critical responses that helped me to improve my learning. Hamilton et al. (2008, p. 21) explained that "the interactive element of self-study allows the researcher to focus on self, engage in reflection through interaction … and ultimately improve practice". In self-study, you work with others who will inspire you to ask questions about your work and gain new knowledge without being judgmental (Samaras, 2011). For me, those others included my fellow subject advisers and the teacher participants. Through interaction and feedback, I was able to rethink my practice around CPTD and focus on what I could do in the future to improve the situation.

When you think of self-study, you can become confused and think about the individual person doing her work; however, self-study is not only about self as it requires a collective effort. Samaras and Freese (2006) highlight that the nature of self-study is paradoxical in that it is, in some ways, a joint task. I gained knowledge throughout the interaction with participants during the research process. Samaras (2011) pointed out that teachers come to understand who they are as teachers and what really shaped them through an understanding of themselves and their

interaction with their learners. I came to know about my shortcomings through discussion with my participants.

As a researcher, my involvement with participants was necessary. I had the opportunity to share my work with them. I wanted participants to give me honest feedback. I anticipated that after receiving feedback, there were going to be changes in my practice and that I was bound to gain new knowledge. Samaras (2011, p. 52) holds that "a self-initiated, honest, and public stance about one's practice can lead to an improvement in students' learning and one's learning". I hoped to grow professionally as I shared my challenges and what happened in my self-study research.

Self-study encourages researchers to share their work and make it known to others through questioning, networking and giving presentations. Samaras (2011, p. 44) confirms that self-study researchers "create new knowledge as they reframe their practice through their questioning of the assumptions of their practice". In this thesis, I share my new knowledge. I hope that the changes in my understanding and practice will be noticed, and others can see them very quickly, which could lead them to want to improve their own practice.

2.3 Research settings

In this study, I worked with three subject advisors from different districts (see Chapter Four). The first was from my own district, whom I met during weekends and at times after hours. This was based on our conversation as we were deciding what would work best for both of us. For the other two subject advisors who were not in my district, I had to travel to meet them in their own offices. I was happy with that arrangement as it assured me that they would be comfortable and willing to share. The decision to meet in their offices was made in our telephonic

conversations as we were making plans for our sessions. The times for these meetings were decided on each day based on our mutual availability.

Part of this research process took place in three different primary schools (see Chapters Five, Six, and Seven). (All school names are pseudonyms.) Although I planned to use a neutral venue such as a nearby public library, the teacher participants preferred to remain in their schools. They cited different reasons for this, such as the fact that they belonged to a lift club and some had to collect their own children from nearby schools. Some teachers had a concern about the safety of their cars in a public space.

The first school, Montana Junior Primary, is an ex-Model C school, situated in an urban area. The enrolment of the school is approximately 400 learners (boys and girls) from Grade R and up to Grade 4. There is one female Principal, one FP HoD and 11 state-paid teachers, with an additional five teachers paid by the SGB, making a total of 16 teachers. (The state-paid teachers are those employed by the government with the full benefit of receiving subsidies and pension funds. The SGB-paid teachers are those on a contract basis, paid by the SGB with fewer or no extra benefits, depending on whether the school has funds.) The teacher-pupil ratio is 1: 25. Because the school is a fee-paying school and has funds, it has a qualified additional teacher assistant in each class, paid for by the SGB. The school is well resourced with a school library and a large hall. The buildings are well maintained.

The second school, Abbib Junior Primary, is situated in a semi-urban area and closer to townships that include informal settlement houses. The enrolment of the school is approximately 450 learners (boys and girls) from Grade R up to Grade 4. The school has seven permanent state-paid teachers, 11 SGB-paid educators, two HoDs (one for FP and the other for Intermediate Phase) and a female Principal. In total, the school has 21 teachers. The teacher-pupil ratio is 1:35. The school has adequate resources, with well-maintained buildings.

The third school, Udosi Combined School, is in a deep rural area, headed by an *amakhosi* (king) and *izinduna* (chiefs). This school is set in a disadvantaged community faced by high rates of unemployment, school dropouts, and crime. Many of the learners' parents and guardians are illiterate. This school has inadequate resources and is faced with many challenges. For example, there is a shortage of water with limited ablution facilities, but teaching and learning carry on regardless. This school accommodates learners from Grade R to 7 with an enrolment

of approximately 1000 learners. The school has 19 state-paid teachers, including the Deputy Principal, three HoDs, one FP Phase HoD, an Intermediate Phase HoD, a Senior Phase HoD and a male Principal. The teacher-pupil ratio is 1: 55. The school does not have SGB-paid teachers, as it is a no fee-paying school and the school cannot afford to pay extra teachers on its own.

For the Language workshops (see Chapter Eight) that were organised for the teachers, the teachers were divided per circuit. We ended up with three groups that were accommodated in three different Circuit Management Centres (CMCs). These centres are departmental buildings that are used for various departmental activities, including the training of teachers.

2.4 Research participants

Since this was a self-study where I was looking at myself in practice, I was the main participant. The other participants in this research journey were three other subject advisors from three different Districts and 13 teachers from three different primary schools.

2.4.1 The subject advisor participants

To recruit potential subject advisor participants, I met with all of the seven FP subject advisors I was working with at the time in my District. I explained that I was doing research for my study, told them about my topic and asked them to be part of my research journey. I did not choose but invited everybody. I explained that together we would discuss our lived experiences of preparing and conducting CPTD programmes. Everybody looked excited. I thought that this was because, as fellow subject advisors, we always considered our challenges informally with each other as friends. I explained to the subject advisors that, to elicit more information, we would be involved in arts-based activities such as self-portraits and making a collage. I told the subject advisors that all of our sessions would be audio-recorded to help me capture all discussions and their voices.

Everyone seemed interested. I explained and gave the consent forms, and they all signed. Two of the subject advisors knew about doing research and had an understanding of what the research process entails. Sadly, though, these two subject advisors passed on later in the year. Personally, this was a significant loss for me.

However, the following day, one of the subject advisors approached me. She indicated that people were not comfortable to share their experiences and perspectives as a group, but were willing to do it individually. I did not want to force group meetings on the subject advisors because it was for my study and my own personal gain.

I had many assumptions about why the subject advisors did not want to discuss their experiences and perspectives as a group. Although we always say that we work as a team, we had never indeed worked collaboratively as a team. A genuine member of a team is not afraid to discuss her or his weaknesses in front of other members. Some of the reasons I thought could be applicable were as follows:

- As I was a supervisor to other subject advisors, perhaps they did not feel free to discuss the shortcomings they experienced during CPTD programmes in front of others.
- We were not all functioning at the same level in terms of our experiences of working with FP teachers. For example, one subject advisor had been teaching in the Further Education and Training phase and held a management position.

I tried several times to meet with the subject advisors individually, but it was impossible. Too many new programmes were being introduced by the National DoE, which were expected to be piloted in schools. Everyone was busy with new curriculum initiatives. Time was against me with my studies.

Some subject advisors asked me how I had time to concentrate on my studies, as everyone was so overstretched with advisory work. What they did not know and understand was that I was behind with my work. Each time I experienced the pressure of trying to catch up with my work, I became very sick.

In the end, in my District, I had managed to have discussions with only one subject advisor after hours and on weekends (see Chapter Four). As their supervisor, I did not want the other subject advisors in my District to feel that I was pressurising them to meet with me because of my position. I had to accept their non-participation with no hard feelings. Although I foresaw that all of us could benefit from the results of this study, I had to respect that the subject advisors had the choice to be involved in this study or not. So, I had to come up with another plan that

would help move my research forward. After a discussion with my research supervisors, I approached two FP subject advisors from other Districts. The subject advisors knew me as their colleague, as we have worked together within and across the Districts. They both agreed to participate (see Chapter Four).

As explained in Chapter Two, none of the three subject advisors who eventually participated in my study was interested in self-portrait drawing and collage making. They were only willing to discuss their lived experiences of conducting CPTD programmes. Subject advisors indicated that it was a busy time as they were engaged with Provincial initiatives. They noted that they were not good at drawing and that they would find it challenging to hold discussions using pictures that will take more of their time. Although I was disappointed not to engage in the arts-based activities I had planned, I respected their wishes.

The first subject advisor participant was Mrs T. Blose, who is a Deputy Chief Education Specialist in my district. (All participant names are pseudonyms.) She is responsible for Foundation Phase teachers (Grade 1-3) and proving them with continuous professional teacher development. Blose works with teachers that come from schools located in both urban and rural areas. She was a Foundation Phase teacher for four years and a school principal for 11 years before she was promoted to a subject advisor. She is also responsible for capacitating other subject advisors in her district.

The second subject advisor participant, Mrs T. Mows, is also a Deputy Chief Education Specialist, responsible for Foundation Phase teachers (Grade R-3) who are located in rural areas. Before she was promoted as a subject advisor, she taught for eight years as a Foundation Phase teacher. She, too, is responsible for developing other Foundation Phase subject advisors in her district.

Mrs Wright, the third subject advisor participant, taught Grade R for 18 years before getting promoted to a Deputy Chief Education Specialist. She works with mainly Grade R teachers who are located in rural areas. Her task is to unpack all grade R related curriculum issues for both teachers and other subject advisors in her district.

Table 2.1. ***Professional experience of 3 subject advisor participants and their qualifications***

Name	**Race**	**Qualifications**	**Where the first qualification was obtained**	**No. of years as a Foundation Phase teacher**	**No. of years as a Foundation Phase subject advisor**
Ms H. Makhanya (myself)	African	Primary Teacher's Diploma	College of Education	10 years as a teacher; 6 years as a teacher educator	18 years
Mrs T. Blose	African	Primary Teacher's Certificate	Teacher's Training College	15 years (4 years as a teacher, 11 years as a Principal at a Primary School)	14 years
Mrs T. Mows	African	Primary Teacher's Diploma	College of Education	8 years as a teacher.	25 years
Mrs D. Wright	White	Higher Education in Early Childhood Education	College of Education	18 years as a teacher.	15 years

2.4.2 The teacher participants

The 13 teacher participants came from three different schools that included teachers and learners from different ethnic groups, with diverse cultures. The full complement of the teacher participants is described in Table 2.2. In the initial planning, the participants' race was not something I planned to focus on, but it became relevant because of South African schools' racialised history.

Table 2.2. ***Teaching experience of 13 teacher participants and their qualifications***

Pseudonyms	**Race**	**No. of years teaching in the Foundation Phase**	**Highest qualification obtained**
Kea	White	30	Bachelor of Education (BEd) in Foundation Phase
Ellie	White	10	Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Postgraduate Certificate of Education
Zola	Indian	6	BEd in Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase
Zodwa	African	19	Senior Primary Teacher's Diploma (PTD)
Knox	African	27	National Programme for Developing Educators (NPDE)
Micky	Indian	14	NPDE
Tamia	White	18	NPDE, Advance Certificate in Education
Sally	Indian	12	BEd in Early Childhood Development
Lindy	African	22	PTD
Sue	Indian	18	NPDE
Thembi	African	32	Bachelor of Arts, Higher Diploma in Education
Anele	African	15	NPDE
Busi	African	13	National Qualification Framework Level 4

I visited the three schools with a letter requesting the Principals for permission to involve FP teachers from their schools in my research project. In each school, I invited four FP teachers (Grades R–3) to participate; one teacher from each grade at each school was going to be part of this research journey. I did not choose who was going to be part of the research journey; the Principals told me that they presented my request during their staff meetings, and teachers volunteered to be participants. At Udosi School, instead of having four teachers, I had five teachers, because the FP HoD decided to be one of the participants.

It was vital for me as a researcher to explain to the FP teachers who I was, as we engaged ourselves in this journey so that I could get honest responses in all discussions. I told them about my self-study journey to gain their trust. I wanted the teachers to look at me as an ordinary teacher doing her research, not as an official on duty who was coming to check their work. The FP teachers knew and understood me as a subject advisor who visits schools to monitor and support teachers. However, I had not spent a lot of time before in each of the schools. We were using turnaround strategy visits of 60, 30, and 10 to improve academic learner performance, meaning that 60% of our visits were to rural schools, with 30% to semi-urban and township schools, and 10% of the visits to urban schools. We spent most of our time in rural, underperforming schools.

When the request was made, race and gender were not factors in the selection criteria. I did not think of gender as a criterion, but in the South African context, most teachers in the FP are female. Teachers' qualifications ranged from a B.Ed. in Early Childhood Development to National Qualification Framework Level 4, which is equivalent to Grade 12.

During the research sessions, we also discussed teachers' qualifications as well as where they obtained those qualifications. We discussed the institutions where teachers had done their teacher training. Different institutions were responsible for the preparation of teachers and produced teachers with varying levels of understanding of educational content knowledge. This was important for this study to understand who these teachers were and what they understood about CPTD.

Another vital factor that I needed to understand was regarding their teaching and which phase they taught, which gave me an indication and understanding of the various PDPs that these teachers have been involved with. The teachers had a wealth of experience in the FP. The teachers were not comfortable sharing their age, so I did not force them as I did not feel this was essential for this self-study research.

Together with the teachers, it was decided that we would have five meetings that were to be spread out because of their other commitments. Each session lasted about three hours. I had to take into consideration that teachers also had other duties after school hours. I was very fortunate that the Principals released the teachers early to take part in the discussions. It also

helped that no teachers left the school premises early, and the talks were held within their schools.

The teachers' willingness and their contributions allowed my research process to run smoothly. I had to explain to the teachers that I was not meeting them as an official on duty, but that I was doing this research to improve my own practice. I assured them that all of our discussions would remain confidential and that I would use pseudonyms instead of their names and the names of the schools throughout this thesis. I explained to them that this study was essential to my personal well-being as it contributed to my personal and professional growth.

Table 2.3. ***The focus of meetings held with Foundation Phase teacher participants***

Meeting	Focus	Researcher's action	Teachers' action
First meeting	▪ Introductions and asking teachers to be my participants ▪ Logistics and participants' expectations ▪ Sharing my research topic with teachers ▪ Understanding CPTD	▪ Clarifying the purpose of our gathering and for the participants to understand my position during the research process ▪ Deciding on our meeting venues, including the dates and number of meetings ▪ Sharing what different authors say about 'professional development'	▪ Discussions, gaining understanding and confidence in me as an ordinary teacher and a researcher ▪ Individual teachers writing their own understanding of CPTD ▪ Teachers coming up with a working definition of 'continued teacher professional development'
Second meeting	▪ Getting to know teachers ▪ About CPTD programmes	▪ Conversations about their teaching experience and qualifications ▪ Examining their understanding of the roles and responsibilities	

		of subject advisors ▪ Inquiring about different CPTD	
Third meeting	▪ Journal entries ▪ Social network	▪ Recap on our working definition of CPTD ▪ Expounding about journal entries and why we can use them on our research journey ▪ Importance of leaving messages about our thoughts and feelings on what we have discussed and been engaged on	▪ Teachers debating about giving views on PDPs through telephone messages
Fourth Meeting	▪ Artefacts ✓ Self-portrait drawing ✓ Collage	▪ Presented my self- portrait drawing to the teachers and explained my thoughts and feelings when I have to conduct PDPs	▪ Teachers enquiring more about my self-portrait drawing ▪ Teachers drawing their self-portrait drawings and discussions thereafter
Fifth meeting	▪ Collage/group collage making	▪ Discussions on CPTD and putting teachers at ease to start their collage(s)	▪ Debate as they were busy starting their collages

As narrated in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, I learnt a lot from the teachers while they were busy with their activities. I learnt to be patient, to listen to their needs, and to take criticism as a tool to rebuild and reconstruct my thinking. I began to appreciate the work of teachers in teaching our learners and understand the difficulties they experience during PDPs.

Most of the teacher participants did not appear to be afraid to critique the work performance of the subject advisors. They had nothing personal against any subject advisors but wanted to give advice and correct the way we do things. Teachers were free to talk about what went well during the PDPs and the things they did not like. They even offered solutions to the challenges.

However, I must highlight that at one school where the HoD insisted on being part of our discussion group, the teachers did not seem as free to express themselves as at the other two schools. If a teacher responded to a question, the HoD would jump in and justify the statement given by the teacher (see Chapter Five).

The full participation of the teachers gave me the strength to continue with my research. Through our discussions, I realised that teachers are carrying a significant burden, and do not often have a platform or space to vent about their problems. Their comments and questions made me think more deeply about my role of being a subject advisor.

The teacher participants were involved in the arts-based activities of self-portrait drawing and collage making. My dual position of being a researcher and a participant helped me to interact with the teachers. I was able to demonstrate my arts-based work to them; they listened and commented where necessary. This helped to deal with the issue of power relations between us. Tidwell et al. (2009) explain how the process of designing and presenting a collage helps in deepening understanding of experiences. Teachers used these artistic methods to share their lived experiences of and perspectives on CPTD. I was not looking for the perfect drawing or collage – what was important was for teachers to express their inner feelings and thoughts. The teachers selected words and images to represent their lived experiences and internal frustrations about CPTD. All of these activities were followed by intense discussions.

2.5 Data generation

In this study, I used an arts-based approach to self-study (Samaras, 2011). I used arts-based activities to relook, rethink and explain my lived experiences regarding CPTD sessions. The use of arts-based self-study encouraged me to do further self-reflection. Using an arts-based approach helped me to work with the teacher participants to represent and reinterpret, construct and deconstruct meaning. I was able to start discussions with teachers through arts-based activities such as collage and self-portrait drawing, as they shared their lived experiences of

CPTD (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2009a; Mitchell, Weber & Pithouse, 2009; Weber & Mitchell, 2004).

An arts-based approach helped me and teachers think deeply about and better understand our own practice (Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020). My participants and I got an opportunity to rethink our roles and purpose in professional development initiatives. Arts-based activities were also a motivating factor where teachers felt the pleasure of visually expressing their feelings and thoughts as in collage making when they had to collect, select and paste pictures with personal meaning. (Hannigan & Raphael, 2020).

I used multiple methods to generate data for this study (Table 2.4), which helped me to respond to the research questions. Samaras and Freese (2006) emphasised that a researcher should consider multiple sources of data to triangulate the data, as this strengthens and increases the trustworthiness of the findings. Similarly, Samaras (2011, p. 164) insists that "self-study requires a transparent research process that clearly and accurately documents the research process through dialogue and critique". During the data generation process, I made sure that I recorded and documented all conversations and activities with the participants.

Table 2.4. ***Methods of data generation used in this study***

Research question	Data generation activities	Data sources
1. What are the lived experiences and perspectives of subject advisors in relation to CPTD?	I drew a self-portrait that reflected my feelings and thoughts when I had to conduct the CPTD programme I collected artefacts that triggered memories of my teaching experiences. I wrote about my observations, feelings, and thoughts during data generation	My self-portrait drawing Artefacts: Scheme book, photos, old desktop computer, college badge, library stamp, in-service training module booklets, My reflective journal entries

	I created a collage that represented my observations of what happens during CPTD sessions Discussions with individual subject advisors about their experiences of CPTD	My collage Audio-recorded discussions with three individual subject advisors
2. What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development?	Teachers were asked to write their own understanding of CPTD Teachers created their self-portrait drawings about their thoughts and feelings on CPTD Teachers were involved in doing a collage of what happens during the CPTD session. Teachers wrote about their thoughts and observations	Teachers writing about their own understanding of CPTD Teachers' self-portraits Teachers' collages Audio-recorded group discussions with teachers Teachers' journal entries
3. How might I use insights into subject advisors' and teachers' lived experiences and perspectives to improve my understanding and practice of CPTD?	Reflection on the planning and co-facilitation of CPTD sessions with teachers and subject advisors	Concrete and semi-concrete workshop material Workshop evaluation forms Photographs from different workshops Text messages and email messages from teachers after the workshop.

2.5.1 Generation of data for research question one

I outline below the data generation activities and data sources that helped me to respond to my first research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of subject advisors in relation to CPTD?*

2.5.1.1 Artefact retrieval

To respond to my first research question, I used artefacts to assist me in recalling and narrating my educational life experiences. During my self-study journey, I retrieved and engaged with several artefacts, such as a scheme book, photographs, an old desk computer, a college badge, a library stamp and an in-service training module booklet (see Chapter Three). These artefacts "[stand] for, [represent], and [express] [my] research interests in a non-linguistic manner" Samaras (2011, p. 104). My memories of being a teacher, teacher educator and a subject advisor were triggered through working with the artefacts. Reflecting on the artefacts helped me to gain insight into how my past shaped my understanding and practice of CPTD.

Photographs of artefacts and photographs as artefacts provided entry points for reflective engagement (Mitchell, Moletsane, MacEntee, & de Lange, 2020). Asking questions about the photographs "[stimulated my] memories of events and [helped me to] inscribe meaning to these events in a narrative fashion" (2020, p. 698). As I looked at the photographs, I was able to ask myself questions that gave me more clarity on what I was seeking to understand. I managed to describe what each photograph represented for me by constructing my own understanding of that particular situation (Mitchell et al., 2020).

2.5.1.2 Journal entries

For this research journey, I had to reflect on what I had done, to document my thoughts and feelings throughout. I also wanted to document the crucial incidents that occurred throughout my research journey. In my understanding, a journal is a document where you record your everyday experiences, thoughts, feelings, and emotions. A journal is a self-communication tool that allows you to write freely in your own space about yourself or what you have experienced, and about what and how you feel. Samaras (2011) defined a journal as a flow of feelings and interpretations and judging of the situation at that time. The author further explained that keeping a journal allows the writer to share her personal opinions and perspectives as she

captures what she noticed. Masinga (2012, p. 129) explained that through using a journal, one can talk about something that is within, whether good or bad.

There were so many issues that went through my mind, and I would not have remembered everything if I did not write it down. I found a very close friend in my reflective journal, as writing down my thoughts in it prevented me from continually replaying in my mind events that had happened (Masinga, 2012). I wrote down the challenging moments and the good things that happened throughout my research journey. Phewa (2016) explained how doing reflection through journaling assisted her in attaining meaningful learning. Using a journal allowed me to read what I had written during my spare time, and to reflect and reason about specific incident. That healed me in the process and helped me to keep an open mind.

I realised that when you have written in your journal, as you reread it, it is like you are talking to somebody who is listening to your concerns and issues and can give you solutions. I read this journal as it assisted me in dealing with my feelings, allowed for self-explanation, and to record why decisions were taken (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009a). The use of the journal was like a reminder to me of what had happened previously.

2.5.1.3 Self-portrait drawing

As a first step in responding to my initial research question, I created a self-portrait drawing (Figure 2.2). As discussed in Chapter Six, this self-portrait reflected my frustrations and fears about conducting the CPTD programme.

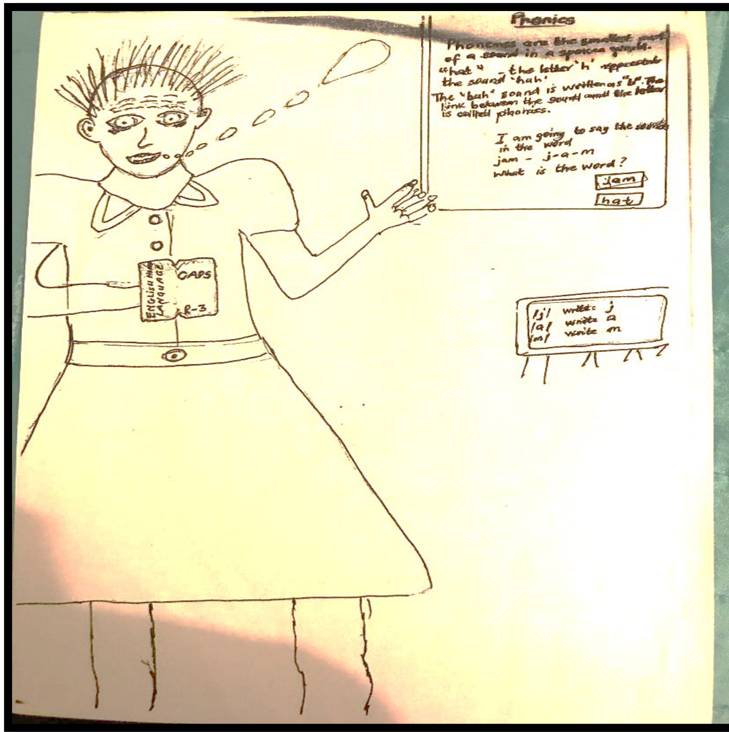


Figure 2.1. ***My self-portrait drawing.***

My self-portrait drawing was an introspection about how prepared I felt to conduct CPTD. Drawing the self-portrait was not easy, but the focus and the thought of what I wanted to explain through the drawing helped in producing a complete self-portrait. It was essential for this process that I kept on asking myself, 'Who am I?' and what was it that I wanted to share and why.

Drawing gave me space to express my feelings and represent my understanding, and it made my self-study meaningful and enjoyable. I was able to reflect on my experiences of how I plan and conduct CPTD programmes. The finished product gave me a sense of identity to understand who I am as a subject advisor, my fears and self-doubt, but also what qualities and skills I had that enabled me to conduct CPTD programmes well.

2.5.1.4 Collage making

As another part of responding to the first research question, I created a collage by cutting and sticking images and words onto a large piece of cardboard to represent my lived experiences of continuing professional teacher development. Butler-Kisber (2008, p. 266) refers to collage "as a genre in which 'found' materials that are either natural or made are cut up and pasted on some sort of flat surface".

Hamilton and Pinnegar (2009a) contend that collage can be defined as a collection of different images that demonstrate an idea or an experience. Butler-Kisber (2008) explained that collage can be a useful way of conceptualising a response to a research question. McKay (2019) maintained that the use of collage helps bring thoughts together in a cohesive manner.

In the beginning, I struggled to create a collage, but later I found it easier to express and explain my work through the use of a collage. Similarly, Hiralaal et al. (2018) asserted that collages as visual representations provided meaning and allowed self-study researchers to relook at their practice from multiple angles. One teacher educator in the study by Hiralaal et al. (2018) explained that she finds it more comfortable to present her work using collage rather than a written narrative. I realised that using collage helped me to explain things visually that were hard to say verbally.

Through collage making, I reflected on my past experiences and thought about what was happening in my present life. It took time to find all the pictures that would represent the situation that I experienced each time I conducted CPTD programmes. I must acknowledge that some images I downloaded from the Internet, while I got others from different magazines and booklets.

Figure 2.2. ***My collage on my lived experiences of continuing professional teacher development.***

The collage (Figure 2.2) represents an overcrowded CPTD workshop facilitated by a subject advisor. What you can see is that teachers are not concentrating: some are on their phones, some are disinterested in what is being said. There are too many teachers in one venue, and the workshop seems disorganised. The collage reveals the challenges I often experienced when I was conducting CPTD programmes. It shows how frustrating it was when I was busy facilitating and some teachers were not paying attention. Some would be playing with their cell phones and some would be talking and laughing, especially those sitting at the back. Some had a tendency to arrive late and leave early. Creating this collage assisted me to reflect deeply on my own role in teachers' inattentiveness and to respond in a more non-judgmental way when I heard the views of my teacher participants on the workshops (as expressed in Chapters Five, Six and Seven).

2.5.1.5 Audio-recorded group discussions with individual subject advisors

As explained above, within my District, I managed to get only one subject advisor involved, and two subject advisors from the other Districts. When I asked them to represent their lived experiences of professional development using self-portrait drawings and collage, they saw it as a challenge. Subject advisors decided not to be involved in doing artistic activities but rather to engage in discussions on CPTD. I explained the benefits of conversations while referring to your self-portrait or collage, and that it helps one to uncover even things that it might otherwise

be difficult to talk about. However, they assured me that when it comes to their lived experiences of CPTD, they could write a book!

I asked the subject advisor participants for their permission to use the audio-recorder and I explained the reasons why it would be used. All of the discussions about subject advisors' lived experiences were audio-recorded to make sure that I captured everything. What was more important to me as a researcher than capturing their voices was to listen to their tone during discussions. Masinga (2012, p. 127) maintained that "voices change as participants spoke also gave clarity as to the emotions that were involved that [she] may have missed in the process". Similarly, the audio-recorder enabled me to replay and listen to the tone of our discussions to get at a deeper meaning of subject advisors' conversations about their lived experiences of CPTD.

2.5.2 Data generation for research question two

To respond to my second research question, *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development?* I engaged teachers in different ways using a variety of strategies to elicit data (see Table 2.3).

2.5.3.1 Teachers' own understanding of continuing professional teacher development

It was important for my study to ascertain teachers' own understanding of CPTD before we engaged ourselves on this journey. I wanted all of us to share some common understanding when discussing my research topic. CPTD is very broad, and I wanted teachers to talk about it from their own perspective of being teachers in the classroom, and attending PDPs. I gave teachers A4 sheets of paper to write down their own understanding of what CPTD meant to them (Figure 2.5).

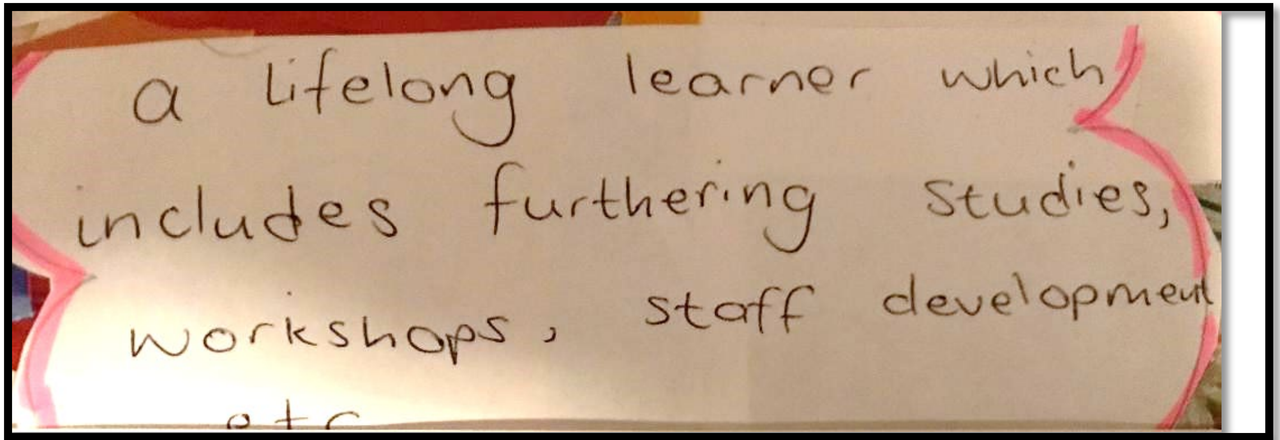


Figure 2.3. ***Teachers' own understanding of professional development.***

It was exciting to see teachers sharing different definitions, and that helped in opening up fruitful discussions. We spent much time discussing each description, and it was fascinating to learn from each other as teachers explained what they had written. These discussions helped me to get to know the teachers better, understand them and see who were the ones dominating the discussions. I then shared my explanation based on what different scholars say about CPTD.

I further explained to the teachers that when we talk about CPTD on this research journey, we will be looking at the workshops conducted by subject advisors. This was easy for the teachers to do, as the instructions were clear and straightforward. I assured them that there were no wrong answers as each person would be writing about her own understanding of CPTD. That assurance helped the teachers to remain calm and they were free to write what came into their minds. The whole exercise helped us to get started. This was a helpful way for us to establish rapport. We debated, we laughed, they contributed to the discussion and it was constructive and fun. I really enjoyed the session and the teachers enjoyed it too. I was happy because I knew that the teachers would be coming to our next meeting as they were not bored or reprimanded in the first session. The first session with the teachers set the tone for the rest of the research journey.

2.5.2.2 Teachers' self-portrait drawings

I involved the 13 teachers from three different public primary schools in doing self-portrait drawings to respond to my second research question. I explained to teachers that our second activity was to draw self-portraits about our lived experiences of CPTD. Examples of teacher self-portraits are included in Chapter Six. I did not include all teachers' self-portraits and

collages in this thesis; I included those that captured my imagination and that came from the teachers who were able to share their perspectives about CPTD programmes.

Before teachers drew their own self-portraits, I showed them my self-portrait drawing (Figure 2.1). I explained the reasoning behind drawing the self-portrait to the teachers, explaining my fears and frustrations at times in presenting a topic or concept that I am not entirely confident about. I shared with them the thoughts and feelings I had while drawing the self-portrait. Everybody sat quietly and they looked amazed as they viewed my self-portrait. Cole (2011) shared with us how one teacher's story triggered another's forgotten memories. Presenting my self-portrait first helped some teachers to reimagine their self-portrait and remember their lived experiences of CPTD.

Teacher participants exemplified by drawing how they view CPTD programmes, what decisions and actions they had taken in unpacking CPTD activities. Doing self-portrait drawings assisted in expressing how we internalised our work and our professional learning and put it into practice. Teachers had an opportunity to inquire and reflect on their learning experience. This helped in identifying both problem areas and beneficial aspects of our practice and professional learning and coming up with artistic ways to improve (Pithouse, 2011). As Pithouse (2011, p. 46) points out: "those researchers involved in self-study drawing take on considerable emotional responsibility towards themselves and others with whom they share their research processes and findings". Thus, I was empathetic towards the possible emotional impact of the research on all participants. This included me, as a participant-researcher in this study.

Using arts-based images, I was able to share my lived experiences of planning and conducting CPTD programmes with the teachers. After that, teachers were free to share their lived experiences of attending CPTD programmes. Furthermore, teachers were able to express themselves through arts-based activities. Weber and Mitchell (2004) maintain that using visual art helps teachers to reflect as they consider their social and cultural backgrounds. Arts-based tasks provoke inner feelings and help in uncovering other lived experiences that teachers are not able to talk about during research discussions.

According to Samaras and Freese (2006, p. 73), using the arts-based method "promotes and provokes self-reflection, critical analysis, and dialogue about improving one's teaching through

the arts". When teachers are involved in creating arts-based activities, even those who had been quiet and non-contributing open up and talk about what they are doing. Teachers got a chance to showcase what they felt from their own experiences. It was like a healing process that allowed us to talk about experiences holistically. Being involved in art activities helps one to relax and think deeply about one's experiences.

Some teachers are more competent in debate and discussions, but using art drawings helps everyone to express their feelings and thoughts in a way that may expose aspects that otherwise would not have been revealed. People find themselves discussing what they have drawn or created. Hamilton et al. (2008) assert that being engaged in arts-based activities helps us to recall, reflect, remember and express our thinking not in words but through images. Hamilton et al. (2008) remind us that art can be used as a reflective tool. Galman (2009) stated that examining one's practice using a self-study method of art improves teacher learning.

When there are issues that are difficult to say in words, using art helps teachers to express themselves and talk about things that were difficult to raise during discussions. Weber (2014) confirmed that when we involve ourselves in art activities, our knowledge expands and we remember things that were long forgotten. The use of arts-based techniques evokes deep layers of thinking, bringing forth a different meaning as it triggers memory (McKay, 2019). I realised that drawings helped the teachers to express themselves and talk about things that were difficult to bring up during discussions.

2.5.2.3 Teachers' collage making

Teachers from Montana Primary and Abbib Primary created individual collages, whereas teachers from Udosi School made a group collage (as explained further in Chapter Seven). The process of creating a collage was similar to the process of drawing self-portraits, where teachers were given the relevant materials like paper, magazines, glue, and coloured pens. Some teachers brought in magazines (as I had asked them to do in our previous discussion meeting).

Collage making assisted me in engaging the teachers in conversation. I explained to the teacher participants that a completed collage must tell us a story. Participants needed to use their creative minds when arranging their pictures. Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010) asserted that collage making encouraged questioning as one selects specific pictures to reflect one's thinking.

As teachers were engaged in collage making, they remembered past experiences they had regarding CPTD programmes. Creating collages helped them to reflect on and voice their concerns about CPTD (Butler-Kisber, 2008). Similarly, Butler-Kisber and Poldma (2010, p. 4) advocated that the use of collage "elicits and allows inner and unconscious thoughts to bubble to the surface". The use of collage helped me to elicit information from the teacher participants; it broke the silence and started the conversation (Butler-Kisber, 2008; Khanare, 2009).

Through collages, teachers were able to represent their lived CPTD experiences, what they liked, what they didn't like, and why. Weber (2014, p. 10) states that "Art-based approaches to research expand our knowledge base by including many of the neglected, but important ways in which we construct meaning through artistic forms of expression". There were things that teachers might have been unable to say in words, but through the use of arts-based activities, this became possible. Teachers explained their collages to the group. The collages and discussions helped me to see and understand PDPs through the eyes of teachers (Weber & Mitchell, 2004). However, as described in Chapter Seven, some teachers at Udosi School did not contribute much to our collage discussions. I had a feeling that they were scared to discuss their lived experiences in front of the HoD.

2.5.2.4 Audio-recorded group discussions with teachers

I met with 13 teachers from three different schools. I had five different sessions doing various activities with each group of teachers on different dates that we agreed upon. Each session lasted about three hours, except for the first session, which was about two hours. In each session, I explained the purpose of the day and allowed my participants to ask questions. This helped all of us, as we were more focused on the activity for the day. I also gave teachers a schedule of what would follow in our next meeting. This allowed teachers to think about our next session and come prepared for the discussions.

I audio recorded all of the sessions with the teachers, as I did not want to miss any information that they shared. I kept reminding the participants that sessions were recorded to help me capture everything we discussed. I did not have any difficulty in recording the meetings; however, on my last day with Udosi School, my recorder ran out of space during our discussion. Each time I recorded the sessions, I used both a recorder and my cell phone, the latter as a back-

up. This helped a great deal in this instance. Otherwise, I would have missed out on a lot of meaningful discussions.

During discussions with the teachers, I also had a small notebook where I was noting my observations. I observed how teachers interacted with each other. I also noted if they were giving each other a space to respond to questions. This was important for this research, as I was getting to know teachers better and finding out how they interacted with each other.

The use of recordings helped me with reflection and gaining more insight and understanding of what was discussed (Masinga, 2012). One cannot always remember what was said by somebody a month ago; this process helped me to refresh my memory. When I listened to the audio-recorded sessions several times, the discussion started to make sense in my mind

I was able to replay the recordings in my own space and reflect on our conversations. When I was listening to the recordings of the early sessions, I realised that I dominated many discussions, and I wanted teachers to tell me more about their lived experiences. Masinga (2013, p. 128) reported that, as a collaborative self-study researcher, "[she] wanted all the voices to be heard and believed that [hers] did not have to lead all the time". I became aware that this was the opposite of what I was doing. After that, I asked many follow-up questions, which led teachers to open up and share more about their own experiences. If I had not recorded my sessions, I would not have been aware of this weakness on my part, which would have blocked teachers from sharing their experiences.

Masinga (2012) shared that recording her sessions became her third ear. Likewise, listening to the audio-recorded sessions assisted me to listen to and understand participants' conversations better. Listening to the audio-recordings also helped me to listen carefully to the teachers' voices and their emotions as they responded to my questions.

2.5.2.5 Teachers' journal entries

My initial plan was for teachers to keep journals. I encouraged teachers to write their thoughts, feelings in their journals. These journals were going to be shared during our research meetings. I thought that sharing journal entries would facilitate our relationship. I recall explaining to them how, during my Master's degree journey (Makhanya, 2010), I learnt to write down my thoughts, frustrations, and emotions in journal entries, and I found it very therapeutic when I

reread it after a few days. I told the teachers how I felt like I was sharing with someone special. After that, I would feel as if that particular person had responded and given me the answers I needed to hear.

I stated we were going to share journal entries during our discussion meetings. Teachers were not used to keeping journals, but some made a suggestion amongst themselves that it would help if each teacher would complete a reflection about her teaching and how learners responded each day. However, amongst the 13 teachers that I had discussions with, only five shared their journal entries with the group. So, I also encouraged the teachers to send me cellular telephone text messages instead if they did not feel like keeping a journal. I advised the use of cell phones because I remembered my experience when I was doing my Master's research when using a journal was new to me and I was not used to it.

I wanted teachers to use their journals to jot down their thoughts and feelings about our discussions, including their past experiences. Likewise, Masinga (2012) indicated that through journaling, her research participants got an opportunity to reflect and interpret all aspects experienced during their discussion sessions. However, this did not work well. I did not get what I was hoping for in teachers' journals as they did not use them as I had anticipated. This made me think about how teachers are overloaded and burdened by paperwork in their classrooms. I realized that the journal writing might have seemed too burdensome and too much like additional work for them. In the future, I would not try to use journal writing with teachers. I observed how the teachers I worked with preferred participating in fun and more creative activities, like drawing.

2.5.2.6 My journal entries

My research journal was like a diary to me, where I recorded what happened and my thoughts and feelings. At times I found myself answering questions or coming up with solutions about what I had written in my journal. After each session with the teachers, I reflected and recorded my observations and responses.

As a researcher, I will never tire of talking about the benefits of keeping a journal. Borg (2011) has described a journal as healing, because it could be the place where you dump your anger, frustrations, and guilt. Likewise, Masinga (2012, p. 129) explained that through journaling, you can "get hold of the experiences that [you have] inside, either negative or positive". I saw a

journal as a true friend, where I could confide all my worries. It was like a person that I could talk to.

2.5.3 Generation of data for research question three

The following data generation activities and sources helped me to respond to my third research question. As narrated in Chapter Eight, I planned and conducted a CPTD Home Language (HL) workshop with the help of teachers and subject advisors as co-facilitators.

2.5.3.1 Concrete and semi-concrete workshop material

In preparing for the CPTD workshop for Home Language, I decided to use concrete and semi-concrete materials to assist teachers in visualising what they would be learning. For the Foundation Phase, concrete materials are real objects that teachers can touch, such as alphabet puzzles, threading beads and laces, and sandpaper letters. Semi-concrete materials can include those that come in the form of a picture, such as flashcards, letter-sound charts, word cards, and wall charts. In planning the workshop, I anticipated that teachers would be able to understand concepts better when they were practically engaged in activities using these concrete and semi-concrete materials. Dhlula-Moruri, Kortjass, Ndaleni, and Pithouse-Morgan (2017, p. 84) asserted that “familiar objects can expose unexpected possibilities for professional and personal learning”. Hence, I wanted to use familiar objects that could be part of teachers’ daily teaching experiences. As part of teacher empowerment, I worked with co-facilitators who were teachers from the same district that I work in. Because we aimed at making the workshops practical for teachers, the co-facilitators were requested to bring teaching materials such as magazines, playdough, alphabet puzzles, alphabet and phonic worksheets that would be part of our activities with teachers.

The teachers’ enthusiastic participation when using these materials during the workshop showed me that when workshops assimilate classrooms, with relevant hands-on activities, teachers can see what might work in their own spaces. Teachers were able to manipulate the concrete materials as their learners would in their own classrooms. And through working with the semi-concrete materials, teachers could see how they could use images to teach any content in their classrooms by getting the learners involved.

2.5.3.2 Workshop evaluation forms

As a requirement from the Department of Education, every CPTD workshop has to be evaluated by all attendees, anonymously. As Dalton, Mckenzie, and Kahonde (2012) explained, evaluation forms are a means to gain insight into how informative and helpful participants have found a workshop. Each evaluation form is specifically designed to capture the essence of a particular workshop. For the Home Language workshop, teachers were asked to respond to questions such as: *What have you learnt in this workshop that you did not know or understand before? What would you like to see us do differently in the next workshop?* When these questions were asked in the evaluation of the Home Language workshop, some of the teachers gave informative responses. For instance, for the first question, a teacher responded: *"I learnt different activities that will help me teach my learners to be aware of phonemes…putting sounds together. I still need information on how to teach learners when I divide multisyllabic words into syllables."* And, for the second question, a teacher responded, *"In the next workshop, I would like to learn how can I divide and manage my class using group work, if you have about fifty learners, including assessment. What activities can I do to prepare my learners for emergent writing?"* From the feedback, I was able to recognise the type of learning that teachers had gained. I could see how their feedback linked with the intentions of the workshop and what the teachers felt they needed for their classroom practice.

2.5.3.3 Home Language workshop photographs

During the workshops for Home Language, I enlisted the assistance of the teacher co-facilitators and other subject advisors to use their cell phones to take photographs to document the process. Subject advisors took photographs of the workshop set-up, showing the seating arrangement of teachers as participants. The teacher co-facilitators took photographs of the set-up of their resources, such as alphabet puzzles and phonic flashcards. They also took pictures of teachers viewing the displays and moving around the room. Mitchell et al. (2020, p. 685) explained how they used "photographs for seeing and making visible key issues [that] provide important platforms for reflective engagement". Similarly, the photographs assisted me in being more reflective and aided my understanding of what happened in the workshops.

For professional purposes, I used the photographs in conjunction with the evaluation forms as I prepared for reporting and planning the way forward. The photographs also provided a means of reflection for my self-study research process. Upon gazing at the photographs, I began to comprehend what Dhlula-Moruri et al. (2017) explained about how photographs can reveal

teachers' different sociocultural contexts. The photographs showed teachers working with the various teacher co-facilitators' materials. While looking at the images, I began to understand that the materials the teacher co-facilitators brought reflected their sociocultural contexts and influences. This was observable from the types of materials that were given to teachers to work with during the workshop.

2.5.3.4 Text messages and email messages from teachers after the workshop

Through this self-study, I have come to realise that, when teachers see value in what we do in our CPTD workshops, they express appreciation. This came to light for me after the Home Language workshop when some of the teachers provided more private responses by sending text messages or emails directed to me personally (see Chapter Eight). The nature of texts and email messages of appreciation I received from teachers gave me an insight into my practice and the effectiveness of the new ways of doing that I had started introducing in the process of this study. It gave me affirmation that teachers enjoyed and gained knowledge from this workshop. I was encouraged to organise follow-up workshops as part of my growth in my practice.

2.5.3.5 My journal entries

I continued writing in my journal to document the planning and my reflections on the Home Language workshop.

2.6 Data analysis and interpretation

All of the data generation sessions with teachers and subject advisors were audio-recorded. I listened to the recorded talks afterward, which helped me to make more sense of the teachers' and subject advisors' concerns and inputs. The data were transcribed and my understanding of the significance of participants' views was also captured in my journal.

I read all my notes and repeatedly listened to audio-recorded discussions even after I had already transcribed the data. I found that listening to participants' voices was different from reading the transcription. I listened to their views and I reflected critically on my practice and became more stressed. I was thinking, *"How can I change my attitude and address teachers' needs?"* In my mind, there was a voice that said: "*Hmm, teachers and subject advisors have spoken, what are you going to do about it?"*

After transcribing the discussions, I looked for similarities and differences in how the lived experiences of CPTD programmes were communicated. It was interesting to note that the challenges that faced teachers were often similar to those that subject advisors were struggling with. I used thematic analysis as a "method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Using different colours, I colour-coded patterns that were present in the verbal responses from subject advisors and teachers. And I jotted down the essential points that I noted.

I then designed a collage (Figure 2.1) to make visible the patterns I could see when looking across all the different data generation activities and sources (as listed in Table 2.4). According to Butler-Kisber (2008, p. 268), creating a collage for research analysis and interpretation can enable one to "generate meaning in a concrete way". Producing this collage assisted me in understanding connections between my own experiences and viewpoints and the experiences and perspectives that the teachers and subject advisors shared with me visually and verbally. This then enabled me to identify and express the essential personal-professional learnings about myself and my practice as a subject advisor that I present and discuss in the final chapter of this thesis.

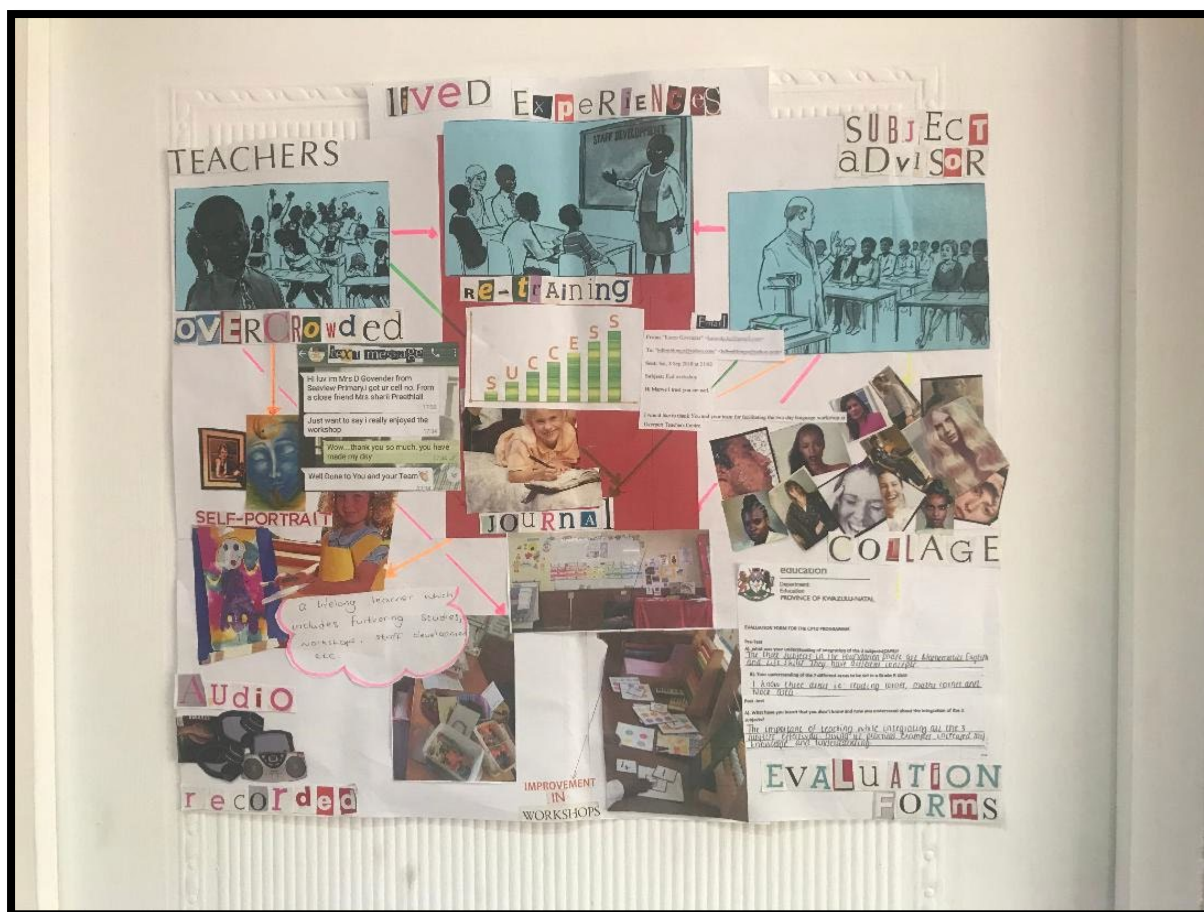


Figure 2.4. ***Collage representing the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers and subject advisors.***

Additionally, I created self-portrait drawings to make visible my growth and learning from the self-study process as a whole (see Chapter Nine). The first self-portrait drawing (see Figure 9.1) depicted who I was as a subject advisor before venturing into this study. I thought it was vital for me to think back to where I started before I could reflect where I believe I am now. In this first drawing, I came across as the one who held the key to teacher learning and was in sole control of the workshops. The second self-portrait drawing (see Figure 9.2) is a reflection of my growth through being involved in the self-study of practice.

In thinking about how to create these portraits, I first had to reflect back on all the work that I had done for the self-study research. I took a paper and a pen to draw how I used to conduct these CPTD programmes. In the first portrait (Figure 9.2), I am positioned as the only person who is in control, while the teachers are crowded around, listening to me. The second self-portrait drawing (Figure 9.3) shows the progressive nature of my role in future CPTD sessions.

Tidwell et al. (2020, p. 28) assert that drawings can "[provide] a context for thinking about practice and, through a recursive process of reflection, [uncover] multiple layers within practice that [help] inform change". Creating self-portrait drawings assisted me in expressing my inner feelings about my practice of CPTD and how I had grown and still wanted to change. The process of doing self-portrait drawings helped me to show how I am evolving professionally and learning as a self-study researcher.

A sociocultural theoretical stance supported my thinking as I saw that being an influential subject advisor involves more than displaying knowledge of practice. It also requires me to include teachers in powerful learning experiences. As Goos (2014) advised, the learning experiences must suit teachers' sociocultural backgrounds. My understanding of social constructivism reminded me that I had to rethink and consider teachers' cultural backgrounds and provide opportunities to actively construct their own learning.

Sociocultural and social constructivist perspectives helped me realise the importance of creating more social interaction opportunities for teachers and subject advisors (Goos, 2014). I also saw the importance of learning to teach using practical examples. I saw how this could lead to a new understanding of integrating resources available in teachers' sociocultural environments.

2.7 Critical friends

During this study, I attended a cohort group fortnightly with three other doctoral students and our research supervisors. All of us students were doing self-study research, focusing on improving our practice as teachers and teacher educators. In our sessions, we shared our work, our fears, our dilemmas. My fellow students acted as critical friends. They were essential for this self-study. As Samaras (2011) asserts, "critical friends can prove useful in your data collection and analysis as they provide alternative perspectives on interpretation to increase the validity of your research" (p. 179). For example, in one sitting, I presented my self-portrait drawing. Listening to my critical friends' responses and suggestions helped me to realise what I could learn from the picture.

My critical friends also acted as a support system for my study. Where I was not sure, they gave me ideas and assisted me to critically think about the issue at hand. For instance, when I was finding it difficult to meet with subject advisors from my district as per my initial plan, they supported my idea of involving other subject advisors from other regions. The critical questions and comments made by critical friends assisted in opening my mind and think analytically about my research topic. This helpful engagement with critical friends made me feel valued and that I was on the right path with my studies.

I also found that my critical friends provided me with both emotional support. In my journey, I have experienced many medically challenging moments that could have ended my studies as I felt like giving up. Yet, with the support of my critical friends, I was able to find my way back to what I needed to do to get myself on track. One of these instances was when I had a persistent cough that doctors could not find a solution for. It affected every aspect of my life, including my studies. Whenever we met, it was encouraging that my critical friends would ask me about my well-being. Some would even suggest some basic home medication that I can use for my cough.

2.8 Ethical considerations

Before I embarked on this journey, I wrote a request to the Provincial Department of Education and asked for permission to do this study and work with teachers. I also wrote letters to the principals of the schools that participated in this study, seeking approval for teachers to be part of this journey. Likewise, I wrote letters to the District Director and CES, who is my supervisor, asking permission to involve other subject advisors in this study.

Teachers and subject advisors signed consent forms (See Appendices A and B) after I had explained the nature of the study and their participation. Participants were given consent forms to take home and decided in their own space, whether or not they would like to be part of this research journey or not. Participants were told that they were free to take part in this journey as well as withdraw at any time if they did not feel comfortable without being any negative consequences.

I used pseudonyms for the districts, schools, and participants involved in this study. I was aware of the need for confidentiality and anonymity throughout this study to protect the participants (Samaras, 2011). Samaras (2011) emphasised the issue of protection of participants as vital

when doing self-study. I realised that my research could be very sensitive and that if I did not assure the participants that they were protected, they would not feel free to be honest in their responses during our discussions.

It was vital for me as a researcher to consider the possible effects of this research on the participants' lives, as I documented their shared experiences of CPTD. Because I was aware of power relations because of my position in relation to the teachers and subject advisors, I had to continuously monitor interpersonal ethics throughout my self-study research (Cuenca, 2020). I was aware that my position might lead to teachers and subject advisors not feeling free to discuss their lived experiences. They might have had a fear of being reprimanded. So, I had to keep striving to ensure that teachers and other subject advisors felt comfortable and safe from any adverse repercussions.

2.8.1 Relational ethics experienced in the study

Due to the nature of self-study, self-study researchers will experience ethical challenges when researching their own practice with the participation of others who are involved in it either directly or indirectly. In my study, such moments of "relational ethics" (Cuenca, 2020, p. 12) came up at different times and in diverse ways.

One such instance occurred during the writing of my personal history (see Chapter Three). In explaining my own history, I used a group photograph (see Figure 3.5), where individuals that were not part of the study were also visible. According to Mitchell et al. (2019), photographs in which people are identifiable are a critical ethical concern. I understood that permission had to be sought from those individuals featured in the picture. It was a task that I immediately realised was going to be difficult as I was not still in contact with some of them. I knew that in the event of not getting hold of them, I had to hide their faces, even when I knew that some would never see my thesis. I then started on a search journey, to find out where they were currently located and the means of contact that were possible. This proved to be such an enormous task that, at times, I would question the need to find them. I then realised this was a task that I could seek assistance for, through individuals that I was still in contact with. This proved to be fruitful as I gained the current contact details of most of the individuals and communicated with them to get their consent.

Another critical experience was brought on by my position in relation to the subject advisor participants in the study. Since I was looking at myself in practice, I had to engage colleagues I worked with as part of my everyday professional life. I was also in a position of power in the relationship, as I was their work supervisor, which I felt might be a source of difficulty. I anticipated having to work out ways to deal with the impact of this power so that my work and the participants would not be compromised.

However, as described earlier in this chapter, I later came to realise that there were issues of discomfort for the potential participants that came from their relationships with each other. As discussed earlier, my initial plan was to have group sessions with subject advisors in my district. But I later found out that this plan was not acceptable to most of the participants, as they did not want to meet together, but instead as individuals. I was informed of these concerns by one of the participants who felt the need to explain why people kept postponing every time we had to meet. It was explained to me that the problem was caused by them not wanting to share what they considered as weaknesses in front of each other. At first, I felt it was a petty excuse they were putting forward as I worried about how this was affecting my study.

I took these questions and challenges to my supervisors as I felt I was not coming to any solution on my own. I learnt that unburdening my feelings to my supervisors was a way of creating moments of clarity for myself. They were able to help me understand that being open to others about your weaknesses is not always easy. I had to realise that this was somewhat easier for me as a person who had been engaging in self-study for some time. However, those who have not made reflection part of their daily practice can find it difficult. Therefore, I became aware that their reactions were not meant to be directed at me, and my role was to come up with what could be a beneficial plan for all of us. Eventually, I decided to work with subject advisors who were not part of my District. I saw this as the best solution for sustaining a pleasant work environment for my colleagues and myself.

2.9 Trustworthiness

As a self-study researcher, it was essential to give clear and detailed descriptions of how I generated data, and make clear to the reader what counted as data in this research (Feldman, 2003; Samaras, 2011). I have endeavoured to give these details in this chapter. To further enhance the trustworthiness of this research, I used triangulation across multiple data sources (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Samaras, 2011; Samaras & Freese, 2006). Also, in self-study

research, trustworthiness is enhanced by showing change in practice (Feldman, 2003). The way I changed how PDPs were conducted was evidence of the transformation in my thinking (Samaras, 2011). The change was noticed in the programmes that we planned and led as subject advisors (see Chapter Eight). In Chapter Nine of the thesis, I further reflect on how I have changed personally and professionally and how these changes will influence my practice going forward.

2.10 Research challenges

This was a bumpy journey. The first challenge was regarding my health, which contributed to this research progressing very slowly. I was in and out of the hospital numerous times, not knowing what was wrong with me. After two years of ill health, I discovered that I was diabetic and have hypertension. I had to change the way that I was used to doing things, including a change of diet. My body changed; I was feeling tired most of the time.

When I was fully engaged in my studies, my husband was run over by a tractor. I was seriously disturbed, and I had to look after him after he came back from the hospital. The greatest challenge was because I became distanced from the routine of writing; by the time I returned to it, everything was like new to me.

As a subject advisor, I was assigned a second responsibility as of September 2014, to be a Centre Manager of a bustling, intricate centre. The introduction of this new responsibility in my workload had negative implications for my time allocations. I already had a working plan that both accommodated my work responsibilities and those of my studies. The new addition meant a split in my time, and this had a massive impact on my studies as the new portfolio was directly controlled by the District Director. This meant I had to be at his calling for any centre related issues. My days started to blend into one as Monday and Sundays began to be the same, filled with work-related tasks. This halted my studies as I could not keep to the plans agreed upon with my supervisors.

If I had a chance to advise other students who want to undertake this journey, I would tell them to continuously stay in touch with their readings and writing, even if their situation conspires against it. They must try hard to keep on working.

2.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, I gave the reasons why self-study methodology was necessary for this research. The self-study methodology assisted me in carrying out self-reflection to improve my practice. The use of self-study methodology enabled me to learn more about and better understand my position and practice as a subject advisor.

I discussed the contexts where the research occurred and explained how participants were selected. I provided details of the meetings with the participants. I also provided a detailed explanation of the practices I used to generate my data, and described how the data analysis was conducted. I discussed ethical considerations and the issues of trustworthiness that were important for this self-study. I also explained some challenges I encountered during the research process and how I overcame these.

Through my involvement in this self-study research, I realised the importance of being a reflective practitioner. The research process taught me to reflect and accept criticism of my own practices from the participants to improve my practice. The self-study methodology provided me with the strength not to take criticism personally but to reconstruct and become a better person. I learnt to be patient and to listen to the concerns and challenges my participants faced, and I changed as a person. The research process assisted me in having an open mind and accepting feedback about myself from teachers and other subject advisors as a step to improvement. The self-study research helped me to learn that at times I had to step aside, do reflection, learn and understand what is expected from me in improving CPTD programmes. I was able to see things from a different perspective. The self-study methodology taught me how important it was to work together with teachers and other subject advisors through a process of collaboration.

In the next chapter, Chapter Three, I retrace my personal history to see what informed my thinking and the way I facilitated CPTD programmes. Looking back into my experiences assisted me to better understand my practice and my role as a subject advisor. The use of artefacts and photographs helped me to recall and reflect on particular events that had connections to my research question.

CHAPTER THREE: MY MEMORABLE JOURNEY AS A TEACHER, TEACHER EDUCATOR AND SUBJECT ADVISOR

3.1 Introduction

My self-study research centred on my learning from the lived experiences of subject advisors and teachers concerning CPTD. I aimed to better understand subject advisors' and teachers' lived experiences so that I could provide assistance, guidance, and support on CPTD.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the setting where the research occurred and clarified how participants were chosen. I afforded details of the meetings with the participants. A comprehensive explanation of the practices I used to generate my data was given, and I explained the data analysis and interpretation. I also discussed ethical considerations, issues of trustworthiness and challenges encountered.

In writing this chapter, Chapter Three, I wanted to gain a better understanding of how I was shaped by the experiences and circumstances that I encountered as a teacher, teacher educator, and a subject advisor. In the chapter, I respond to my first research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of subject advisors in relation to CPTD?* I narrate my personal history intending to understand myself in making meaning of my past experiences, aiming to change and improve my practice (Samaras, 2011, Samaras et al., 2004; Samaras & Freese, 2006). Goodson and Walker (1991) highlight that teachers' personal life experiences from the past interact with their current professional lives and shape their work. Who we are as individuals affects who we are as teachers and teacher educators, and consequently, our practice (Samaras et al., 2004). Therefore, reflecting on one's personal history can enable one to understand why one does things in a certain way (Allender & Allender, 2006). This deeper understanding can help teachers and teacher educators to change and improve their practice (Allender & Allender, 2006). Also, teachers' and teacher educators' self-study of their personal and professional histories can contribute "to the professional knowledge base of teaching as well as generating understanding of the world' (Hamilton et al., 2008. p. 402).

I wanted to recall and understand the process of my personal and professional development before I could appreciate other subject advisors' and teachers' experiences and viewpoints on CPTD. I used a sociocultural theoretical perspective as a lens to reflect on my past experiences. This lens reminded me of my sociocultural background and the practices that supported or

hindered my professional development. Using a social constructivist theoretical perspective, I perceived meaningful interactions in the professional environment throughout my journey.

I was curious to discover what shaped me to be where I am today so that I could see how I might do things differently in the future in my professional space. When I reflect on my own development in this journey, I highlight not only my progress but also my growth and my contributions to this profession. I recall and reflect on my learning and development as a teacher, a teacher educator and a subject advisor, including the support received from other people. All the names of others are pseudonyms.

3.2 Developing as a teacher

I joined the teaching profession in 1985 during the apartheid era when there were racially segregated Departments of Education in South Africa. The particular school I joined, Khalabantu Primary (pseudonym), was in a deeply rural area with households that had no water and electricity and were surrounded by sugarcane fields. Unemployment was rife in the area, and the learners had to help their parents in the sugar fields; hence they only started Sub-Standard A (now called Grade 1) from the age of 10 years.

In schools, at that time, there were no Heads of Department (HoDs) to guide teachers, but rather a Vice-Principal (now called Deputy Principal) who was part of the School Management Team (SMT). As a new teacher, the first documents I was given by the school Vice-Principal were a set of two scheme books, one of which was empty, and the other had short lesson preparations. The scheme book was a document in which we had to write lesson preparations; it had a page where the teacher indicated the day the lesson was completed, like a record sheet. It included a date, topic, short subject matter, aims of the lesson, resources to be used (specifically the chalkboard and chalk) and the lesson conclusion. There was no space for reflection on the lesson. This was a teacher’s daily preparation: showing step by step what needed to be done and how it must be done. This was different from the full lesson plans that we wrote while we were doing our teaching practice as student teachers at the College of Education I had attended.

In the scheme book, the teacher also indicated the weekly and monthly tests to be written by learners. In the book, the teacher also kept records of what learners had achieved. No continuous assessment was done at that time. The teacher taught at the beginning of the week; the learners were tested at the end of the week.

One of the scheme books was new and blank, while the other one belonged to Mrs Mtshali (who was an experienced teacher) and was dated 1972. I was instructed to copy this scheme book as it was. I was told that this scheme book was going to be the day-to-day instruction booklet that I was expected to use in executing my subject matter.

This was different from what I had learnt at Indumiso College of Education, where I was taught to use concrete or semi-concrete objects when teaching. I expected that the school was going to give me a 'syllabus' and then I would do my own planning – not copy someone else's planning. However, I was not even asked to use Mrs Mtshali's scheme book as a guide, but to copy it as was. I felt like a restricted teacher who could not take education as a practice of freedom (hooks, 1994). I was concerned that how I was going to teach was not going to empower my learners to be critical thinkers, and nor was it going to develop me as a reflective practitioner.

The Principal of the school would instruct teachers on what to do, and you had to do it without any deviations. I was in a space where I did not have a voice. The Vice-Principal, too, did not have a say, as he not only respected but feared the Principal. Our Principal was very conservative: when you spoke to him, he made sure that you did not question his authority.

My first experience of professional development was one-sided as I only received information in the form of the scheme books. According to Guskey (2002), traditionally, schools neglected professional development programs because they saw these as costly and taking too much of teachers' time. As a novice teacher, I expected the principal to take me through induction in terms of the curriculum and the school's overall functioning. By sharing my personal history, I understood why the principal did not give me this support when I joined the school. Nevertheless, as Nkabinde and Armsterdam (2018) asserted, it is imperative to support new teachers in understanding reform initiatives and effectively implementing curriculum policies. I was not given a platform to be innovative and show precisely what I had learnt at Indumiso College of Education.

While training as a student teacher, I had been exposed to different methods of teaching, theoretical as well as practical. I learnt to develop materials at the level of learners and to break down the topic I was dealing with for understanding. I remember that for three years, I was selected as the best student teacher to teach in front of all the other second-year or first-year

student teachers. We had a room with a two-way mirror, where I would teach learners from neighbouring primary schools. The learners could not see that people were watching in the other room. Student teachers would be watching my lesson on the other side, and had to critique it at the end. This assisted me in growing as a teacher during the teaching practice period; I expected that I would not have any difficulties teaching after that, and I felt confident to stand in front of a class and teach. Therefore, I would have liked to have shared my expertise with other teachers at Khalabantu Primary. Teacher development scholars such as Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) support the idea of collaboration amongst teachers. These authors highlight that when teachers are involved in collaborative professional development activities they can share different ideas while learning. However, such sharing was not encouraged by the Principal.

In my first year of teaching, I encountered certain aspects of being in the teaching fraternity that were not taught at the Teachers College of Education. Some rules were laid down by the Principal that I had to follow without fail. When I look back at that period, I realise that it is then that my professional anxiety started. I doubted myself, not knowing if anything that I was doing was acceptable or not. This created a situation of doubt in my life. Whenever I was tasked to perform a task, I hesitated, and this hindered my creativity. I came to expect someone to tell me what to do and how to do it. My experiences as a novice teacher did not allow me to show my own initiative.

Looking back to that period, I realised that, later on, as subject advisor, I became angry and frustrated when some teachers did not take the initiative to put into practice new ideas they had learnt from the CPTD programmes. However, I never bothered to find out the reasons for this apparent unwillingness to change. In recalling my time as a novice teacher, I became aware that, in my case, in the past, I often felt that I did not have a choice. To illustrate, I copied Mrs Mtshali's scheme book and followed it as was, then submitted it to the Vice Principal to add his signature. In my view, this was not the correct way of doing things. I would prefer teachers to be allowed to collectively plan and come up with workable approaches to use in their classrooms (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Likewise, many of the teachers who attended the CPTD workshops might have had similarly constraining experiences in their school contexts.

I still recall how alone I felt when I was called into a special disciplinary meeting about my non-teaching of the subject Ubuntu Botho. I did not have any content knowledge on the subject.

Still, other teachers told me that I had to teach the learners slogans, praises, and songs about one particular political leader while decrying other leaders. There were no prescribed books I could refer to. I was left high and dry, feeling hopeless with no one to guide and help me. I kept on asking myself what precisely other teachers were teaching the learners. Teachers were not allowed to plan together and share ideas, since no planning was to be done except to copy the scheme book. By contrast, Dearman and Alber (2005) emphasised the value of collaborative planning as it allows teachers to improve their practices when they share, reflect, and discuss the content knowledge.

The artefact shown in Figure 3.1 signifies my first years of teaching as a novice teacher, and the challenges I encountered without any support. This scheme book represents the first faltering steps that I took on this journey of a thousand miles.

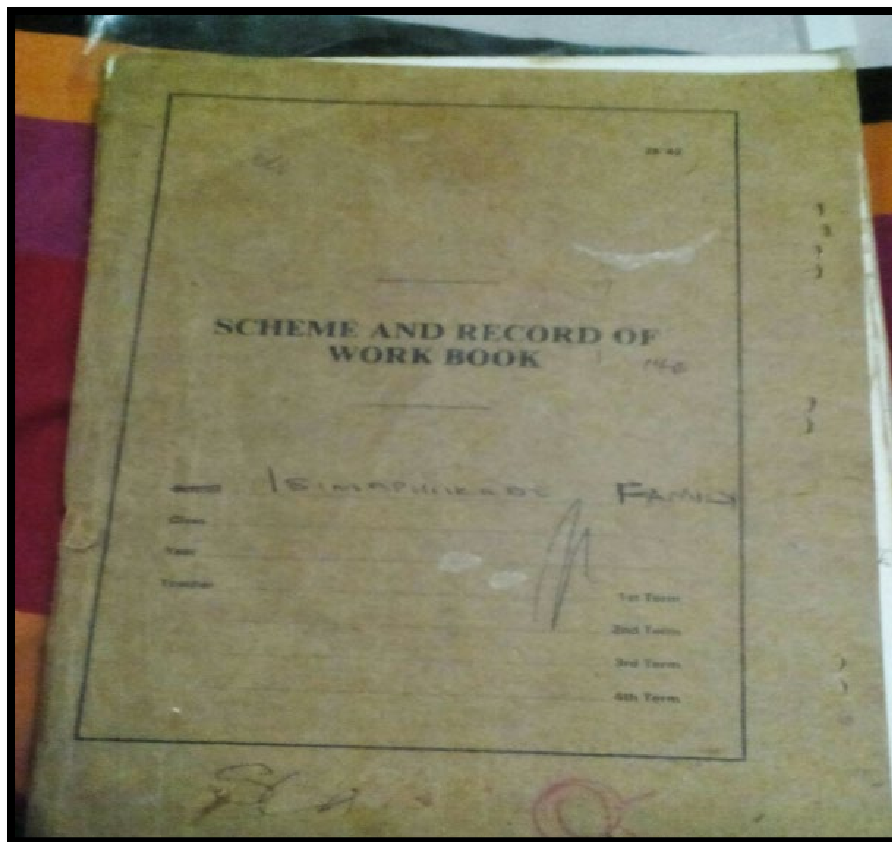


Figure 3.1. ***Scheme book.***

I chose this artefact as it reminds me of my limiting experiences as a novice teacher. During that period, no PDPs were planned and conducted within rural schools. This artefact reflects part of who I am and where I come from.

When I looked back, it was clear that the scheme book did not contribute anything positive to my professional growth. Instead, it was taking me backward, instilling the notion of dependency as a person who cannot do things on her own without being instructed by someone – a person always waiting to be served or given a portion of growth, like a small bird. hooks (2014) believed that education is a place where you need to reinvent yourself and be free. However, this freedom was not part of the culture of the school where I began my teaching career.

Despite this, during this period, I still managed to make use of some resources that I had compiled during my three years at the College of Education. My classroom changed, and it looked bright with all different types of coloured pictures hanging on the oily painted walls. Although my charts kept on falling off because of the oily paint, my classroom was print-rich. Since the learners could not read or spell, they were able to look at the pictures and tell their own stories, so incidental reading was happening (DoE, 2012).

But, my colleagues used to discourage me by making condescending comments such as "*New brooms sweep clean"* or *"uzokhathala sisi"* … (meaning, "You will get tired soon, girl"). When teachers questioned the changes I was bringing into my classroom, I became more frustrated. I was not trying to impress anyone nor to change anything that was working, I was merely doing my work the way I was taught at the College. I was concerned that the lessons that we were producing were outdated and would never equip our learners to be able to think critically and contribute effectively in this changing world. Our learners would not be able to compete with learners from urban schools.

I was a novice teacher, and the comments from my older colleagues made me doubt whether I would make a good teacher. I even questioned the training I had received and whether it was tailored for specific schools, such as those that fell under the Department of Education and Training (in urban areas), not the school where I was appointed in a deeply rural area. My colleagues wanted me to be like them and expected me to fit into their norm: the norm of not being thoughtful about your own development, the pattern of not cultivating creativity and excelling in your own classroom so that learners perform better. The idea of not being able to take the initiative was very disappointing and discouraging. The school became a place where I failed "to maintain the right to be an independent thinker" (hooks, 2014, p. 4).

It is only now that I understand fully that no development at all was taking place in my practice. No one at the school level was responsible for checking our work; we just had to submit those scheme books and registers to the Principal's office once a month. At times these scheme books would be signed, and at times not; no comments were given by the Principal or Vice-Principal. Nobody came back to us and offered advice and support on what we were doing. What was more frustrating was that, no PDPs (internal or external) were conducted for two years. The other teachers seemed convinced that copying old scheme books was the best way to go. So I asked myself, how does one take ownership of something you were not part of when it was being developed? Whose ideas and views were teachers taking forward and sharing with learners?

During my first year of teaching (see Figure 3.2), I doubted myself because after I had taught the learners, they did not perform well in tests. I explained concepts using the different resources I had brought from the College, and then the learners responded well; but when they wrote a test, only three learners would pass. I was so frustrated. I tried all methods and strategies, but they still failed their tests. I thought that I was not good enough to be a teacher.

Figure 3.2. ***My first year of teaching as a novice teacher.***

This photo shows me in my first year as a teacher. I used to dress formally as we were not allowed to wear trousers. The wearing of pantyhose was my daily outfit, and I loved it. I was a role model to my learners of how they must dress. I am standing in the courtyard, but I realise now that although it was not winter, the school did not have flowers and green grass. Some windows were broken and not repaired because of the lack of funds. My first classroom had only two benches and more than 100 learners. Each learner had to bring his/her brick or big stone to sit on, and when writing, they had to kneel. Some classrooms did not even have doors, and the community goats would sleep there during the night and on weekends. In the morning before class started, we had to clean the classroom with the learners. Those were challenges

that contributed to my growth as a teacher – to be able to solve problems as I encountered them.

In my third year of teaching, I attended a workshop for the first time; it was on how to identify and assist learners who had difficulty in learning. The facilitator was Ms Sue from Canada, who shared her experiences with us and how she overcame challenges. That was the first and the last professional development session I attended as a teacher at that time. The invitation was only for two people per school, and the Principal chose me to attend with him. We travelled for more than three hours to get to the venue.

That workshop changed the course of my life. I quickly imagined myself in front of my learners who could not read or write. I asked myself, "*What can I do to change the situation*?" It was as if Ms Sue was addressing my concerns and answering my questions about how to support learners who have difficulty in learning. I wished the workshop could last for the whole week so that we could have gained more strategies and increased our knowledge.

The workshop made me understand that there were learners that had difficulty in learning and that a teacher needed to deal with them differently. This required me to work collaboratively with other teachers and to network with relevant stakeholders who would help me with better strategies and appropriate resources to use in my classroom. As Engelbrecht, Swart and Eloff (2001, p. 259) point out, "a support network provides teachers not only with the opportunities to build on learners' strengths but the access to resources increases teachers' perception that they can have an impact on the educational outcomes of learners with special needs". I wanted to network to learn more about my learners who had difficulty in learning. I thought about the learners in my class, and I wanted to help them to improve their education. Hence I took it a step further.

The following year I decided to enrol for a Diploma in Special Education: Remedial Work, at the University of Durban-Westville. This was the beginning of a personally initiated professional development journey that Fraser et al. (2007, p. 5) described as an "ongoing process of reflection and review that meets institutional, departmental and individual needs". I felt that everyone was going to benefit once I gained additional knowledge, including the learners at my school.

I continued with my studies on a part-time basis while teaching. After obtaining my postgraduate diploma, I applied for a promotion. I was then appointed as a teacher educator at Indumiso College of Education, where I had previously trained as a Foundation Phase teacher. And after I was appointed, I wrote a letter to the DoE and resigned as a teacher.

3.3 Developing as a teacher educator

During 1995 I had to adjust a great deal in my career, moving from being a teacher to becoming a teacher educator. Williams and Ritter (2010) emphasise that the construction of new professional identities is challenging, as typically, nobody prepares you for this career shift from teacher to teacher educator. They argue that the social context of where you are coming from plays a more significant role in what you take forward.

At Indumiso College of Education, I was responsible for older students, unlike at school, where my learners were all children between the ages of 6 – 11 years. At first, I had a fear of teaching grown-up people, some older than myself. Also, I had to teach all my lessons in English, whereas, at the rural primary school, I was teaching using my mother tongue, isiZulu.

At Indumiso, I was responsible for preparing student teachers to be qualified teachers. This was a period when I felt that my professional skills and knowledge were developed. I was in a space where I was developing and shaping student teachers to be qualified by assisting and guiding them through their practice. I engaged them to allow them to understand the kinds of learners they would be dealing with, as well as the different methods to apply and adapt in teaching these learners.

When I reflect on that time in my life now, I can proudly say that this is where my development as a teacher educator started. I was surrounded by people who appreciated the contributions I was making and also mentored me; hence there was this improvement in my practice. I had the full support of my colleagues, who continuously guided me on how things were done at Indumiso.

Figure 3.3. ***The Indumiso College badge. I was trained there to be a teacher, and 11 years later was appointed there as a teacher educator.***

When I was a student teacher at Indumiso College, I was in the school choir, and we wore a black blazer with this badge when we were performing. We had red tracksuits that we wore for our Physical Education activities, and that uniform also had this badge. When I was a teacher educator, on special trips, we had our college jackets with this badge. When different colleges met, it was easy to identify a student or a lecturer wearing a tracksuit with this badge as being from Indumiso College.

I felt so proud whenever I came across the Indumiso College badge (Figure 3.3). I got my teacher training diploma at Indumiso College of Education after studying there from 1982 to 1984. The badge reminds me of an institution where I was well-grounded to be the kind of professional I am today. I have good memories whenever I look at this badge. As a student teacher, I was exposed to so many educational activities that developed me as a teacher. I looked at my lecturers as my mentors, and I wished that one day I would also be in that position – and it finally happened.

As a teacher educator at Indumiso, I found it vital to send my students to the library, as the college had a well-resourced library, and it was linked to the computer centre. Students had a library period where they would go and look for information, then return and present it to the

class. At times I would give them a project for which I knew they would find information in the library. At the library, they were also taught how to use computers, but I never bothered myself with learning computers at that time. I was not aware of the rapid change of technology that was to come. I was still in my comfort zone, not thinking that one day I would have my own office with a computer to make use of.

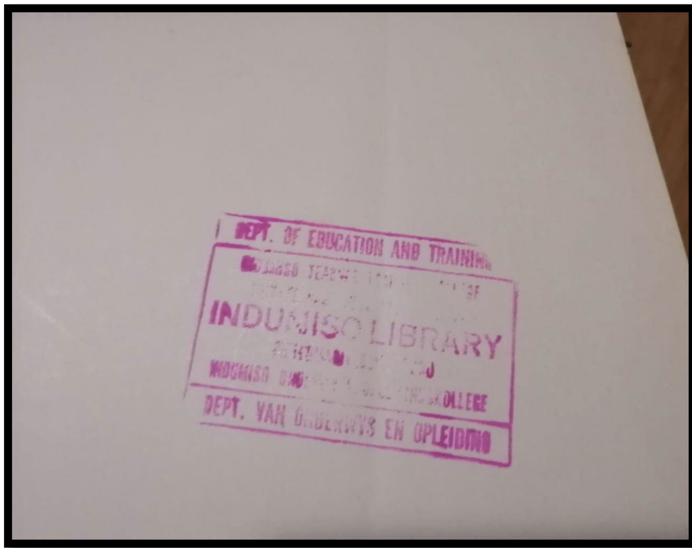


Figure 3.4. ***Indumiso library stamp***

This is the stamp from the library book I took out in the year 1999 while I was still a teacher educator at Indumiso College. When all the teacher training Colleges closed down, most materials and resources were available for us to keep. I still use this Mathematics book whenever I want to look at strategies on how to teach a particular concept. The curriculum has changed, especially the terminology, but Mathematic concepts remain the same; hence this book is still a relevant resource to use during CPTD programmes.

All books were stamped to show that they belonged to the library. The stamp (Figure 3.4) reminds me of the facilities that were available to us as teacher educators; however, I now realise that I did not use them as effectively as I could have. I learnt very late that if you want to be knowledgeable, you must read extensively. The reading of selected books would have developed my knowledge, but I did not realise that at the time. The above artefact reminds me of the opportunities I overlooked, which were there to develop me holistically.

However, there were other opportunities that I did take advantage of. For instance, I remember how we attended different seminars about the various methods of teaching Mathematics. I still feel the joy and excitement when I think about how that developed me to become a more confident Mathematics teacher educator in the FP. These PDPs happened in different provinces. For the first time, I had to travel out of our province and had an opportunity to engage with other teacher educators from different regions. Everything that we participated in was through practical work and demonstrations. I was exposed to varying PDPs on Mathematics and Early Childhood Development, which helped to grow me as a person and gain confidence.

Figure 3.5. ***Maths workshop with other teacher educators from colleges in other provinces.***

I remember all the exciting PDPs we had. I am pictured towards the back on the right hand said of the photograph. It was my first year of working at the teacher training college, and I used to sit quietly and not contribute to any discussions because I was afraid and not confident enough to speak English. However, through collaboration, I learnt different strategies of teaching Mathematics.

These professional development workshops not only developed me as a teacher educator, but professional learning took place. Webster-Wright (2009, p. 713) affirms that reframing

professional development requires "moving from a focus on development to learning and from an atomistic perspective to a holistic approach". I realised that collaboration with other teacher educators who had different cultural backgrounds, coming from different socio-economic environments, assisted in developing various strategies of teaching and understanding. This enhanced my holistic development.

3.4 Developing as a subject advisor

When Indumiso College closed down in 2001, I joined the advisory service, as an FP subject advisor responsible for Early Childhood Development. This was during the time when Colleges of Education were closing down, and personnel had to be absorbed in different Regional Offices in KZN Province. It was also at this time that the new Curriculum 2005 outcomes-based education policy was introduced to teachers (DoE, 1997).

I was allocated a big office. It was the first time in my career that I had my own office. I was so excited when I was appointed in this position, assuming that my experience as a teacher and teacher educator was going to assist me in advising teachers on curriculum issues. I was given a desktop computer to use (see Figure 3.6).

Figure 3.6. ***Example of an old computer.***
This is the gadget I found in the office when I joined the advisory service as a subject advisor. I did not even know where to turn it on.

However, I was afraid to tell anyone that I was neither familiar with nor confident in using this device. Mrs Smith, who was the Senior Education Specialist for Early Childhood Development,

with a wealth of experience, trusted me and had confidence in me as I was coming from a reputable College of Education. Mrs. Smith was very organised, hardworking and committed to her work. She was very knowledgeable, and I learnt a lot from her. However, even though I had taught at the College for six years, I had not used a computer before, we had administration support staff (typists) who were responsible for typing our documents such as tests and examination papers.

This artefact (Figure 3.6) reminds me of the frustrations I experienced when I became a subject advisor. I doubted whether I was the right person for this kind of job. I had less confidence because, for everything that I had to do, I had to use the computer. As a teacher educator, I had been exposed to staff development programmes and attended various exciting PDPs that were more practical in nature. These programmes helped in improving my practice and confidence. I was able to come back and share with my student teachers, but I had never bothered to learn how to use computers myself.

I needed someone to assist me to develop in the use of computers. I arrived during a time when Mrs. Smith was preparing for a CPTD on Curriculum 2005. She was also preparing for her trip to the National DoE in Pretoria to meet with other FP subject advisors from other provinces. She tasked me to carry on with inviting schools for professional development workshops, which were going to take place in a month.

The draft circular was ready – my task was to put different school names onto it and then print them. Mrs Smith took me to the registry, to which I was going to submit these circulars once they were ready. The registry was responsible for posting the circulars to different schools.

I struggled to insert different school names onto the circular because I was not computer literate. Mrs Smith was gone by that time, and I was all by myself. I knew my handwriting was legible and neat and so, I asked myself, "How about if I wrote the addresses on these circulars using my own handwriting?" There were more than 350 Primary Schools that had to receive this circular. Was it possible? What about my integrity?

When Mrs Smith came back from the National DoE a week later, the circulars were still not ready and had not been posted to the different schools. The circulars had to be posted early

because principals did not go and check their post daily. These were the dynamics I learnt later on in my career. That PDP was a disaster, with poor attendance. I learnt the hard way how important it was to write and send invitation circulars on time and make sure that they reached all schools timeously.

In the same building block, three offices away from mine was a resource centre with lots of computers. All of the other subject advisors who did not have computers in their offices were allowed to use computers at this resource centre. After the debacle with the circulars, I went to the resource centre and introduced myself to the centre manager, Mrs Brown, who was a coloured lady. I had to explain my frustrations in English; she was surprised that I did not understand the basics of the computer. (Later, after six months of knowing her, I was surprised to find that she speaks Zulu better than I do, as she grew up on a farm.)

Mrs Brown asked me to bring all my work to the resource centre so that she could monitor and help me. Another frustration was how to move the document from the computer in my office to the resource centre. I did not have floppy disks, and even if there were any, I did not know how to use them. All of this technology was new to me.

Mrs Brown played a crucial role in teaching me essential skills in using a computer. She still does not know the vital part she played in my life. In isiZulu, there is this idiom *"Izandla ziyagezana"*: you go all out helping someone but not expecting something in return, but one day that person will return the favour when you have forgotten the good things you did for them. Mrs Brown was studying privately, doing her teaching qualifications. I helped her by further explaining the assignments as she was not in the teaching fraternity. If it were not for her helping me get used to using the computer, I would have resigned from that job. That was another layer of my development because I had to use the computer to plan PDPs for the teachers.

As indicated above, when I joined the DoE, it was at a crucial time. There were many changes in terms of the introduction of the new outcomes-based curriculum policy called Curriculum 2005 (DoE, 2005). Curriculum 2005 emphasised the holistic development of a learner, taking into consideration that each learner is unique and that they develop at their own pace. The issue of learner-centeredness was also important, considering that all activities must be inclusive. Active learner participation was also one of the critical elements. However, the kind of

prescribed curriculum that I was familiar with was that based on teacher-centredness, not learner-centredness (Kunene, 2009). The teacher was believed to be the only one with knowledge and was allowed to dominate the classroom while learners sat and listened. Now, we came to know that the activities that we were going to develop must be learner-centred and that teachers must facilitate learning (Kunene, 2009).

After the first round of training for Grade R teachers, it became clear that Curriculum 2005 was very complicated for most teachers. In Grade R, some teachers were qualified, some were unqualified with matric (the school leaving certificate) and others without matric. Some teachers failed to understand the training because of the difficult terminology Curriculum 2005 incorporated. We saw that the new curriculum policy could be implemented better in schools that had resources. However, for others, the lack of resources and poor infrastructure made it very difficult for teachers to change to a learner-centred approach. They complained about overcrowding and lack of skills in how to facilitate group work.

As the provincial FP team, we came to a decision to develop in-service modules for Grade R teachers. We wanted these to be more user-friendly for those teachers who lacked resources and skills. I was part of the provincial team that developed these modules from 2001, over eight months (see Figure 3.7). The most frustrating thing was that nobody claimed to know how these modules should be compiled. It was a new learning experience for all of us, but an exciting one where we had to use what we possessed in terms of pedagogic and content knowledge. As mentioned, the terminology was complex in Curriculum 2005, and hence modules were developed to make the jargon more user-friendly for the Grade R teachers. In Curriculum 2005, there were 67 specific outcomes across eight learning areas. There was a lot of emphasis on integration, rather than teaching essential concepts to learners. The teachers were used to simple terms such as ‘themes’, which were now referred to as ‘programme organisers’ in Curriculum 2005 (DoE, 2005). These kinds of changes created more confusion amongst the teachers.

There was a partnership between UNICEF as a funder, the Media in Education Trust, who trained us on developing material for Grade R, and the Department of Education and Culture. The first module was about the teacher and the learner. The module was based on the premise that teachers needed to understand who the learners were that they were dealing with, including

the learner's needs. The module also helped the teacher to organise her class and group the learners.

The second module dealt with the content of the three FP subjects and how they could be integrated. The third module dealt with planning and assessment. My involvement in the development of these modules contributed to my professional growth as a subject advisor, as we collaborated with other subject advisors from different Districts and shared knowledge.

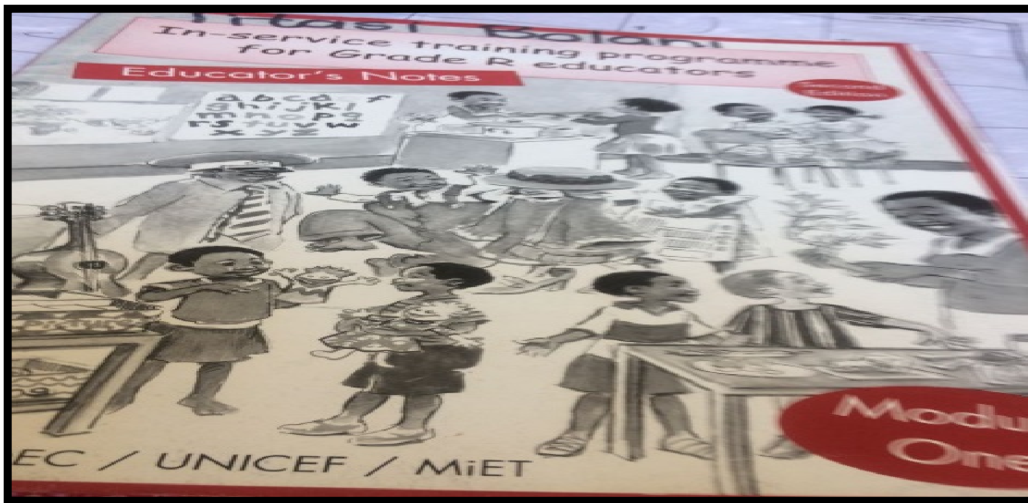


Figure 3.7. ***In-service training module for Grade R educators.***

I chose the artefact of the in-service training module booklet (Figure 3.7) for three reasons. Firstly, these modules contributed professionally to developing teachers to do their best in their classrooms. Secondly, it also motivated them to further their studies as they discovered themselves. Thirdly, I chose it because the process of developing modules improved my practice and helped me to grow professionally.

The module booklet symbolises the isiZulu metaphor *"Imfundo ayikhulelwa",* which simply means that nobody is too old to study; even a pensioner can study and get a qualification. Education has no age, it is all about hard work and commitment. Teachers who were trained on these in-service modules were practitioners without Grade 12 and no formal qualifications but with a wealth of experience in teaching in preschools, and qualified teachers, including HoDs.

Through this training, I saw teachers in their sixties graduating for the first time with a teaching qualification. That fulfilment and joy I will always remember: the contributions I have made to change the lives of these teachers and their families, and the lives of the learners they deal with. It all started when they were trained with these modules, and that motivated them, imparting the love for further study and obtain a teaching qualification.

As indicated, most of these teachers did not even have matric (the school leaving certificate). Still, the policy White Paper 5 of 2001 advocated that the wealth of experience that these teachers had in dealing with children must be considered for formal employment. I call it formal employment because, for the first time, the DoE paid these practitioners as teachers. These teachers transformed from being unqualified; now, some have their National Professional Diploma in Education, while others have Bachelor of Education degrees.

The process of developing these three modules took me back to the things I knew and had learnt at the College as a student teacher and teacher educator. This actually helped me in discovering who I was and what I was capable of. The sharing of ideas and coming up with different activities inspired me. I realised how much I had learnt over the past years.

Although we no longer train teachers on these modules, we still refer to them as our resource. With another colleague, I was once tasked to go to the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga Province to train their officials on these modules developed by KZN FP advisors. That was part of my professional development, where I was now growing other FP subject advisors.

There was a provincial curriculum team that comprised subject advisors responsible for Grade R–3 teachers from different Districts (see Figure 3.8). I was expected to come up with ideas to share when I met with the provincial team, and I had to type these using a computer. As a team, we would have workshops to brainstorm ways to simplify what was supposed to be taught in Grade R. The activities had to be user-friendly and in simple language with lots of practical examples. For instance, I remember when I was involved in a workshop on classroom management for Grade R, the discussions I had were not supported by any resources. I realised after the workshop how important it was to read and understand assessment policy documents and have relevant resources ready before you went to the workshop.

Figure 3.8. ***Provincial Foundation Phase Team.***

This is a photograph of Provincial subject advisors from the 12 districts of the province of KZN. It was taken during the time when we gathered to unpack and simplify the Curriculum 2005 policy as we developed the three modules of in-service training used by Grade R. I am fourth from the left in the back row.

All of this helped me to gain confidence. Later on, when there was a change of curriculum policy from Curriculum 2005 to the Revised National Curriculum Statement, I felt better prepared because of the experiences I had had. There was a District team to train all FP teachers (Grades R–3) on the new changes in the curriculum. I was the only FP advisor to train teachers in a District that had 365 schools. I also wanted to have more knowledge so that it would help me to do my job well. After a 13-year break, I decided to go and do my Master's degree, because I wanted to learn and understand new education legislation/policies and improve my practice.

3.5 Developing as a Module Co-ordinator for the National Professional Diploma in Education

In 2002, while working as a subject advisor, I was employed as a part-time Module Co-ordinator to train tutors and then monitor the National Professional Diploma in Education Programme. This programme was developed and offered by the University of KZN to train underqualified and later unqualified teachers to obtain their teaching qualification. I co-ordinated and facilitated the NPDE programme up until 2009 when I registered for my master's

degree. My involvement in the NPDE programme was part of the reasons I saw a need to register and further my studies.

I gained a lot of experience in working with FP teachers who were tutors in this programme. This contributed to my professional development, as I gained an understanding of how unqualified teachers struggle with content and pedagogical knowledge (Shulman, 1987).

The teachers employed as tutors in the programme were from the province of KZN and part of the Eastern Cape. The programme was an eye-opener for me, as I learnt about the difficulties FP teachers encountered in their classrooms. If these tutors were struggling to understand some FP concepts, how did they teach their learners? I was in a position where I helped teachers to gain more content knowledge.

My role as a module co-ordinator was to share skills with tutors on how best they could facilitate the programme. On most of Saturdays, I had to visit different learning centres within the province and in other part of Eastern Cape. My visits were based on support and guidance for tutors in those areas who were facilitating the programme. Through being the co-ordinator, I learnt that even though tutors were qualified teachers, they still needed to gain more knowledge and further training on Foundation Phase concepts.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I narrated and reflected on my lived experiences as a teacher, a teacher educator, and a subject advisor. I included significant artefacts to illustrate the different phases of my life that contributed to my personal and professional growth. I highlighted periods where I grew and those where I struggled to grow. There were also some professional development opportunities that I did not use because of ignorance. Through sharing my stories, I became more empathetic towards the frustrations that teachers and subject advisors face when they are not offered adequate professional guidance and support.

My chosen artefacts “provided a useful and convenient lens through which I looked back to how I became a [subject advisor], looked deep into my experiences that informed my current work” (Weber & Mitchell, 2004, p. 980). Presenting these artefacts, assisted me in looking into my background of becoming a subject advisor, and will help me to face the future with more self-insight. As Samaras (1998, p.13) highlighted, “teaching is social, personal and culturally

transmitted". Retracing my personal history made me realise that I lacked social interaction and mediation as a novice teacher, which was necessary for my professional development.

Reviewing and presenting significant experiences of my life assisted me in understanding the events that shaped my life. Narrating my personal history helped me in understanding myself and my experiences concerning professional teacher development. O'Connor and Moletsane (2009, p. 43) believe that "there is a need for human beings to tell the story of their own lives as they experienced it". Telling my stories enabled me to revisit my past and make new meanings from the experiences I had. The process helped me to better comprehend the way I react to my practice as a subject advisor. I recognised how my past experiences have influenced my thinking and my practice.

In the next chapter, Chapter Four, I describe how I engaged subject advisors in conversations to continue to respond to my first research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of subject advisors in relation to CPTD?* The discussions assist me in reflecting on the challenges that other subject advisors encounter concerning CPTD and on the solutions they have developed. The conversations also led me to reason, question myself, and become more critical about my practice.

CHAPTER FOUR:
LOOKING AT THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF SUBJECT ADVISORS

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I looked at how I was shaped by the experiences and circumstances that I met in my professional career as a teacher, teacher educator, and subject advisor. I reflected on my own learning to understand the process of my personal and professional development. I acknowledged how my past experiences have affected my thinking and my practice as a subject advisor.

In this chapter, I continue to respond to the first research question that gives direction to this study: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of subject advisors in relation to CPTD?* As explained in Chapter Two, to elicit and gather more information, I had conversations with individual subject advisors who are responsible for the FP (Grades R–3). A social constructivist theoretical outlook helped me to understand how subject advisors construct professional development meanings that they share with teachers. A sociocultural theoretical viewpoint helped me take notice of subject advisors' diverse sociocultural backgrounds and environments.

As discussed in Chapter Two, I managed to involve one subject advisor from my District and then decided to invite other subject advisors from other Districts. In the end, this worked very well for the study, as I came to know and understand more about subject advisors' lived experiences within and across Districts.

4.2 Conversations with individual subject advisors

As subject advisors from 12 Districts, we meet once a quarter at a central venue decided by the Head Office. Usually, we spend two or three days deliberating about FP matters, including the implementation of the prescribed curriculum. I used the opportunity of a quarterly meeting to talk with other subject advisors' after-hours to explain my research. I targeted only two subject advisors from other Districts, Toto[1] and Mrs Wright, because already one subject advisor from

[1] As explained in Chapter Two, pseudonyms have been used for all the names of districts and the names of subject advisors.

my District, Mrs Blose, was willing to meet with me on weekends (as explained in Chapter Two).

I was excited. At last, I had found two more subject advisors who were willing to share their lived experiences with me. However, I was aware that it was going to be costly because I would have to travel to their Districts, which are far from mine.

I met three times with each subject advisor. For the first meeting I met all three of them at the same time. This meeting took place after-hours during the provincial forum. At that initial meeting, I explained my research topic and process, gave them consent forms (see Appendix A), and described what would happen in our subsequent meetings. I explained that all our discussions would be audio-recorded so that it would be easier for me afterward to capture the essential points.

As explained in Chapter Two, the three subject advisors asked not to do the drawings and collages as I had planned because they felt it was going to take too much time. I wanted them to take part in the arts-based activities but had to respect their concerns.

It was vital for me to know and understand the teaching experience of subject advisors because they practiced as teachers before their promotion to subject advisors. So, at that first meeting, we discussed our qualifications, our teaching experience in the FP, and where we had completed our qualifications. First, I shared information about my qualifications, including the experience I had with the FP at different levels. That helped the others to open up and share their expertise in the FP as well as their qualifications (See table 2.1 in Chapter Two). I discovered that the subject advisors had a wealth of experience in working with FP teachers.

At the second meeting with each subject advisor, I had an in-depth one-on-one conversation with each one in her own District. As narrated in the following sections of this chapter, we discussed their lived experiences of conducting CPTD. I also wanted us to revisit and discuss our roles and responsibilities as subject advisors. I felt that, at times, we might take it for granted that we understand our work because we have been in the system for an extended period.

For the third meeting, I took advantage of the provincial meeting to meet with each subject advisor individually again. I gave each subject advisor my transcription of our recorded conversation for her to read and make comments. I asked them to tell me if they disagreed with anything they saw. I explained to them that I would not be adding any new information but could take out some parts of the discussion if they did not feel comfortable with anything that I had transcribed. However, each one indicated that the transcript accurately reflected our conversation and that nothing needed to be left out.

It worked very well for me to recall and reflect on my own experiences of developing as a teacher, teacher educator and subject advisor (see Chapter Three) before having conversations with the other subject advisors. Some of the questions I asked the subject advisors were informed by my new understanding of my own history. I prepared the same fundamental questions for all subject advisors, but, in the end, some subject advisors were asked additional questions that were prompted by their responses. In particular, Toto, at times, responded to a question by posing a further question. So, my conversation with her was longer than the others.

4.2.1 Nandi District (Mrs Blose)

Mrs Blose was from Nandi District, and she met with me during weekends. We began our first conversation by discussing our roles and responsibilities as subject advisors. Mrs Blose was clear about our obligations of conducting workshops and supporting teachers in schools.

Our meeting happened during a time when a new programme was introduced in the FP, to enhance teaching and learning. This was the English First Additional Language (FAL) programme. Not all schools had to do it, but it was to be piloted in a few schools. The FAL programme had a training manual that laid out step by step what workshop facilitators needed to do. It included a variety of activities that teachers must be involved in.

Mrs Blose found the FAL programme exciting. When I asked her to share with me her lived experiences of CPTD, she specifically discussed English FAL workshops. Mrs Blose explained that subject advisors were introduced to and trained for this programme by the DBE, and they liked it because it came with its own schedule of pre-planned weekly activities. During training, there were also group activities to check teachers' understanding. I realised that Mrs Blose was very taken by the English FAL programme. This was highlighted in this conversation:

> **Me:** *During training, how do you check as a facilitator, whether teachers are following and understanding what they are expected to do in their classrooms?*
>
> **Mrs Blose:** *When I realise that teachers are not following or understanding what I am explaining, I make them read the document.*

I was a bit puzzled by her response, and I thought back to my own experiences as a young teacher when I was given a scheme book to follow. The Principal of the school would instruct teachers on what to do, and we had to do it without any deviations (see Chapter Three). I remembered how it felt to be in a space where I did not have a voice as a teacher. I then asked Mrs Blose a straightforward question.

> **Me:** *What is it that you and teachers read from the document?*
>
> **Mrs Blose:** *Everything that is important, that we are discussing 'about' on that workshop, things that they seem not to understand when you explain.*
>
> **Me:** *Do you think that reading from the document helps teachers to understand the content better? Is there no other way, method or strategy that is simpler, that you can use for teachers to grasp the content fast?*

The reason for me further exploring Mrs Blose's statement was because the teachers had complained that attending workshops was a waste of time, as some facilitators (subject advisors) just read the document aloud to them. However, Mrs Blose seemed to believe that if teachers read the document together with her, they would understand it better.

> **Mrs Blose:** *We also make sure that teachers work in groups, discuss and then report back, as they are engaged in group activities.*
>
> **Me:** *Explain more, how do you group teachers if you have more than 70 participants in one room?*
>
> **Mrs Blose:** *We look into the programme, and each subject advisor choses her slots (what we are going to share with teachers) that she is comfortable to facilitate.*

I felt that this response was not clear, as she gave seemingly contradictory statements. When I asked her again about the challenge of overcrowding during workshops, she changed her account:

Mrs Blose: *Each subject advisor will have her own group of teachers to the workshop.*

Mrs Blose further explained that in each venue, they book at least four different classrooms and each subject advisor will facilitate in one room. As I reflected on this conversation, I wondered if Mrs Blose wanted everything to look good on the part of the subject advisors. Even though my questioning was not about fault-finding, I wanted us as subject advisors to think back on the workshops that we had planned and conducted and to do self-introspection, to check where we had made mistakes and learn from.

Mrs Blose also alluded to the fact that workshops at the Indoni Circuit and Umthebe Circuit are uncontrollable in terms of numbers. Too many teachers come to one venue, and then the workshop is not manageable. Mrs Blose also raised the issue of late-coming and early departure when teachers attended these PDPs. Teachers will tell the advisor that they use one form of transport that leaves at a specific time, that they have to catch to reach home.

Me: *Share with me how do subject advisors prepare for these professional development programmes?*

I wanted to check on the level of understanding of the content to be imparted to teachers. Since only one subject advisor per District will go to the DBE for training, when they came back, they train other subject advisors in a cascading model of instruction. I had to ask questions for more clarity. I wanted Mrs Blose to further explain whether, when they come back from the DBE, they do mock training as subject advisors before they go out and train teachers. Mrs Blose did not respond to my question. I saw that she appeared uncomfortable, as she kept quiet and looked at me astonished. So, I then moved to ask about teacher participation:

Me: *Tell me more about the participation of teachers during these workshops.*
Mrs Blose: *Teachers from schools where the medium of instruction is English participate well and they are very sharp and quick in understanding.*
Me: *What about teachers from rural areas as well as those teaching in townships? Do they participate well in workshops?*
Mrs Blose: *I believe that teachers were understanding everything during the workshop, but the problem was that when we visited schools to check curriculum coverage, some*

teachers are not following the policy. Some don't even bother to do workbooks supplied by National Department with learners. They give learners workbooks to take home, like homework. These workbooks complement teaching and learning, and teachers are expected to monitor learners' work and sign them. This will also help them to see the progress of learners: who were the high-flyers on certain activities and which learners are struggling and need more intervention.

Me: *What do you do about that as a subject advisor?*

Mrs Blose: *The challenge with our own schools is that some teachers are not thoroughly doing their work. During workshops, they come late and leave early. When you visit schools to check on the implementation of policies, teachers come with so many excuses for documents being stolen or there was a burglary or they have forgotten their files at home.*

Nevertheless, Mrs Blose did acknowledge that she believed that at times subject advisors do not prepare thoroughly when going to conduct workshops. They do not give clear direction to teachers, and hence teachers are doing different things in the schools.

4.2.1.2. Reflecting on my conversation with Mrs Blose

I was aware that Mrs Blose has years of experience in the FP as an educator and a subject advisor. She has experience in management at a school level as a Principal. From my experience, very few Principals have subjects that they teach – they are more concerned about managing their schools. Although policy requires them to do at least 1% or 2% teaching or to be a class teacher if the need arises, it is difficult for them to do so because of the management workload. During her 11 years of being a Principal, Mrs Blose was not in touch with the classroom because her school was massive. She was then promoted to be an FP subject advisor. She joined us at the District and was very enthusiastic about learning how things were done.

Mrs Blose explained how they organised workshops for FP teachers. However, she was not explicit in explaining her lived experience of CPTD. As much as I knew that there were challenges during workshop sessions, for her, everything was normal. She said she preferred to talk about ex-Model C schools – that teachers understood the content, but when in their schools, some do not practice what they have been taught. I asked her to tell me about her experiences when doing school visits, and this was when she voiced out her frustrations: "*Some ex-Model C schools do their own things, not following the curriculum*". Mrs. Blose blamed

teachers and some schools where the medium of instruction is IsiZulu, saying that teachers will tell you different stories as to why they are not prepared and do not have documents, such as that the classroom is used as a church on weekends. She said that no preparation was done and some teachers complained that they were too old and tired. I wanted Mrs. Blose to tell me more about the challenges. But, maybe because we worked together, she did not want me to believe subject advisors in my District were not managing CPTD well.

After talking with Mrs Blose, I reflected on how, for us as subject advisors to improve and grow in our practice, we need to see and acknowledge and learn from our mistakes. We need to take negative criticism, to acknowledge our weaknesses as pointed out by the teachers, and learn more from that. I felt terrible because I knew and understood how our District conducted these PDPs. The workshops were held without doing practical demonstrations. Subject advisors encouraged teachers to form clusters to share ideas. But, those clusters were not closely monitored. If, as subject advisors, we do not realise that there is a problem, there will be no change. The schools, teachers, and learners will not grow. The education system will never improve unless subject advisors change the way they conduct CPTD programmes.

4.2.2 Mvubu District (Toto)

My discussion with Toto, subject advisor for Mvubu District, happened in her office, after lunch. She wrote a big note in her door: '*Meeting in progress, please don't disturb*'. I was happy because I saw that she took our discussions very seriously.

This time, I thought it was wise to say to Toto that we were going to have conversations about how we conduct CPTD programmes. This was because Mrs Blose did not elaborate on this in our discussion. I was aware that I had to try to involve Toto in discussion and ask follow up questions to get more information.

After explaining my research topic again to Toto, we started our conversation. I asked her to share her views on the responsibilities of a subject advisor. Toto was very articulate in describing the duties of a subject advisor. At some points during our conversation, she even took over my position as a researcher, and she asked me questions relating to CPTD. I did not want to discourage her, as I found that her questions were giving more clarity to our discussion.

I then asked her:

> **Me:** *Tell me more about your lived experiences of CPTD programmes and how you involve your participants?*

Toto first expressed her frustrations about the process of inviting teachers to these workshops. She mentioned that only one invitation will be written and signed by the District director. The invitation has different venues and different circuits, dates and times of the workshop. She felt that this was confusing. She continued to say:

> **Toto:** *Most teachers arrive late, so late-coming in workshops has become a norm, irrespective of how you have motivated teachers, transport is a problem. And. Heads of Departments (HoDs) don't even attend these workshops, yet they are expected to monitor and give guidance to teachers at a school level.*
> **Me:** *Do you invite HoDs to attend the same workshops as teachers?*
> **Toto:** *Yes, we do, because we want HoDs to know and understand what teachers are taught and expected to do in their classroom with the learners.*
> **Me:** *Have you thought of conducting a separate workshop for HoDs?*
> **Toto:** *If you have separate workshops, teachers do as they like, and they will insist that they were told in the workshop to do that; HoDs will have no knowledge nor control of that situation. There are HoDs' meetings where I talk about the management of classes in the FP.*

After this, I felt like I was now a participant when Toto asked me questions and, at the same time, gave solutions. For example, Toto said: *"How can you monitor something and give proper guidance on something that you don't even understand or know?*" Toto explained that most primary schools now have appointed males as Principals, and, in her view, they do not take FP (Grades R–3) seriously. Most of them have knowledge and experience teaching in Senior Secondary Schools. *"These Principals don't have a vision and do not take Grade R seriously as they do not see it as a foundation"*, explained Toto. *"You then find that Grade R teachers are loose cannons, as nobody cares what is supposed to be done at the school level, yet we boast and say we are building a strong foundation for our nation"*.

Toto said: "*The very same learners are expected to perform well the following year in Grade 1, and how do you assure that?"* At that moment, I felt like Toto was attacking me with her

questions, but she was venting her frustrations as a subject advisor, which all of us, I guess, experience at some point.

I asked, *"During training, how do you check whether teachers were following the programme?"* Toto responded by saying, *"it is important that as you facilitate, you ask questions to check whether teachers' are still following the discussion"*.

> **Me:** *Since your District is more rural, at what time do you start your workshops?*
> **Toto:** *We can't have teachers for the whole day, as it is difficult for teachers to leave their learners unattended.*

Toto mentioned that the timing of the workshops was not right, and that teachers do not attend if you plan training on Saturdays. She further explained that as a subject advisor, you are expected to start the workshop at 13h00, and yet teachers expect to be dispersed by 14h30 because of transport problems. *"You cannot blame them as there is only one form of transport that brings them to school and takes them back home"*, said Toto. Mvubu District, where Toto is based, is very rural, and schools are far from each other.

> **Toto:** *What can you achieve in such a limited time? We find it difficult to engage with teachers on important content issues.* [I felt as if she was expecting me to give her an answer.]

Toto further explained that another problem was teachers not attending the whole session. If it was a two-day workshop, some teachers would come on the first day and not participate on the second day. Some teachers knew very well that was not a full-day training, and would also ask to leave early because of personal commitments. Toto said, *"Teachers do not take workshops seriously and take advantage of leaving early when they are not in their schools".* To me, this showed that she was frustrated by the way things are done in the Department.

> **Me:** *Share with me about the behaviour of teachers during your CPTD programmes.*

> **Toto:** *At times I witness teachers not participating, not paying full attention but fiddling with their cell phones, laughing while the session is still on, and as a facilitator, you don't know why. For me, that shows that they were not listening. Teachers feel that the*

subject advisor must be the one who is telling them everything. Teachers do this irrespective of the fact that ground rules are laid down before the workshop started. The challenge is overcrowding in some circuits regardless of how we try to invite schools as per their wards. Teachers are all connected, so they share information through their cell phone messages.

I then moved the focus back to the subject advisors. I asked, "*In your District, how do you ensure subject advisors are ready with relevant content knowledge before conducting CPTD programmes?"*

Toto: *I don't think our junior subject advisors plan adequately and prepare enough to conduct the workshop. How can you as a subject advisor, talk about, for example, a weather chart and how it is used in a classroom situation, without bringing the concrete example of this weather chart you are talking about? How can you tell teachers the difference between group reading and shared reading, when you are not even doing demonstrations with practical examples? Subject advisors must lead from the front, lead with examples. If a subject advisor talks about classroom organisation, she needs to set up a class for the teachers to see, for example, how group work is being done, how each area is utilised. No theory, everything must be practical".*

As I sat there listening to her, I wished that all of the subject advisors could open up something like a subject advisors' professional community of practice, where we could professionally develop each other.

Me: *What do you think must be done?*
Toto: *All subject advisors, when they workshop teachers, they must set up an ideal classroom, where she/he will use practical examples and demonstrate to the teachers".*

Toto reminded me of an old proverb as she said: *"If you tell me, I will forget, if you show me, I will remember, but if you involve me, I will understand*." She emphasised the importance of subject advisors using practical examples when conducting CPTD.

Toto: *It shows maturity on the side of the subject advisors to go all out and do research about the content topic you want to talk about. An advisor can even tap on experienced*

> *teachers to help sharpen her skills. We don't have to pretend to be Foundation Phase experts, yet our teachers are struggling at the school level, and we are unable to fully guide and assist them.*

Toto raised an excellent point when she said, "*How do you expect teachers to implement correct curriculum policy if we as subject advisors don't understand it, and we don't do it justice during workshops?"*

> **Me:** *Can you explain what you meant by 'justice' in this discussion?*
> **Toto:** *If teachers don't understand the concept the subject advisor is explaining during the workshop, how are they going to teach learners?*

This reminded me of how Bantwini (2011, p. 10) pointed out that "what complicates teachers' challenges is the facilitation approach used by District officials". Teachers complain about the lack of clarity after they have presented as a group during their workshops. The groups will comment on each other's presentations, but the facilitator must give final comment or clarity – but that does not always happen.

As my discussion with Toto developed, she raised significant issues related to CPTD programmes. At times she would ask me to discuss the specific problems about CPTD, and, before I could agree, already she was addressing that issue. I did not want to discourage her by ignoring her requests. Hence in what follows, there are some issues that I did not discuss with the other two subject advisors. Toto was the one now acting as a researcher asking her own questions, and I became a participant. I have included these matters because they are related to my research focus, and they contributed to my learning. For instance:

4.3.2.1 The impact of poor facilitation of workshops for teachers

It was quite interesting to hear another subject advisor speaking candidly about our performances as subject advisors. For instance, Toto said to me, *"Let's talk about the consequences of poor workshops"*, and then said:

> *In some schools, teachers do not implement curriculum policy because nobody is monitoring what they do. There is no guidance, no support. Some HoDs, as I explained earlier on, don't attend workshops even if they are invited, and yet they are not sure*

what to monitor. How do you give support when you were not there? There is poor leadership, poor guidance, and that shows in teachers who are not self-driven.

This was a reminder to me that if workshops are not conducted and followed-up effectively, teachers do not gain anything. This discussion made me even more aware of the issues that necessitate our attention if we intend to improve CPTD programmes.

4.2.2.2 What can be done to change the situation?

I asked Toto what she thought could be done to change the situation. Toto became emotional as she spoke. I could see it in her facial expression and the tone of her voice.

> **Toto:** *We must not blame teachers for our failure to do our work. The Department inherited unskilled people in the Foundation Phase field. Our Department must do an audit of all personnel. The Department must give subject advisors a chance to choose to go where they will perform better. You can't just put anyone in the Foundation Phase who can't even develop material for learners, who don't even have an interest in young learners at heart.*
>
> *You can't expect a Senior Phase Mathematics teacher to function adequately in the Foundation Phase. Foundation Phase is a specialised phase that needs to be dealt with by specialised dedicated people because we are laying a solid base. Foundation Phase advisors need to know how to develop teaching and learning materials. They also need thorough reskilling, although it's going to take more time.*
>
> *Teachers and subject advisors, including HoDs can be pulled out of their job maybe for a month to be reskilled. The Department can hire locum teachers for that particular month to take care of learners.*

Toto continued and indicated that if this was well planned, teachers would have taught and locums (temporary teachers) would be reinforcing the concepts that the learners have already learnt. She also recommended that subject advisors could also regularly visit FP classes in the high functioning ex-Model C schools across the province, to see what is being done.

Toto also emphasised that learners in the FP are still fragile and need proper guidance, support, and a strong foundation. Teachers who deal with these learners must know and understand that as they interact with them.

4.2.2.3. Reflecting on my conversation with Toto

Toto was talking from her heart. She was concerned about what is happening in terms of CPTD. She was very assertive and had a vision of what attributes an FP subject advisor should have. She told me that she does not conduct the same workshops for all teachers, but looked at the target group and decided which concepts to deal with. She gave the example that as a subject advisor, you cannot be calling together teachers from affluent schools who network with well-known private schools and conduct a workshop on classroom organisation or how to do group work. Instead, as a subject advisor, you must be learning from them, that is, the sharing of good practices.

Toto is well organised, and shared with me that at the beginning of the year, she compiles one circular that has different dates and venues for the whole year. I found this interesting. I was happy to see that some Districts are so organised. She further explained that the topics for those workshops are based on the teachers' needs that have been ascertained during school visits. This was one lesson that I took from her because then teachers will know well beforehand when to attend workshops and what concept that will be dealt with.

Throughout our conversation, Toto stated proverbs, which I found motivating and relevant to our discussion. I wanted Toto to go on and not to stop sharing her lived experiences of CPTD. I was quite relieved when I saw that I was not the only one getting frustrated with how these programmes were conducted. How I wished we were sharing these insights with a person in a higher position, who could listen and make changes.

In talking with Toto, I was reminded that it is our responsibility as subject advisors to change the mindsets and attitudes of teachers to CPTD. Teachers will not become experts in teaching the subjects if ongoing assistance from subject advisors on professional development is not provided (Bantwini, 2011). Teachers must be carefully supported in their schools to improve teaching and learning.

I also thought that we subject advisors can improve and make a difference in our own space when we work together honestly and assist each other. It is essential to know and accept your weaknesses because if you work on them, they become your strongholds.

4.2.3 Emalahleni District (Mrs Wright)

Mrs Wright was a subject advisor from Emalahleni District, which mostly includes schools from very disadvantaged, rural communities and only a few from the urban areas. Mrs Wright is a white woman and taught Grade R in one of the advantaged preschools at Emalahleni for 18 years. She was willing to share her lived experiences with me as she believed that at times it heals and improves your practice if you listen to other people's challenges and also share yours.

When we started our conversation, I asked, "*Can you share with me your lived experiences of conducting CPTD programmes and how you involve your participants in your District*". Mrs Wright started by explaining her views on what might have caused teachers not to understand during CPTD programmes. The other questions were prompted by her responses because I needed more clarity. What follows are her opening remarks about her lived experience.

> **Mrs Wright:** *As a Grade R teacher, I was concerned that I would not be able to capacitate adults effectively, and I did not have appropriate facilitation skills. I was also concerned about the language barrier and teachers' understanding of the policy documents*.
>
> **Me:** *Understanding your weakness, share with me what did you do differently during your workshops?*
>
> **Mrs Wright:** *I planned pieces of training and presentations very carefully. I did a lot of research and reading of policies, making sure there were lots of practical activities and use of resources (many made and some bought). It was time-consuming and very tiring but effective. I built in opportunities for teachers to ask questions and also demonstrate their own ideas.*
>
> **Me:** *Did that help you, and what was the evidence that teachers were following and understanding what they were expected to do in their classrooms?*

Mrs Wright wanted to talk more freely about her lived experiences of CPTD, and I realised that asking her questions while talking was disturbing her. So, I decided to listen and give her more time to share her story after asking her a question.

> **Me:** *Share with me how subject advisors prepare for these professional development programmes?*
>
> **Mrs Wright:** *I used lots of simple ideas to explain the concepts and used practical ideas, e.g., size, bring different size bottles, length using hand sizes. The more opportunities I had to train and also share with other subject advisors at meetings, I developed a greater sense of focus and purpose and gained confidence in my ability. I realised through some frustrating events that to try and teach too many ideas and concepts just causes confusion and can also be an 'overload' of information. As I analysed teachers' needs, we were able to develop focused training, i.e., Maths concepts or Assessment. This was received very well by teachers because it was 'hands-on' to help with what they needed to implement. I also realised that it was important to include different learning styles, practical, visual, etc. This enabled me to reach the teachers effectively.*
>
> **Me:** *Share with me about the behaviour of teachers during the workshop, including their participation*.
> **Mrs Wright:** *Teachers are not on the same level, in terms of understanding, experience, and qualifications. Some teachers will sit quietly in the workshop, not participating, and you will think they are following. Then, when you visit their schools, you find that it is difficult for them to implement the correct curriculum. Some will be busy with their cell phones during the workshop just because they are confused and not understanding.*
> **Me:** *How do you check and ensure teachers' understanding after the workshop?*
> **Mrs Wright:** *The use of evaluations for workshops. I took the time to read these and tried to build in recommended practical changes, i.e., 'Not comments about no food!'*

I smiled and responded by sharing with Mrs Wright (who looked surprised) that, in my experience, with most teachers, the first comments will be about the distasteful food or shortage

of food – understanding of the content will be the last thing (if you are lucky) that they will talk about.

Mrs Wright then stated that the training team feedback session helped her to focus on her individual issues (weaknesses), i.e., timekeeping and preparation, but also what worked well or did not work effectively.

She went on to explain that she recognised that although training and capacitation are essential to teachers' growth and development, there has to be support and monitoring that must be done simultaneously. She further reiterated that when teachers are trained in groups, it 'seems' that they all understand, but when you visit them on-site and individually, they require support in different areas. Some are not able to implement at all, and therefore individual capacitation is vital, as is the support and monitoring team within the school.

> **Me:** *How did you ensure that HoDs on-site monitor and support teachers*?
> **Mrs Wright:** *Over the last couple of years, where training has become more challenging to implement, we have had to become creative to ensure our teachers are supported. Therefore, capacitation of Foundation Phase HoDs and Principals has become part of our training programme. If these key role players work together, teacher development is continuous and effective.*

Thus, Mrs Wright highlighted another layer of training, the importance of developing the School Management Team (HoDs and principals)**.** I thought it was an excellent idea as teachers would receive more support.

It was also good to hear from Mrs Wright that there is one circuit where they do activity-orientated workshops because teachers are battling with theory; they had to do a lot of repetition through the training and slow the pace.

> **Mrs Wright:** *I have learnt to have planning and dry run sessions before the workshops. This is where we decide on what content to put into the workshop and what resources to use. This helps my subject advisors to build up content knowledge and how to present that content knowledge to teachers.*

I discovered that different Districts do things differently. One advantage is that the Emalahleni District has few schools and teachers compared to others. In the Emalahleni District, as well as Mvubu District, they are allowed to take teachers out of school for the whole two or three days. Their teachers have the advantage of receiving more hours of training, compared to the teachers from Nandi District that attend from one o'clock and then at half-past two are leaving because of transport problems.

Both Mrs Wright and Toto expressed their appreciation that I cared about the professional development of our teachers. To illustrate:

> Mrs Wright: *I feel relieved and very proud that we still have people like you, whose interest is on the improvement and developing teachers professionally. Your study is very important; I wish it could be shared with top management.*

I felt humbled by Mrs Wright's comment.

4.2.3.1. Reflecting on my conversation with Mrs Wright

Mrs Wright has a wealth of experience as a teacher and a subject advisor. And so, I felt relieved when Mrs Wright acknowledged that she was initially lacking in facilitation skills and explained how she had improved over time. She also told me that when she had to speak to her teachers in English, she spoke slowly and used simple words. She added that she was compelled by the situation to learn to speak isiZulu.

It was exciting to hear from another subject advisor that they hold feedback meetings after the workshop and discuss what they thought went well or was not sufficient, including reading the evaluation forms. That is when, as subject advisors, they discuss changes or ways to improve their methods of facilitating workshops.

Although her District is more rural and disadvantaged in terms of infrastructure and resources, Mrs Wright made an effort to do things differently to benefit the teachers. All of this showed me that she was not focusing on the teachers as a problem but had done self-introspection, which all of us subject advisors must do. Both Mrs Wright and Toto showed a passion for their job and offered solutions on how to deal with challenges. They have tried different strategies

and have used those which they believe are working for them, and are also catering to teachers' needs.

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented my learning about the lived experiences and perspectives of three subject advisors regarding CPTD. I elaborated on the conversations with subject advisors, explaining their feelings, thoughts, and suggestions on CPTD programmes. These conversations with other subject advisors were eye-opening for me. I felt ready to change some of the practices I had been doing and to venture on to new ideas that would help FP teachers to learn and develop.

I realised that as a subject advisor, I had sacrificed many things and worked endlessly, but I mostly worked independently of others. I saw a need for subject advisors to work collaboratively with each other and with teachers in developing and sharing helpful practices. Social constructivist learning theory helped me comprehend how significant it was to create an environment where subject advisors could construct their own knowledge and understanding of professional development. In the conversations I had with subject advisors, they could raise their concerns about conducting effective professional development.

I recognised the importance of hard work and commitment on the part of subject advisors. I became more conscious that subject advisors should do research and visit schools that are performing well to tap into their expertise.

In the next chapter, Chapter Five, I move on to responding to my second research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development*?

CHAPTER FIVE: UNDERSTANDING TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES OF CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter Four, I narrated how I engaged three other subject advisors in conversation to assist me in responding to my first research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of subject advisors in relation to CPTD?*

In this chapter, I discuss how I involved FP teachers from three different schools, Montana Junior Primary, Abbib Primary, and Udosi Combined School, in helping me respond to the second research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development?* I share why it was essential for this research for me to establish a rapport with these FP teachers. I include a detailed schedule in table form of the meetings with the FP teachers, and explain why teachers needed to receive this complete schedule at our first meeting.

I include teachers' understandings of what CPTD meant for them, and also present an original definition of professional development by a teacher from each school. I explain how we came up with our working definitions of 'professional development' after looking at similarities and patterns in the teachers' explanations, and how this links with my research question. Lastly, I reflect on my meetings with FP teachers in different schools and explain what the data that emerged meant for my learning as a subject advisor. A sociocultural theoretical standpoint assisted me in understanding teachers' cultural backgrounds and their learning. This also prompted me to note how teachers socialise and interact with each other during CPTD programmes. A social constructivist theoretical stance helped me better understand how teachers will gain more knowledge if they interact with one another using language to construct meaning.

My discussions at Montana Junior Primary and Abbib Junior Primary were in English, as this is their medium of instruction. At the third school, Udosi Combined School, although I conducted my research in English, I was able to code-switch and speak their home language of IsiZulu, to allow the teachers to be comfortable during our discussions. All of our meetings were audio-recorded.

5.2 Importance of establishing rapport with Foundation Phase teachers

It was vital for me to establish a good rapport with the FP teachers. This was important for the smooth running of this research to ensure that teachers felt free to be involved in the dialogue. Teachers knew me as their subject advisor who visited schools to check on learners' work and inspect, monitor and support the implementation of the prescribed curriculum. In the beginning, I was concerned that the formal association that I had with the FP teachers could jeopardise my research. I felt that it was going to be impossible to come to know about teachers' lived experiences of CPTD if I did not create different kind of relationship from the start of our conversations.

Before this research, my experience had been that when I asked teachers what their challenges were, they would keep quiet. I realised that it was essential to explain to the FP teachers which 'hat' I was wearing as I interacted with them so that I could get honest responses. I explained my self-study journey to the FP teachers, to gain their trust and for them to understand my expectations. I wanted the FP teachers to see me as one of the teachers doing her research, not as an official on duty doing a school visit.

On my first research visit to these schools, I had mixed feelings, as I did not yet know who my participants were. I was excited as teachers had accepted my invitation and agreed to be part of my discussions. I was fearful, not knowing whether teachers would be free to talk and discuss their experiences during PDPs.

I introduced myself officially, and explained to the FP teachers the purpose of our gathering and reminded them that anyone was free to withdraw from participating in these discussions at any time. After giving out consent forms (see Appendix B), I explained the reasons why they needed to sign, but that it was not binding. A consent form was an agreement that confirmed that teachers were willing to be my participants in my study. Again, teachers were reminded that they were free to drop out of these discussions anytime if they felt uncomfortable.

I emphasised the issue of confidentiality to the FP teachers and explained that if someone spoke about something very sensitive, whether good or bad, it must remain among us. I explained to the FP teachers that they must feel free to discuss anything with me, that I would not hold a grudge or punish them in any way, but needed their honest comments to help me improve my

practice and do things differently. I assured teachers that I was not going to use their real names, school names, and District or Circuit names in the study.

I shared with teachers that subject advisors are also lifelong learners who do not claim to know everything. Teachers can learn from us, and we can learn from them. I needed everyone to relax and feel free to contribute to our discussions.

I also explained to the FP teachers how this self- study was essential to me as a subject advisor, to improve my own practice. If I improved, I could collaborate with other subject advisors within and across the District. I was hopeful that all subject advisors could enhance their practice when I shared my self-study journey with them.

I discussed with the FP teachers the duration and the number (five) of our meetings. I unpacked all our future meetings by giving teachers a complete schedule for all five days (Table 5.1). This schedule had a breakdown of what would happen in each session. (For all three schools, I planned and conducted the same schedule of meetings).

Then, I negotiated with the teachers about the duration of each session. I had witnessed during our PDPs that we started at 13h00 and teachers became uneasy after 14h30 as they indicated that they were fetching their children from different schools. So, I wanted to avoid that kind of situation. The whole process of explaining and negotiating was necessary for teachers to commit themselves while understanding what they were getting themselves into.

Table 5.1. ***Focus of meetings with FP teachers***

Meetings	**Focus**	**Researcher's actions**	**Teachers' actions**
First meeting (Chapter Five)	▪ Introductions and explaining my research process. ▪ Logistics and dealing with teachers' expectations. ▪ Sharing my research topic with FP teachers.	▪ Clarifying the purpose of our gathering and for the teachers to understand my position of wearing a different cap during the research process. ▪ Deciding on our meeting venues,	▪ Discussions, gaining understanding and confidence in me as an ordinary teacher and a researcher. ▪ Individually teachers writing their own understanding of CPTD. ▪ Teachers coming up with a working definition of CPTD.

	▪ Understanding CPTD.	including the dates, number and time of our meetings. ▪ Sharing what different authors say about "Professional development".	
Second meeting (Chapter Five)	▪ Getting to know individual teachers. ▪ About CPTD programmes.	▪ Conversations about their teaching experience and qualifications. ▪ Examining their understanding of the roles and responsibilities of subject advisors. ▪ Inquiring about different CPTD programmes.	▪ Sharing and discussing the teachers' teaching experience. ▪ Teachers discussing their understanding of the subject advisor's roles and responsibilities. ▪ Teachers narrating about CPTD programmes.
Third meeting (Chapter Six)	▪ Journal entries ▪ Social network ▪ Self-portrait drawing	▪ Recap on our working definition of CPTD. ▪ Explaining about journal entries and why we can use it on our research journey. ▪ Importance of leaving messages about our thoughts and feelings on what we have discussed and+ been engaged on. ▪ Discussion of my self-portrait drawing	▪ Teachers debating about giving views on PDPs through cell phone messages. ▪ Teachers doing their self-portrait drawings followed by discussions.
Fourth meeting (Chapter Seven)	▪ Collage making	▪ Teachers from schools A and B individually making their	▪ Teachers engaged in debate as they were busy doing their collages.

		own collage. School C teachers were engaged in designing a group collage.	
Fifth meeting (six months later)	Re-sharing what I have written about what teachers said about CPTD.	▪ Reading some of their 'voices' during our discussion.	▪ Listening and commenting.

5.3 Our working definitions of professional development

To begin with, I asked teachers to write their own understanding of the term professional development in their own context. Each teacher read and give an explanation of what she understood by "professional development".

At each school, we looked at the similarities and patterns and together came up with one definition. Below, in explaining how these discussions went, I include teachers' voices and their own explanations of how they understood professional development.

5.3.1 Montana Junior Primary School

At Montana Primary, after introducing myself, I asked teachers to introduce themselves, state their names that they would like to be called by and the grade they were teaching. As an icebreaker, I asked teachers to share with us one name that would represent them in all our meetings. I started and said "*Willing to help Mawi"*. Teachers introduced themselves as *"hard-working Kea", "faithful Ellie", "honest Sue", and "committed Micky".* We all laughed and then started our work for the day. To me, this showed that the teachers were feeling comfortable and were likely to be forthright in their responses.

I gave the teachers A4 size paper and a pen and asked them to write their understanding of 'professional development'. I wanted us to have our working definition of professional development so that we could be focused when discussing it in the sessions. It was exciting to see how creative teachers were. Some cut their papers like flowers and wrote about their understanding of what professional development was. Teachers came up with different definitions of professional development, read them aloud, and further explained them very

well. I include a table of the various explanations of professional development by teachers at Montana Junior Primary (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2. ***Teachers' understanding of professional development at Montana Junior Primary School***

Name of the teacher	Definition of 'professional development' as written by the teacher
Micky	I think it's about a teacher being a lifelong learner, which includes furthering studies, workshops, staff development, etc.
Sue	My understanding of Professional development is how you improve yourself so that you perform better with regard to your job description. You can do this by attending courses, employer-initiated training sessions or through a tertiary institution.
Kea	One takes steps to increase one's knowledge and further their understanding of their interest/passion/career to keep up with new trends and become aware of increasing evidence that supports children's learning and issues experience by children in order to better support the child and his/her family through their learning JOURNEY. Steps were taken to further educate oneself through research/reading/ attending talks/networking with others on similar topics of interest so that new knowledge can assist the teacher in planning further support/intervention in the child's best interests It can be PERSONAL professional development, by taking time to REFLECT on yourself, your purpose, your goals and EVALUATING where you are currently and then maybe chatting with others (dialogue) to find common ground and learn new strategies from others, and eventually THINKING CREATIVELY to implement changes or additions in your planning!!
Ellie	Also, we cannot carry ourselves like the way we are at home or with our friends. There are many short discourses and motivational speakers to help us, and these are part of professional development. Also to help a person to uplift himself.

Below, I also include one example of the original definition that was handwritten by Micky (Figure 5.1). I chose Micky's definition because it touched on exactly what I wanted teachers to talk about: "*teachers' lived experiences of continuous professional teacher development*".

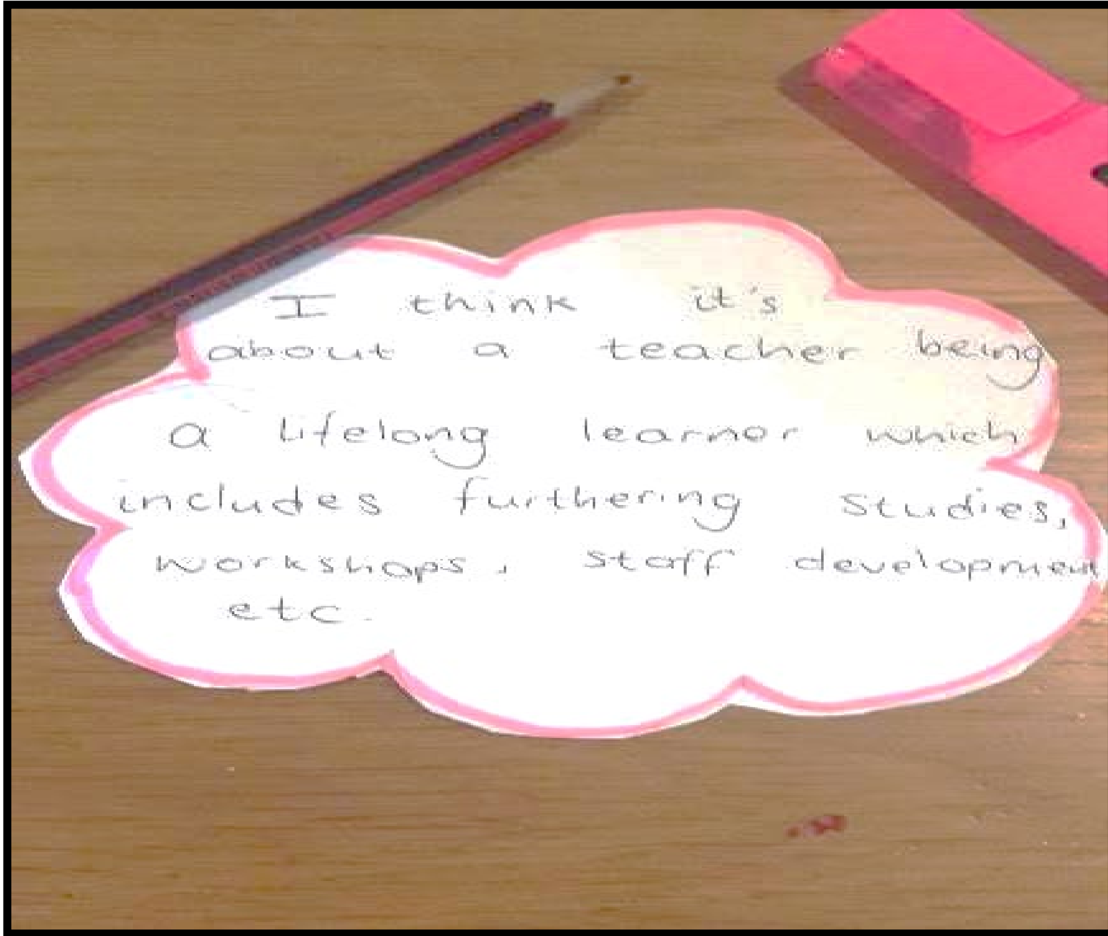


Figure 5.1. ***Micky's original writing about professional development.***

I was excited because some of the teachers were already discussing my research topic. For example, Kea said: *"The workshops that were organised and conducted by my union were much better than the workshops organised and facilitated by the Departmental officials"*.

I did not want to query Kea's statement at that point because I felt that it would open up a lot of debate amongst the group. We still had more sessions to come and would have time to discuss the topic more in-depth.

Ellie supported Kea, by stating that: "*Unions invite fewer teachers and bring experts in that particular subject, unlike the workshops where the Department invited more than 80 teachers in one venue and the subject advisor didn't even know what he/she was talking about. They can't even bother to go and research more about the subject, they just don't care!"*. I deliberately did not comment on the above, because I knew that if I was going to defend subject advisors that would damage the trust that I had just built.

Neither of their definitions was wrong. My aim was to motivate them to speak out and be more involved in future discussions. I asked teachers to read their definitions aloud. As teachers were reading their definitions, I asked them to listen for the most striking or essential words from each individual definition, for all of us to share afterward. Teachers were also asked to paste their definitions on the wall for everyone to see.

I picked up the similarities and some patterns in the teachers' definitions of professional development as they read (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 ***Similarities and pattern observed at Montana Junior Primary School***

Similar words (similarities)	Some patterns
Workshops, furthering studies	Gaining knowledge, keeping abreast of new developments in education assures the better performance of teachers in their classrooms.
Improve yourself Perform better	
Increase knowledge Keep abreast of latest developments New knowledge Support children's knowledge	
Short courses Upliftment	

I asked teachers to come up with one sentence as our working definition, from the keywords we noticed in their definitions. Teachers were hesitant for a while; looking at the time, I chose Sue to look at the definitions and come up with one sentence. Sue responded: *"Professional development is when a person keeps up with new trends to uplift himself by furthering studies, workshops to improve and perform better"*. We all agreed that it was going to be our working definition.

Next, I shared with the teachers what different authors had said about professional development. I explained that the term 'professional development' was widely used, referring to various educational contexts. For example, I shared how Darling-Hammond et al. (2017, p. 2) defined professional development "as structured professional learning that results in changes in teacher knowledge and practices and improvements in student learning outcomes". I emphasised how I firmly believed that if teachers know and understand what to do in their classrooms, the performance of learners improves.

I gave each teacher a copy of what different authors said about professional development. I gave it to them after they had shared their understanding of professional development because I did not want them to copy what the authors said about it. I read the definitions and further clarified some concepts. I chose these authors because what they said was meaningful for the teachers to understand, as they highlight the centrality of teacher' needs and knowledge in professional development:

- Fraser et al. (2007) referred to professional development as an ongoing process of reflection that meets institutional, departmental and teachers' needs.
- Evans (2002) explained professional development as improving teachers' knowledge, skills and practice.
- Earley and Bubb (2004) highlighted professional development as an ongoing process, including formal and informal learning experiences, that improves the knowledge and skills of teachers. The authors emphasised the importance of teachers being involved in CPTD activities to grow their knowledge and skills throughout their careers.

Participants showed interest and wanted to know more about professional development. They asked questions such as if they register and upgrade themselves, will the credits be endorsed by SACE? Will their salary be increased? What will the benefits of doing professional development be? I explained that I believe that professional development must be an ongoing activity for teachers to gain knowledge and grow in the profession.

To close the session, I explained to the teachers that at our next meeting, we would discuss the roles and responsibilities of subject advisors, then share our qualifications and years of experience, including the grades taught. I felt that it was going to help my research process to know more about who these teachers are, their qualifications and years of experience.

I requested my participants to keep a journal of any thoughts and feelings that would come into their minds about what we discussed on the day. These thoughts would be shared amongst the group if they wanted to, or could be submitted to me via email. I kept on reminding them that whatever we had discussed and were going to discuss would remain confidential. I kept on emphasising these issues so that I could earn their trust and for them to know that they were safe to discuss anything with me.

Later on, when I was reflecting on this first meeting, I acknowledged my self-consciousness about some of their comments. I asked myself:

> ***Journal entry (8 September 2016)***
> *How am I going to separate my inner feelings, my beliefs, from what teachers had commented about? Should I agree with them or defend our dignity as subject advisors? I felt hopeless, and I thought about how sensitive my research topic was. I thought it was going to help me to keep calm.*

5.3.2 Abbib Junior Primary School

My session with the teachers at Montana Primary School gave me the confidence to feel ready to deal with questions and address challenges at Abbib Primary School. However, I came to Abbib Primary at a time when they were struggling with assessment and the conversion of marks into the South African School Administration and Management System (SA-SAMS), (Department of Education, 2006). So, to begin with, instead of dealing with my research topic, I found myself explaining how to convert scores and transfer them into SA-SAMS. It took time, and they wanted to involve other teachers as well. I pleaded with my group and promised them that I would invite an official from the Education Management and Information System to visit the school and explain the procedures. I realised that not all teachers had this frustration, but only those in a particular Grade, because they had to include an informal assessment. But, I felt that if I did not address their needs at that specific time, I would not get a positive response from the teachers. And, in the end, the discussions we had on the SA-SAMS helped to get the conversation going. Thereafter, it was not difficult when I had to explain my research journey and their involvement in it.

I followed the same procedure as I had done at Montana Primary of introducing myself and then asking the teachers to introduce themselves and mention the grade they taught. Unfortunately, we did not get time to do the introduction ice-breaker that I had done at Montana, because we spent a lot of time discussing their challenges with the assessment.

The process of the session followed the same basic format as at Montana Primary School. I gave the teachers a piece of paper and pen to write their understanding of CPTD. Teachers looked at each other and were talking aloud, saying there was so much to say, and they did not understand what exactly I wanted. I told them, "Anything that comes first into your mind when

someone mentions 'professional development'". I explained to the teachers that I was not looking for a correct specific answer, but I wanted each of us to have our own working definition. I promised them that there would be no wrong answer.

Sally started the conversation by saying to the others, "*We attended a number of professional development programmes last quarter, some exciting, some boring. Is that what she is looking for?*" I kept on reminding the teachers that we would discuss this topic in more detail in our next session, and what I needed at that moment was their understanding of professional development.

The participants' responses were excellent. Teachers gave different explanations of professional development. Each teacher was given a chance to read her definition.

I noted all the definitions that teachers wrote about their understanding of professional development. In Table 5.4, I present three of the original teacher explanations of professional development, which I chose because of their simplicity and how they related directly to my research question.

Table 5.4. ***Teachers' writings about professional development at Abbib Primary School***

Name of the teacher	Definition of 'professional development' as written by the teacher
Tamia	Professional development is the knowledge and expertise you gain through your working experience. Could be through the workshop and courses you have attended, could also be through networking with other professionals and also through keeping abreast with developments within your field of work
Sally	It's specialised training intended to help managers, teachers improve their professional knowledge, skills and ongoing effectiveness.
Zodwa	It is when we are doing a noble job and we have to follow the code of conduct. And you have to be aware of what we are doing and how we speak and what we do. We have to be very courteous and understanding to other colleagues. And the way we listen and retaliate to a person's view. Also, the rules and regulations and values have to be adjured to.

I requested teachers to pick up one or two keywords from other teachers' definitions. I wrote those words onto a chart, and together we discussed further what learning we were taking from those words, for example, 'knowledge' and 'skills'. We entered into exciting discussions about the teaching profession and our lives. With each other's help, we explained how we can make

sure that as teachers, we acquire relevant knowledge and skills to help us perform better. I explained how I agreed with Easton (2008) when she emphasised that teachers must continue learning. Easton (2008, p. 775) said teachers need "to move from being trained or developed to become active learners".

As with Montana Primary, I looked at the similarities in teachers' definitions (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5. ***Similarities and patterns in teachers' definitions of professional development at Abbib Primary School***

Similarities in teachers' definitions	Patterns
Knowledge and expertise workshop and courses	Once teachers have knowledge and skills, there is an improvement in their performance, but teachers must continue to learn (lifelong learners)
Knowledge and skills	
Improvement of educator performance	
Information is always updated Lifelong learners	

Below, I present the original writing by Sally on professional development (Figure 5.2). Sally explained professional development as specialised training that helped teachers gain their knowledge and skills.

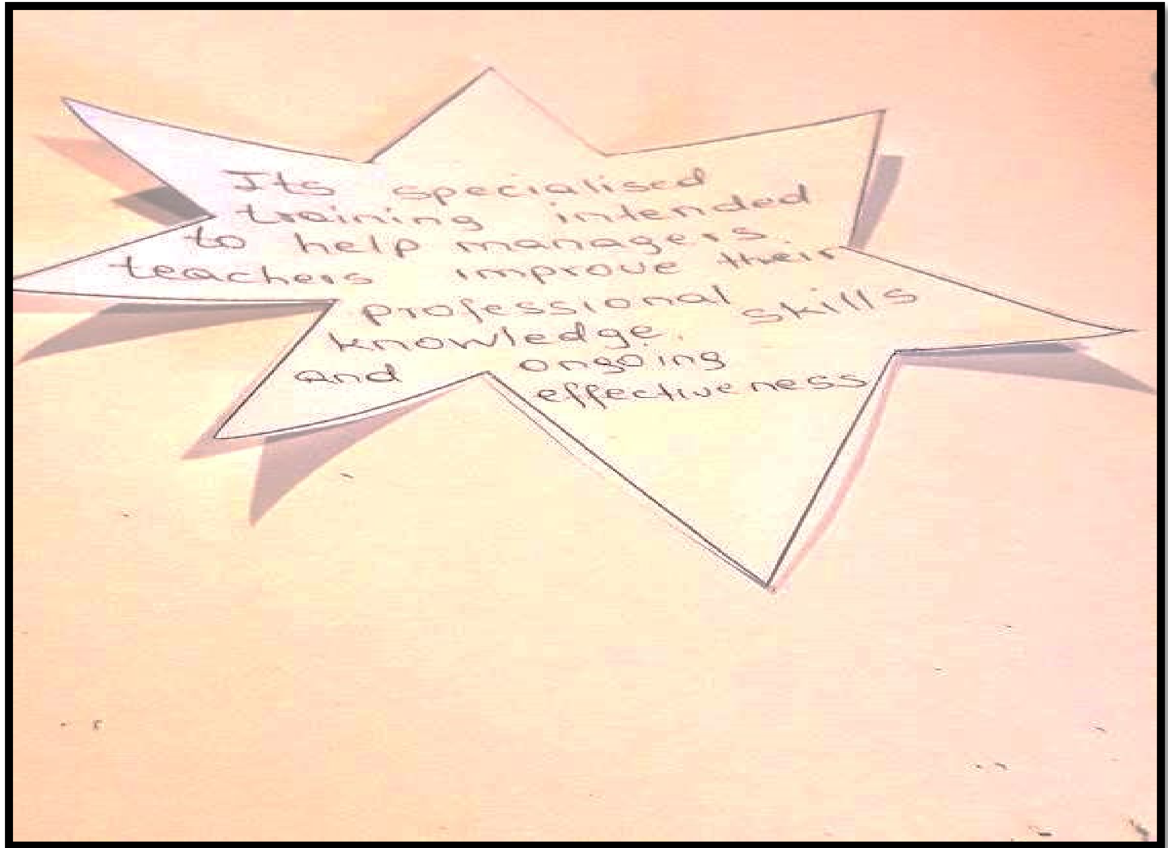


Figure 5.2. ***Sally's original writing on 'professional development'.***

I asked teachers to look at their definitions that they had posted on the wall, and come up with one combined working definition. This took some time. Because I also wanted to share with them what different authors said about professional development, I chose Tamia to give us a definition. She said: "*Professional development was about gaining knowledge and expertise as lifelong learners when you keep abreast of latest development to improve educator performance*". I asked the teachers what could be the latest development that could help us improve our performances as teachers, and Cindy said: "*by attending seminars, conferences and workshops*".

Next, I did what I had done at Montana Primary by giving each teacher a copy of what different authors had said about professional development and we discussed those ideas. Then, the teachers started talking about the quality of the workshops they had attended. I had to remind them that we would have more chance to discuss this in our future meetings. Thereafter, the meeting closed in the same way as the Montana Primary meeting.

5.3.3 Udosi Combined School

At Udosi School, five teachers were present instead of just four as I had originally requested (one for each of the FP grades). The fifth one was the FP HoD. As explained in Chapter Two, this came about because, during my first visit to the school to ask the Principal if I could do research with FP teachers in his school, one from each grade, he agreed but called the FP HoD to assist me. Unlike at the other two schools where teachers volunteered to participate, these teachers were selected by the HoD. The HoD also insisted on being part of the research process so that she would know what the teachers were discussing. I did not have a problem with that, as I felt it would be of benefit to increase the number of people who would be contributing to my discussions. Therefore, instead of four teachers, I ended up with five teachers at Udosi Combined School.

At Udosi Combined School, the setting was very different from the other two schools. When deciding on a venue and dates for our meetings, the teachers mentioned that it was not safe to be on school premises after hours. Udosi Primary School is in a rural area and there is no library close by. The principal decided that we could meet on sports days, which were shorter than regular school days. This meant that our discussions could start early. This arrangement worked well for me, as I knew that the teachers would be less likely to want to leave our sessions early.

After explaining the process of the research journey and assuring the teachers about confidentiality, as discussed with teachers at Montana and Abbib Primary Schools, I introduced myself, restating the purpose of our meeting and allowing teachers to introduce themselves. The HoD started and wanted to introduce everybody, but I politely asked the HOD to let the teachers present themselves.

I gave teachers A4 paper to write down their understanding of professional development. I explained that I wanted all of us to have a working definition and a basic understanding of the term.

There was silence in the room; nobody wanted to start writing. After a few minutes, Thembie said: "*Kahle-kahle mhloli wami sitshele ufuna sibhaleni"* (meaning, "In reality, my advisor tells us; what is it that you expect us to write about professional development?"). At that moment, I thought it would help if I remained calm and started afresh by explaining everything in isiZulu. I explained to the teachers that I was conducting research as part of my study and

reminded them of my research topic. Zola, the HoD, smiled and said, *"ufuna thina sikwenzele umsebenzi wakho?"* (Meaning, "You want us to do your work?") I had to re-explain to the teachers the process of involving others when doing research and what is expected from the researcher to complete her studies. At that time, I saw smiles on the teachers' faces, and I was relieved.

I explained to the teachers that they could relax as there would be no wrong answers and that I wanted teachers to share with me their own understanding of the term 'professional development'. Teachers were encouraged to write anything that came into their minds about 'professional development', and they came up with exciting definitions (Table 5.6). I also encouraged them to write in isiZulu. However, the teachers indicated that it would be challenging to explain specific terms in isiZulu, as at times meaning would be lost.

Table 5.6. ***Teachers' definitions of professional development at Udosi Combined School***

Teacher's name	**Definition of 'professional development' as written by the teacher**
Zola	Improvement of one's knowledge in one's professional field. It is about the exercise that needs to take place on a regular basis in order to keep abreast of changes and new development in one's area of expertise. It can either be formal (lead to qualification) or informal (workshops and seminars).
Thembie	In my own understanding, professional development is whereby you develop yourself as a professional in your institution. You can develop yourself professionally by gaining new skills, which can equip you to be innovative. Professional development is a skill that any worker needs so that you know how to handle yourself in a professional manner within the working environment.
Knox	It is where as a teacher you acquire skills that equip you, to upskill you in order to handle yourself in a professional manner.
Lindy	Professional development is when a teacher takes an informed decision that she needs to be on par with some of the issues and happenings on her field as a teacher, then seeks ways to go and study in order to fulfil the gaps that need to be fulfilled.
Anele	It is ongoing, we are all lifelong learners, we cannot adhere to past, old methods, news, ways of doing things. Modern trends, new methods. Information is always updated. Changing times need to change management. End results are for the betterment of learners.

I asked teachers to read their definitions individually. Their definitions were placed on top of the big round table we were sitting around. Each teacher read her own definition while others sat and listened. I picked up one or two words from the definition, then made a motivating

comment, e.g., “To improve our knowledge and skills”. Then I explained to the teachers that for all of us to grow, we need to be engaged in PDPs.

I quickly looked at similarities and patterns while they were reading and wrote a few words on the A3 blank chart. Each teacher wrote her own definition and individually, each picked up her own important word. We discussed what those words meant for us. Then I asked teachers to compile one sentence using those words, not adding anything. There was silence. Because of the limited time, I came up with a definition from those words, and everyone agreed that the definition covered all their ideas: *“Professional development happens when a teacher keeps abreast with changes, upskills themselves with new development in order to acquire skills and improve one’s knowledge”.*

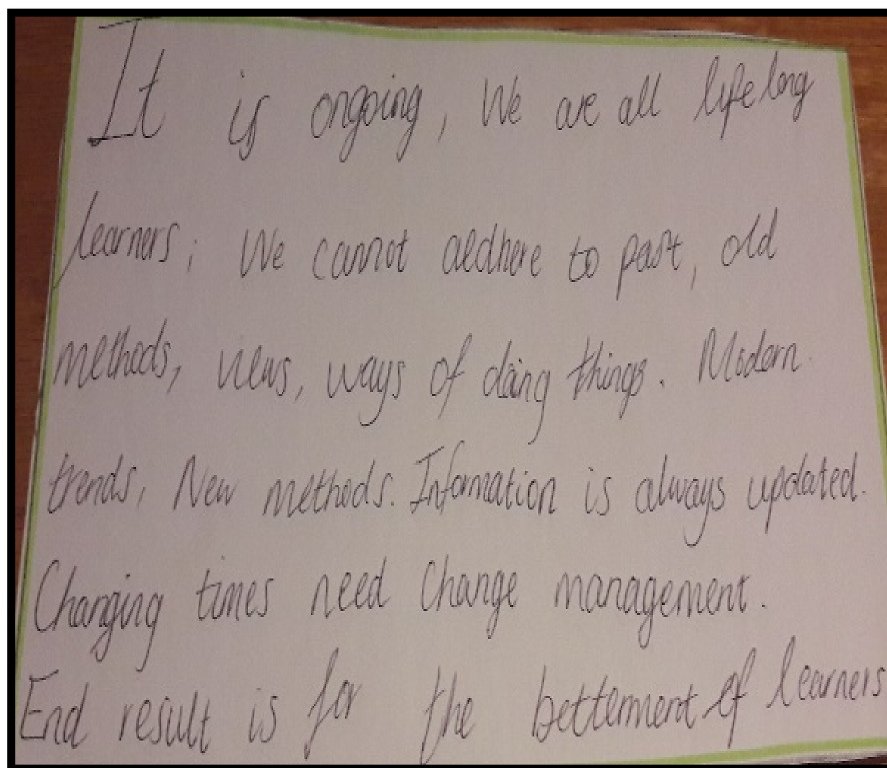


Figure 5.3. ***Anele’s original writing about professional development.***

I included the similarities and patterns that I noticed in teachers’ definitions (Table 5.7).

Table 5.7. ***Similarities and patterns in teachers’ definitions of professional development at Udosi Combined School***

Similarities in teachers’ definitions	Patterns
Keep abreast with changes	
Improvement	

Acquire skills	If teachers keep abreast with the latest developments, they acquire skills and they improve and there is development
Go and study	
Develop yourself	

As I did with the other schools, I gave each teacher a handout about what different authors have said about professional development

During our discussions, it was clear that the teachers knew that they needed support, and hence they were talking about their weaknesses. They were also stressing how important it is to attend PDPs. Anele commented as follows: *"When I had attended the workshops, I came back more confused, not knowing what to do"*. In response to which Zola the HoD made what I felt was a regrettable comment: *"When people don't understand English, they must not say workshops were not helping them".* With a smile, I reminded the teachers that everyone was free to voice their own feelings, and people must not take that personally, as I was not taking it personally.

I learnt that the teachers were frustrated and demotivated about how CPTD programmes were conducted. I took away from this that there was a need for change. On my way driving home, I was thinking about this, which I later reflected on my journal:

Journal entry (8 November 2016)

Why did the HoD insist on being part of my focus group? *I also thought, why as a Department we don't have forums where teachers are given a platform to voice out their concerns? What is the point of us as subject advisors going to schools with the monitoring instruments, checking on curriculum coverage, instead of visiting and understanding from the teachers where they lack, including challenges and their needs?*

At the fifth meeting at Udosi School, about six months later, where I shared what I had transcribed with the teachers, they wanted to add more information and ideas about their lived experiences. This showed me that, after I had left, teachers continued to have conversations about this issue. The teachers realised how important it was to discuss their lived experiences of CPTD with a person who can change things for the better.

5.4 Reflection

Teachers' explanations of their understanding of CPTD across all schools were similar. They highlighted knowledge, gaining new skills, improvement, development, and keeping abreast of changes in the education sector. This showed me that all teachers wanted to acquire skills and knowledge. Teachers were willing to learn. I was excited about this because, as Bantwini (2015, p. 587) asserted, "teachers are the key drivers in transforming the education system from the ground level".

Working in different schools, with different groups of teachers that have their own beliefs and diverse cultures, taught me to accept and understand all of the teachers that I interact with. I recognised that we need to appreciate teachers and acknowledge that they have a wealth of experience and are knowledgeable.

At the Montana and Abbib Schools, how the teachers respected each other showed me that they were familiar with socialising and working together as a team. It was also evident that they attended staff development programmes. For example, when Kea made a comment about well-planned workshops conducted by her union, Nelly supported her by stating that union workshops had limited numbers with not too many teachers in one venue, meaning there was no overcrowding. Teachers in those two schools were also reflecting on their lived experiences of professional development as a team. From this, I appreciated that as subject advisors, we need to involve teachers in collaborative inquiries. It is our responsibility to continuously motivate teachers and give them opportunities to do things together. As Pithouse-Morgan and Samaras (2015) emphasised, teachers need to collaborate with each other and be involved in conversations so that they can have a voice that will help them to improve their professional learning.

I realised that when teachers are involved in hands-on activities, learning happens. In the sessions, the teachers were very creative and came up with different explanations of their understanding of professional development. As reported in Chapter Four, during my discussion with one of the subject advisors, Mrs Blose, she mentioned that when she realised that teachers were not understanding, she made them read the policy document. I made a conscious choice to try not to follow that approach in my meetings with the teachers.

I discovered that I could show maturity when Zola, the HoD, asked me in front of other teachers if I was there to ask them to do my work. I was not expecting such a comment from her, because when I first visited the school to ask the Principal for permission to do the study, she was the one who helped me. I was surprised and disappointed at the same time but did not show my feelings. I replied politely with a smile. From this, I realised that it is essential to understand people when you work with them and to show humility.

My interaction with the teachers made me more aware and understanding of some of their frustrations and needs. Teachers had anger, not against me as an individual, but against the education system that had failed them in some aspects. This gave me the insight to understand teachers better and to understand their attitudes towards subject advisors. During my sessions with the teachers, I was reminded that I needed to be humble, to be calm and to be a good listener. Already I felt like a changed person who must do things differently. And the discussions facilitated my subsequent conversations with the teachers (as described in Chapter Six and Chapter Seven).

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I narrated how I started to learn about the lived experiences of teachers concerning CPTD. In my first meeting at all three schools, I made sure that I established rapport with all of the FP teachers participating in the research. I explained my research topic to the teachers and asked them to sign consent forms if they agreed to be part of the research journey. After teachers had shared their own understanding of professional development, we looked at similarities and patterns and came up with our own working definitions. I also shared with the teachers what different authors have said about professional development.

Our discussions showed me that teachers do understand why they should attend PDPs. I became conscious that at times I had misjudged teachers as not seeing the value of PDPs. The discussions with the teachers helped me to begin to understand their frustrations about how professional development sessions were conducted. A social constructivist theoretical stance helped me see how teachers construct their knowledge and take responsibility for their own learning through collaboration. The teachers' discussions made me realise that professional development sessions' content and innovative strategies should align with teachers' professional practice and experiences.

In the next chapter, Chapter Six, I describe how I learnt about the teachers' lived experiences of CPTD from their self-portrait drawings.

CHAPTER SIX: LOOKING AT THE TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES THROUGH THEIR SELF-PORTRAIT DRAWINGS

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I continue to discuss how I involved the FP teachers from the three different schools in helping me to respond to my second research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development?* In this chapter, I describe how I asked the teachers to create self-portrait drawings to share with me the inner feelings, thoughts and learning that they have experienced during professional development sessions. In understanding my own learning, a sociocultural theoretical viewpoint supported my understanding of how teachers continuously learn in the profession.

All teachers from the three different schools participated in drawing their self-portraits, depicting themselves in a professional development programme. Pithouse (2011, p. 3) asserts that "creating self-portraits drawing of professional selves in action allows one to identify and examine both problematic and beneficial aspects of one's current practice and to think of ways to enhance future practice". As discussed in Chapter Two, drawing my own self-portrait assisted me in highlighting things that hindered my progress as a subject advisor, at the same time giving me direction on how to improve. For this chapter, I decided to choose and present a selection of self-portrait drawings from each school that captured my eyes and stimulated my thinking. In what follows, I also give an account of discussions with teachers about the self-portrait drawings. Some teachers did not contribute new ideas to the talks but repeated what other teachers had said. I did not include this repetition in the chapter.

6.2 Demonstration of my self-portrait drawing

In all three schools, I started with the following prompt: Can you draw a self-portrait drawing showing yourself in any professional development programme organised by subject advisors. Show your feelings, your thoughts and ideas." However, I realised that after I had explained that they were to do self-portrait drawings, the teachers were hesitant and unclear on what was required, and they did not start drawing. So, I took out my self-portrait drawing (figure 6.1), showed it and discussed it with the teachers. Weber (2014) explained that visual arts-based approaches to self-study can foster self-introspection and give voice to issues that are hard to put into words. I told the teachers that while drawing my self-portrait, I became more thoughtful

about my work as a subject advisor. I explained that I found it easier to explain my lived experiences of CPTD through my self-portrait drawing.

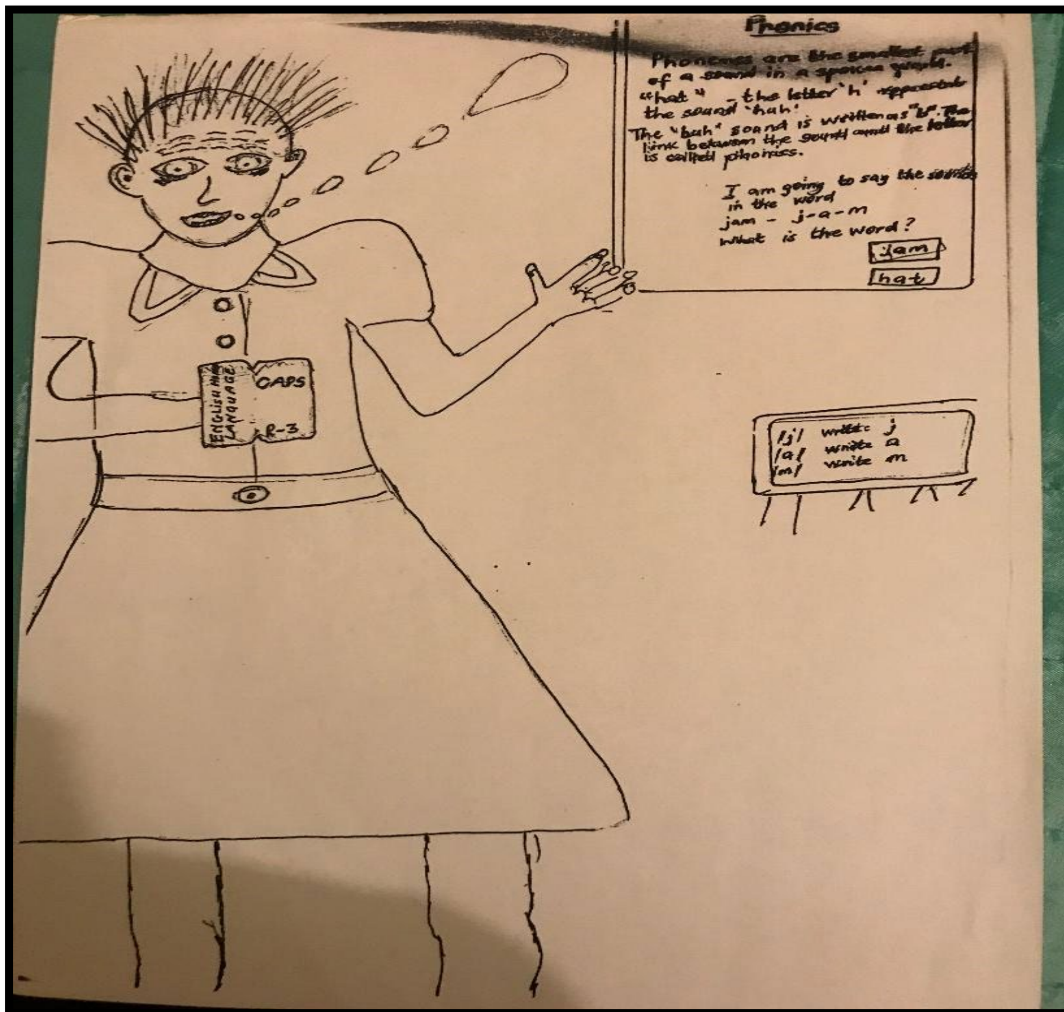


Figure 6.1. ***My self-portrait drawing.***

I explained how I created a self-portrait drawing to portray my lived experiences of conducting CPTD programmes. This self-portrait drawing shows the day when I was going to do a presentation on Home Language, and my topic was how to introduce Phonics to young learners. My hair shows the frustration and anxiety I felt, not being sure if teachers would understand my presentation or if it would meet their needs. The lines on my forehead in the drawing show my doubts and uncertainty about the topic I was expected to present. My broad shoulders show the heavy burden of work to be done. My big eyes are a sign of the fear I had – fear of the unknown. Apart from all of this, I had to look presentable as a facilitator of knowledge and had to prepare a variety of resources.

I shared with the teachers that planning a PDP requires a lot of thinking and doing some research on the topic. I told them how I would think about how I was going to do my presentation for all of the teachers to understand and be able to go back and implement policy properly. I revealed to the teachers that organising and presenting the PDPs was not easy. Although, as subject advisors, we should try to take into consideration all teachers' needs, every teacher is unique, and they also have exceptional learners that they need to treat differently in their classrooms.

I revealed that there were questions I continuously asked myself, such as, "Do I have adequate content knowledge of what am I going to present?" The curriculum policy on its own has the theory, but is lacking in giving the practical examples: "Will I be able to match theory and practice?" I was going to address teachers on an aspect of the curriculum that I was also battling with: "What if teachers needed more information or clarity?" "Would I be able to give them direction?" I was also apprehensive that my English pronunciation might not be understood by all the teachers coming from diverse contexts and backgrounds.

It was actually a relief for me to share with the teachers some of my worries about doing PDPs. The gist of my story was that each time I had to conduct a PDP, it was not an easy task. There were a lot of things that went through my mind: "Would I be doing justice in what I was presenting to the teachers?" Teachers rely heavily on the subject advisors for information about teaching and learning. Teachers trust that if they have a lack of information and inadequate content knowledge, subject advisors are there to fill in that gap.

The teachers in all three schools sat quietly, listening to my self-portrait description. I could see from the looks on their faces that they were surprised but at the same time were appreciative of me being candid with them. Later on, I saw this appreciation reflected in a teacher's journal entry:

Journal entry, Sue, Montana Primary School
It takes a wise and confident person with wisdom to accept her weaknesses.

6.3 Montana Junior Primary School

At Montana Primary School, I could see from the teachers' faces that they had questions about my discussion of my self-portrait drawing. I paused to ask them whether they wanted to contribute or comment. I wanted everyone to feel free to contribute to our discussions.

Micky had doubts, judging by the expression on her face, and responded as follows:

> *I don't want to talk about individual names of subject advisors here, but will reflect on the programmes that I have attended. I don't think those subject advisors ever thought the way you have presented, that is not true. As teachers, we asked ourselves after each workshop, why these people called us because they had not shared new information or addressed the challenges we face every day in our classrooms.*

Ellie echoed what Micky had said:

> *I doubt whether subject advisors have clear plans that they submit to their supervisors. If they have, it means that even supervisors have no idea about our Foundation Phase curriculum.*

At first, I was confused about the comment Micky made. I quickly thought about my whole presentation that I had given and asked myself, "Did I touch on something that has provoked the teachers' feelings?" I felt like Micky was attacking me in person, but remembered my research journey and how sensitive my research topic was, then smiled. Deep down my heart, I was feeling a pain that I could not explain. I felt so guilty, and I was not sure why. I did not know whether to carry on describing my self-portrait drawing or to stop.

In my mind, I kept on asking myself, "What are the teachers' expectations when we as subject advisors conduct workshops? What is it that we do wrong?" Subject advisors are qualified teachers, but it depends on the individual subject advisor as to whether she or he has FP (primary education) knowledge and experience.

I shared with the teachers how my practice had stared to improve after recognising my shortfalls. I explained to them how I had slowly started to change the way I was doing PDPs. To give an example, I explained how I had made sure that for Grade R, PDPs would be planned and conducted for only a few neighbouring schools rather than inviting all of the schools in a Circuit. A Circuit consists of about 22 schools, with more than 350 Grade R educators. Now we were concentrating on smaller numbers for our cluster groups, between 10–15 teachers

At times I felt like the discussion was becoming chaotic, as all of the teachers wanted to talk at the same time, trying to qualify the point under consideration. I had to remind them all the time that I was recording and would allow just one speaker at a time. Teachers were doing that because they wanted to agree at the same time on the point in the discussion. For example, I remember when Micky put forward her position that she doubts whether subject advisors had supervisors. Kea agreed with Ellie and said that if they had, it meant that supervisors themselves are not competent in terms of the FP curriculum.
I thought: "How do you take information from a person you don't trust and make use of it?" I felt that the teachers' attitudes towards subject advisors were not conducive to professional development. I recognised that subject advisors and teachers need to change their mindsets so that they could gain trust and start working more closely together.

However, I did not want us to move away from our target task for the day. I made a humble comment and said to them: "Oh! I understand your frustrations, can we shelve this discussion for another day, let us try and focus on what we want to achieve today". All of the teachers agreed to my request. I then asked the teachers to start drawing their self-portrait drawings. I thought that this was a long journey, and I would not be able to reach my destination on time if we spent too much time on discussion without getting started on the drawing. But, deep down in my heart, I felt that I had failed to address teachers' concerns.

I gave teachers A4 paper and other materials to draw their self-portrait drawings. I reminded the teachers to reflect, remember and then represent through their self-portrait drawings any professional development workshop they had attended, that was conducted by subject advisors. I assured the teachers that I was not looking for the perfect drawing but was interested in the meaning and discussion that would emanate from their pictures. It was quiet for a while as teachers drew their self-portraits.

Weber and Mitchell (2004, p. 984) asserted that visual arts-based methods can assist us to "access those elusive hard-to-put-into words aspects of our practitioner knowledge that might otherwise remain hidden, even from ourselves". I anticipated that teachers would open up and freely discuss their lived experiences using their self-portrait drawings.

I waited for all of them to finish. While waiting, I was a little scared but remained optimistic. I noticed that amongst the four teachers, only one teacher was struggling to draw. I encouraged her by stating that I was not looking for a perfect drawing, but an illustration that she could share with the group about her lived experiences of CPTD.

After a few minutes, teachers started showing each other their self-portrait drawings and having lively conversations about them. I then decided to open a platform for a whole group discussion. When the conversation started, everybody wanted to speak at the same time. I had to remind the teachers that everyone would be given a chance to present and share with us her self-portrait drawing.

Ellie raised her hand and said, "*Teacher, teacher, can I be the first one to showcase my drawing?"* We all laughed because she behaved like learners do in the classroom when they want to be noticed first. To my surprise, she produced a page that already had typed writing on it, stating: '*The best teachers teach from the heart not from the book'*. I remembered that this was the same teacher who had bought an article for our previous discussion, entitled '*Teachers were left with no clue*'. This time it was not a newspaper article but a handout that Ellie created on her computer. Ellie told us that getting the outline of what our discussions would be on each day helped her to think more about the subject and decide what would enhance her contribution. While the other teachers were busy with their self-portrait drawing, Ellie was adding to what she had already started and created.

Ellie said, "*I thought there is an intensive training that is done specifically for subject advisors, to make sure they know and understand the content before they engage with us as teachers".* Before I responded, Kea said "*Even if you attend that workshop but it is important that subject advisors must have competency knowledge of Foundation Phase."* Kea was right, but I did not want to entertain the discussion much because it was going to look as if I was defensive or defending my other colleagues whom I knew were not FP specialists.

The completed self-portrait drawings opened up discussion amongst teachers. Teachers had no fear of talking about what really frustrated them as teachers. The conversation raised anger in some teachers, and they showed that they had lost hope in us as subject advisors. Teachers voiced their concerns, and it looked as if they were waiting for me to respond and solve their problems.

Ellie said (referring to her self-portrait drawing – figure 6.2) "*After each workshop, I become more confused because at times not all concepts are well explained, it's just the overload of work on our side as teachers".* Quickly Sue responded and said, *"What is more frustrating is the lack of guidance and support that we hardly get from our subject advisors".*

Montana Primary is an ex-Model C school that we do not visit frequently because we believe they are doing well and do not need much support. I realised then that all teachers – irrespective of where they are – need subject advisors' full support.

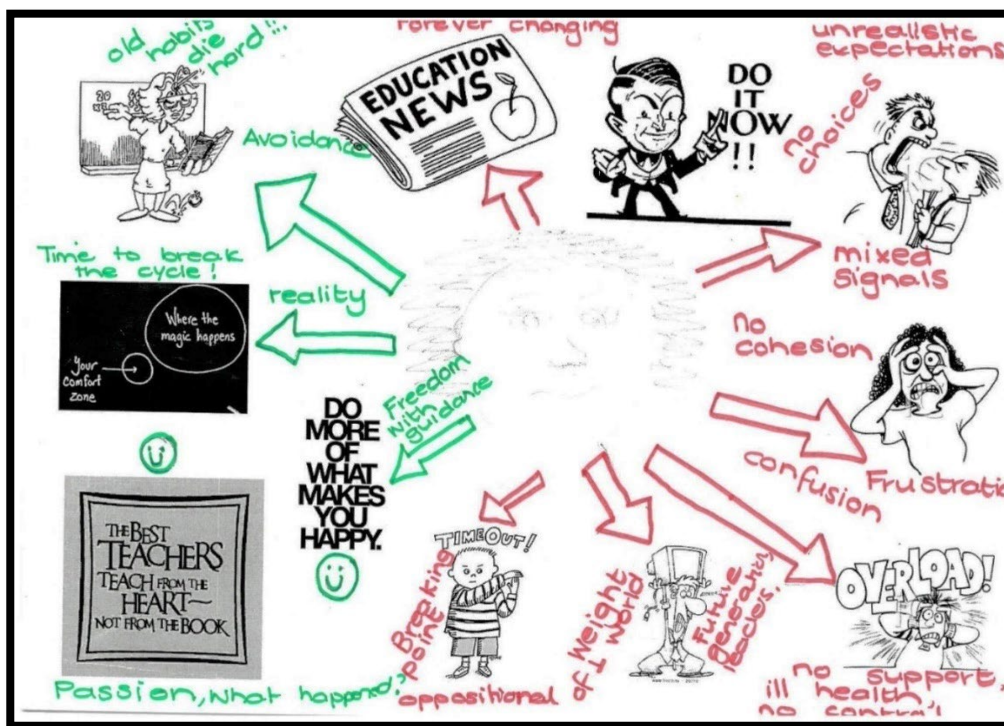


Figure 6.2 ***Ellie's self-portrait drawing.***

Ellie explained that she had decided to put her face in the middle of the page. She said, "*This lousy face, with big eyes, was not happy, because of all these frustrations and dilemmas around my teaching profession".* The first thing she referred us to was *Education News*. She narrated her story with a frowning face. All the other educators were nodding their heads in agreement with what she was describing; at times, you could hear the *hmm!* sound.

Ellie said, "*I had never such seen a confused Education Department, with so many changes of the curriculum, but no clear guidelines*". I thought of how Bantwini (2010, p. 7) asserted that "it is imperative to check continuously where teachers stand in their understanding of the reforms". At times as subject advisors, we assume that teachers understand different aspects of the curriculum; monitoring was thus essential to check on teachers' understanding of the curriculum.

I was concerned and also thinking about which new curriculum they were referring to because the CAPS had been introduced about five years ago (DoE, 2011). It was then clear to me that teachers still had questions and still needed clarity on CAPS.

Ellie said, "*Our Department of Education has unrealistic expectations. How can you expect teachers to perform to their best when the curriculum is ever-changing? With zero support?*" I realised that teachers really do not understand that the lack of human resources harms the implementation of curriculum imperatives, including follow-up support in our schools. As Bantwini (2011, p. 8) highlighted, "the critical issues facing school Districts is the deficit of human capacity, hindering and incapacitating the few officials from effectively servicing schools and the teachers". That was the case in my own District, where subject advisors were unable to support all of the schools. Subject advisors are few and the DoE does not employ new personnel in the FP. Only in 'critical subjects' like Mathematics and Physical Science (as the DoE put it) do they advertise and bring on board new personnel.

Kea continued with this line of thinking by sharing that subject advisors do not visit schools honestly – they do compliance by coming and filling in visitor forms. She said:

> *We were given no choice, and we were expected to do it now, meaning to change now like weather without proper training. We became frustrated because of the confusion caused by our subject advisors. Subject advisors did not show us that they were the experts in the subjects. There was no cohesion in everything that the subject advisor did. As teachers, we felt that there was too much overload that was coming with the changes in the curriculum. Nobody was prepared to hold our hands and take us through the change. As I have said, we had no choice.*
>
> *What happened to the passion for teaching? One, at times, wondered whether subject advisors were teachers before they were promoted to be subject advisors. One can even question their appointments, whether they have Foundation Phase expertise? But not all of them are like that. When I think about professional development programmes, I think 'It is the time to break the cycle, subject advisors must move out from their comfort zones'.*

Ellie explained that her hair in her self-portrait represents the frustration and confusion she had about the PDPs: "*At times, I don't even understand myself whether I am coming or going, that's my confusion*".

We all sat quietly listening to Ellie. Other teachers were nodding their heads in agreement with what she was discussing. I then asked Ellie to further tell us precisely the kind of support she expects from subject advisors. Instead of Ellie responding, Sue furiously said: "*When the subject advisors come, they will only meet with Departmental Heads (HoDs) and just request our files. They don't care about what we teach and the challenges we encounter in our daily teaching. Hardly ever do they come to our classes*".

I told the teachers that I understood their frustrations but would like to get from them what exactly they wanted subject advisors to do. I also indicated to the teachers that I was a bit confused: some say subject advisors come for the sake of compliance in filling in school visit forms, some say they only come and meet with the Departmental Heads. What was really happening?

The teachers came up with many suggestions, most of which I felt were unrealistic. I say 'unrealistic' because I thought of the conditions that subject advisors work under in our District. However, I did understand that teachers do not have an understanding of the scope of our work. There are only five FP subject advisors responsible for 350 primary schools, with more than 1200 teachers. The teachers expected subject advisors to visit and spend about two weeks in each school co-teaching. They suggested that each school should do planning together with the subject advisors.

Ellie's self-portrait drawing (Figure 6.2) showed her emotions and frustrations after attending a PDP. Ellie explained that she remembered the day she received a circular inviting her to participate in a workshop; she thought about previous unproductive workshops she had attended. Ellie's head was spinning as she wondered what was new. Even after Ellie had participated in the workshop, her head was not clear.

Ellie repeatedly uttered, *"The buzz word was the better curriculum. Subject advisors expect teachers to change overnight"*. Ellie pointed at the newspaper article 'Education News!' in the drawing and continued, saying that this curriculum is the talk of the town, on the radio and television news. What is new about this curriculum? Ellie raised a critical point and said: "*But they are not talking about how teachers are going to be trained, guided, mentored and supported"*. Ellie pointed at the short man with a big head and said, *"This man represents our*

Education Minister, who is excited that the government came up with big change and is instructing teachers to change now, as he said, 'Do it now!'."

Ellie said she remembered that after the workshop, the group of teachers was talking about the ever-changing curriculum, and they had mixed feelings. Some teachers thought the curriculum was going to solve the problems they experienced in their classrooms. Others thought it was coming with so many demands, including increased paperwork. Ellie indicated that after attending the workshop, she was so frustrated because there was no cohesion. Ellie complained about the overload of work. She imagined that teachers would be absent from school, and some might take extended leave because of their frustrations.

Ellie explained that she thought my research was an excellent opportunity to make a difference in the education system, to say something that teachers in the same position as her would not get a chance to express. Ellie felt relieved that she was able to voice (also on behalf of other teachers) all her opinions, concerns and experiences she had in her journey as a teacher. She said, *"I felt not deteriorated anymore as a teacher"*.

Ellie felt heroic that she was able to take a stand for what she personally felt was wrong and right. It was good to hear that Ellie wanted to change her life in education. She further explained that she was confused and did not know what to do. Ellie said: *"The Department is bombarding teachers with unrealistic expectations and we are not given any choice but to do it"*. She further complained about subject advisors not providing ample support.

Kea continued and said: *"It's time to break the cycle and bring back the passion in teaching that was once alive"*. Ellie promised to find strategic ways to be a better teacher without waiting for someone's instruction and information on how to deal with the workload. I then responded, trying to calm down the teachers: "*This is lifelong learning, we need to be patient with each other. Education is like a journey, as we teach, we gain more knowledge and skills that make us become more competent as teachers. One day we will reach our destination"*.

Our discussion helped teachers to voice their concerns and frustrations about how workshops are conducted. Ellie showed her frustration about the ever-changing curriculum. I felt that it was essential to highlight that each time the curriculum had to change, it was given to the public for comments. I did raise that with teachers, and they said they knew nothing about this. This

concerned me because teachers are the critical stakeholders, as they are the implementers of the curriculum policies.

The teachers further explained that when they were invited to attend a workshop they worried that it meant that there were new things to be introduced that would to their overload of work. They said that what they needed was support, guidance and relevant examples that link to their everyday classroom practice, not just theory. They stated that they felt that they had no control over anything that was done in terms of the curriculum. They also pointed out that some teachers took long sick leave and some teachers even opted to leave the system because of the uncertainty within the education system.

The discussions made me feel flawed, worried and vulnerable. I imagined myself as a teacher in that situation, experiencing frustration, with nobody to help me. I also thought about my roles and responsibilities as a subject advisor when the new curriculum policy was introduced. I felt that I needed to go back and share information with other subject advisors and slowly make some changes as I continued learning from my practice.

I thanked Ellie for sharing with us and asked Kea to share her self-portrait drawing. Kea indicated that she remembered the last time she attended a PDP conducted by the subject advisors and told herself that she would not waste her time in the future and attend another one. Kea said her self-portrait drawing resembles her sitting in that workshop, bored and yawning (Figure 6.3). She was thinking of paperwork: "*Why so much emphasis on paperwork? What about teaching and learning? When will the learners be taught*?" Kea said she thought about how the learners must eat healthy food, as teachers cannot teach hungry learners. She emphasised that learners cannot concentrate in class when parents gave them junk food. I had to intervene and ask Kea to explain her reasoning in bringing healthy food into the discussion. Kea explained: "*I think it is important for subject advisors to incorporate healthy living style in all workshops because we dealing with the minds of the learners here. Whatever professional development programme you come up with, will never be implemented well in the classroom if learners still eat junk food".* She insisted that healthy snacks help learners meet their daily nutritional needs.

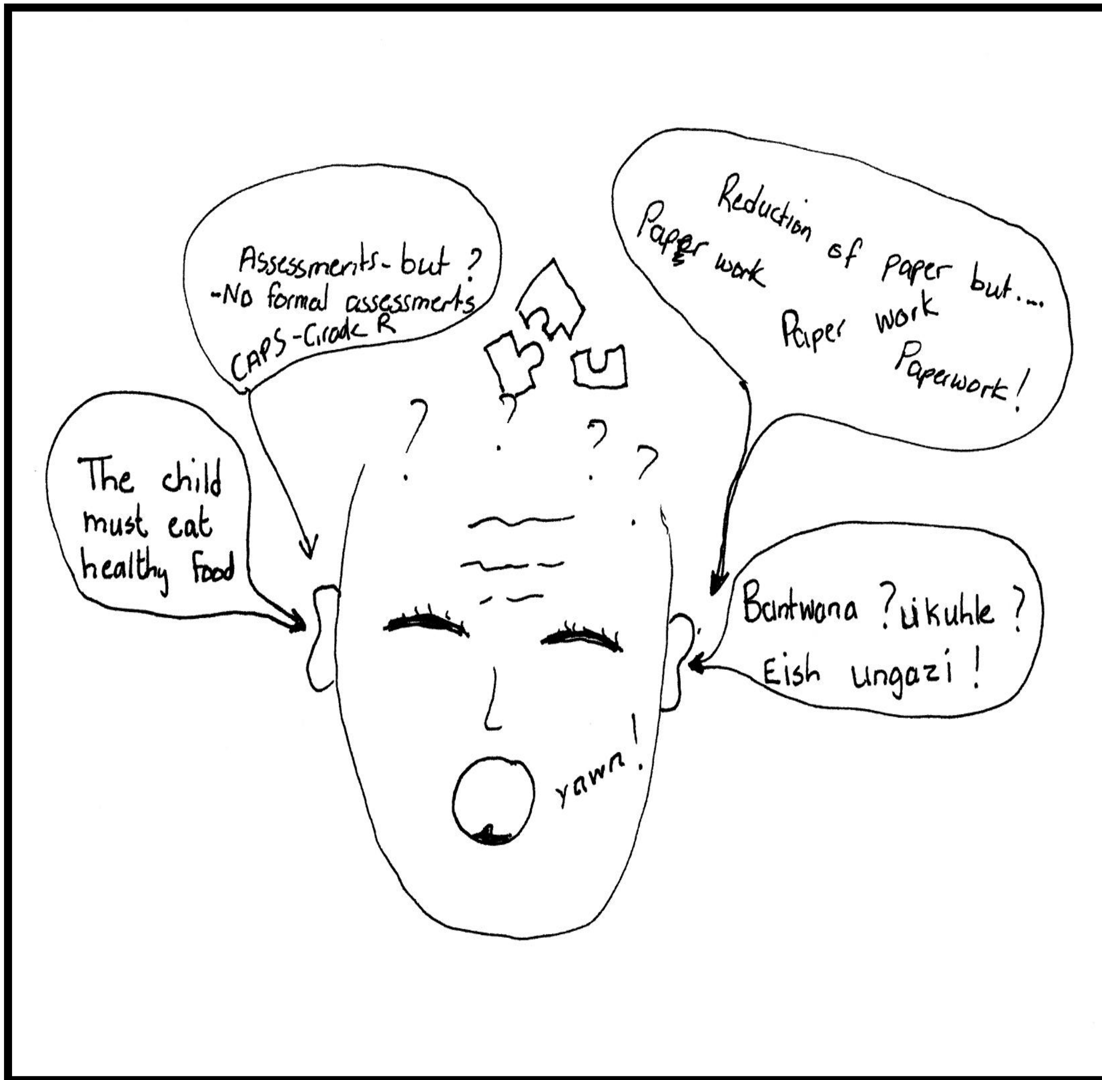


Figure 6.3. ***Kea's self-portrait drawing.***

Kea had an excellent point, but I asked the group to shelve it for another day. Kea said that in her mind, she has pieces of a puzzle about the PDPs that she is trying to put together. She further asked: *"Do subject advisors know the reasoning behind in conducting these programmes or is it a matter of compliance?"*

I found myself trying to answer questions that teachers were posing rather than discussing professional development deeply. I also thought that if I answered these questions directly, it would look as if I was defending the subject advisors. I was then torn in between the two, between my position as a subject advisor and the teachers. Soon I remembered that in this journey I was a researcher, not just a subject advisor. So, at times I had to suppress my inner

feelings, so as not to show teachers how I felt about what they were saying about subject advisors.

Kea said, in a loud voice: "*Why are these professional development programmes the same every year, with no improvement?"* She said that she wondered whether subject advisors read the evaluation remarks at the end of the workshop. As a subject advisor I can comment that we do read the evaluation forms, but often do not get a chance to implement some of the suggestions, because of time. That was my thinking but that was never shared with the teachers. At times I thought it was vital for me as a researcher not to answer questions directly, as I indicated above.

I then referred Kea to her drawing again, regarding what she had written in isiZulu, to further explain to us as I also did not understand it. Firstly, I had to praise Kea on the fact that she could write and speak in isiZulu. Kea indicated that learners in her classroom had taught her to speak a bit of isiZulu.

Kea said that while sitting in the PDP everything comes into her mind. She becomes frustrated with all the policies that need to be implemented. She burst out and said: "*Subject advisors themselves cannot clearly explain how assessment policies work, yet they demand us to be pioneers in our classrooms, how?"*

Kea said that with all the frustrations she experienced when she attended a PDP, she thought of learners and then found herself uttering these words "*Bantwana? Ukuhle? Eish, ungazi!"* ("Children, it looks good but I don't know!", meaning she had doubts).

Kea said that the face represented her emotions during workshop sessions. She said she felt it was necessary to draw her head because this was where her thinking was, and where the frustrations were experienced. Kea said*: "In my head and mind, I had these pieces of the puzzle. I have always wanted to fit them together but they never fitted".* What Kea emphasised was that nothing was making sense when it came to CPTD.

To wind down the session, I asked the teachers to pretend they were subject advisors and share with me how they would support schools. It was a cheerful moment as they exchanged ideas from adopting certain schools to subject advisors spending more time with the teachers. After this session, I realised that teachers have a lot of ideas of how they can be supported through

CPTD programmes. What is needed is for subject advisors to provide a platform for teachers to share their ideas with us.

6.4 Abbib Primary School

When I arrived at Abbib Primary School, the teachers had already prepared all the materials for the day's task. I had not asked the teachers to bring material, but I appreciated their thinking, readiness, and willingness to do the activity. This was possibly because, in our previous discussions, I mentioned that our next task would be self-portrait drawing.

I told the group that I was going to share my self-portrait drawing about my thinking when I had to conduct PDPs. At that moment, I felt very emotional, and I did not understand why. So, I decided to start by asking the teachers to tell me what they saw in my self-portrait and what conclusions they could draw from it.

The discussions were exciting, and it provided a bit of relief from the emotions I felt. Zodwa said: "*I see a subject advisor that is anxious, with a lot of anxiety. The eyes tell us a hidden story of fear, frustrations, etc.*" Sally said: "I *see a subject advisor that is indecisive because she has her own opinion of doing things. Now she does not have a choice as she has to teach and follow what is prescribed in the policy".*

Then, I went on to explain my drawing to the teachers, as I had done at Montana Primary School. Sharing and explaining my self-portrait drawing seemed to help the teachers quickly develop their own pictures.

Teachers were quiet while drawing, but were soon talking to each other, smiling and showing each other what they had drawn. They were whispering, looking at each other's drawings and laughing. I kept reminding them that I was not looking for a perfect picture but would like them to explain their self-portrait drawings and also share with me their thoughts and feelings. When everybody was done, I asked them how they felt.

Everybody looked serious then, with no smiles. I became worried and asked them whether there was anything wrong. Tamia responded that there was nothing wrong, but the whole process reminded them how they felt during and after they have attended the workshops. She remembered the day she attended a ‘reading’ workshop with her newly appointed colleague. In that reading workshop, the facilitator told them that there was no programme as they will be dealing with reading only. No handouts were given. Tamia said: “*Oh my, I am so bored. Why? Year in, year out, the same curriculum focus!*”

Figure 6.4. ***Tamia’s self-portrait drawing.***

Tamia drew herself and a colleague sitting in a workshop (Figure 6.4). Her colleague is new to the teaching profession and looking forward to learning more about classroom organisation and management. Her colleague was excited as it was her first time attending a professional development workshop. During the workshop, Tamia showed boredom; she is sitting there

listening to the same things she heard three years ago, with no new information being shared. Furthermore, the information she had received three years previously did not help her in the classroom, and nobody gave her follow-up support or guidance.

She was sitting there thinking that this workshop is the same as those done year in and year out, with no follow-up support and guidance on the part of the subject advisors: "*What is new?*"

However, Tamia's colleague, who was new to the profession, was smiling and happy about the workshop. She was finding the workshop very interesting, and it gave her more ideas on organising her classroom.

Tamia felt drained, bored and exhausted when she thought about how workshops were conducted. She said that she would like to see a change in how the content knowledge was presented by subject advisors. Tamia said: "*Subject advisors must make the workshop alive. Let us not become bored when we listen to them*".

Tamia showed dissatisfaction about attending a workshop that did not develop her as a person. She was disappointed that the workshop had the same content as previous years – for her, it was just repetition. The concerns and questions that the teachers had expressed previously were not answered nor attended to. While the novice teacher was excited to be invited to the workshop and found it exciting, Tamia felt that it was a waste of time to attend the workshop.

This was an eye-opener for me, as a subject advisor, to think about our teachers and the kind of information we give them. As subject advisors, at times, we forget that teachers are at different levels and so the information provided should also be different. For example, if I plan for an assessment workshop, I could plan to separate experienced teachers and new teachers. For experienced teachers, it must be a continuation, and for new ones, new information must be given.

Cindy started her discussion by sharing with the group that before she attended a PDP she was very optimistic. Before attending, she thought about how she was going to improve her knowledge and skills to implement the new curriculum. She also believed that the curriculum would benefit learners with special educational needs. Because of the inclusive education policy (DoE, 2001) learners experiencing barriers to learning and development must be accommodated in a regular class. Cindy was frustrated because she was never trained to do that.

Cindy further explained that after the PDP she felt like crying because nothing new was presented. She indicated the lousy timing of workshops, starting during the day at 13h00 when they are tired and hungry. Teachers do not concentrate as they are thinking of going home to cook for their children and relax.

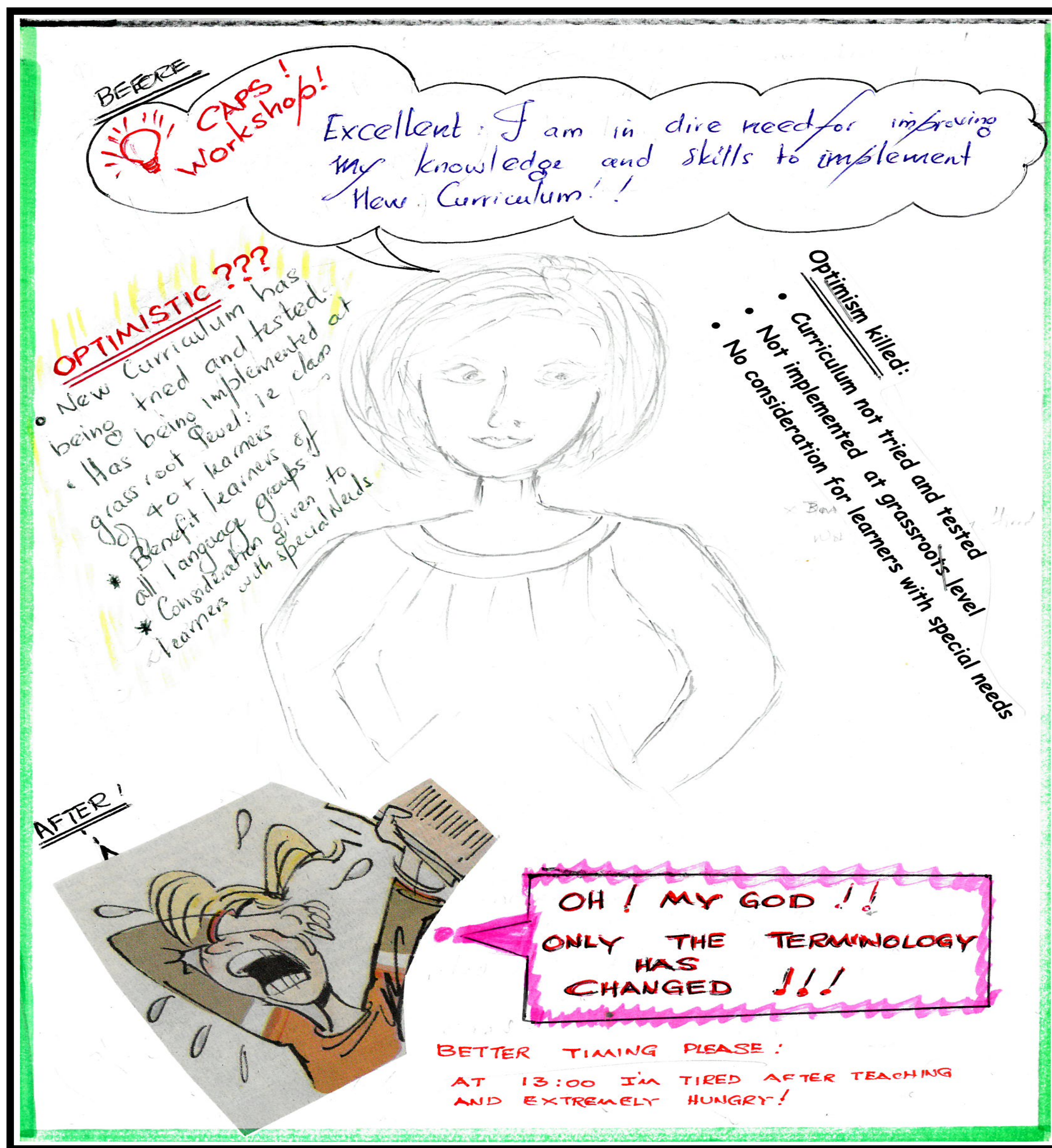


Figure 6.5. *Cindy's self-portrait drawing.*

Cindy said when she had received the invitation to a workshop on CAPS she had seen there being a light bulb moment at the end of the workshop, which is why she drew a light bulb. Cindy states on her drawing: *"Excellent. I am in dire need of improving my content knowledge and skills to implement the new curriculum!"*

However, on the day of the workshop, Cindy was very disappointed: everything was the same, except for a change of terms. Cindy was not happy about how workshops were conducted.

Cindy even showed in her picture how after the workshop, she cried because she didn't hear what she expected to. on her self-portrait (Figure 6.5) she said: "*Oh my God! Only the terminology has changed! This curriculum has not been tried and tested, nor has it been implemented at a grassroots level".*

Cindy said she thought how miserable it was to attend workshops where the same things are shared every year. She wants to be a better teacher and is determined to reach her goals.

As the teachers discussed their self-portrait drawings, I realised that it was essential to take responsibility for my own work as a subject advisor and honestly assist teachers during PDP sessions. I gained valuable insight from the teachers' discussions. These dialogues opened my mind and I thought of better ways of improving PDP programmes.

6.5 Udosi Combined School

In Udosi School, I decided to start by asking teachers to share with me what they expect when they attend PDPs. I started with this question to ease the tension I was noticing amongst the teachers. They were very quiet and looking at their facial expression, it seemed that they were not free to talk. The teachers were silent for a while, then Thembie responded*: "I expect a presenter who is well dressed, well presentable".* I replied to Thembie's comment by asking whether the dress could help in delivering an excellent presentation. Knox then responded, saying: *"A presenter, in this case, is a subject advisor and she/he must be a person who is knowledgeable, who has more information than teachers".* Thembie added: *"A Foundation Phase advisor must know her subject specialisation very well".*

I then showed teachers my self-portrait drawing and asked them whether they could see all the qualities that they had mentioned. There was silence, and then Lindy asked: *"Why do you look so scared?"* I then explained my self-portrait drawing and what each part represented. I explained to the teachers the frustrations I had at times when I had to conduct a PDP and was not sure about content areas. I elaborated on my story (as explained previously) and as to what my hair, my shoulders and my forehead represented.
Next, I gave teachers materials and reminded them that I was not expecting a perfect drawing. After the explanation, I asked teachers to start drawing their self-portraits. Anele and Lindy indicated that they had never drawn anything before. I asked them what they do if they need to represent something to their learners. Lindy said she chooses one learner in a class that can draw well. I encouraged them to keep on trying. It was quiet when teachers were doing their self-portrait drawings.

Anele ended up drawing a face with big eyes (Figure 6.6) and was the one to start the discussion. Anele said the big eyes resembled her worries as to whether the workshop would be fruitful or not. Anele said that when they received an invitation to a workshop, she raised her eyebrows and opened her eyes wide, wondering whether the workshop would be of benefit to them. She further indicated that as teachers, they become worried when they are invited to specific venues because of safety issues, as well as threats to the security of their cars. At the last workshop they attended, three vehicles were stolen. Anele said: *"You sit in a workshop wondering, not even listening, because you are wondering whether by the time the workshop has finished, your car will be there."* I had to sympathise with this, and then we carried on.

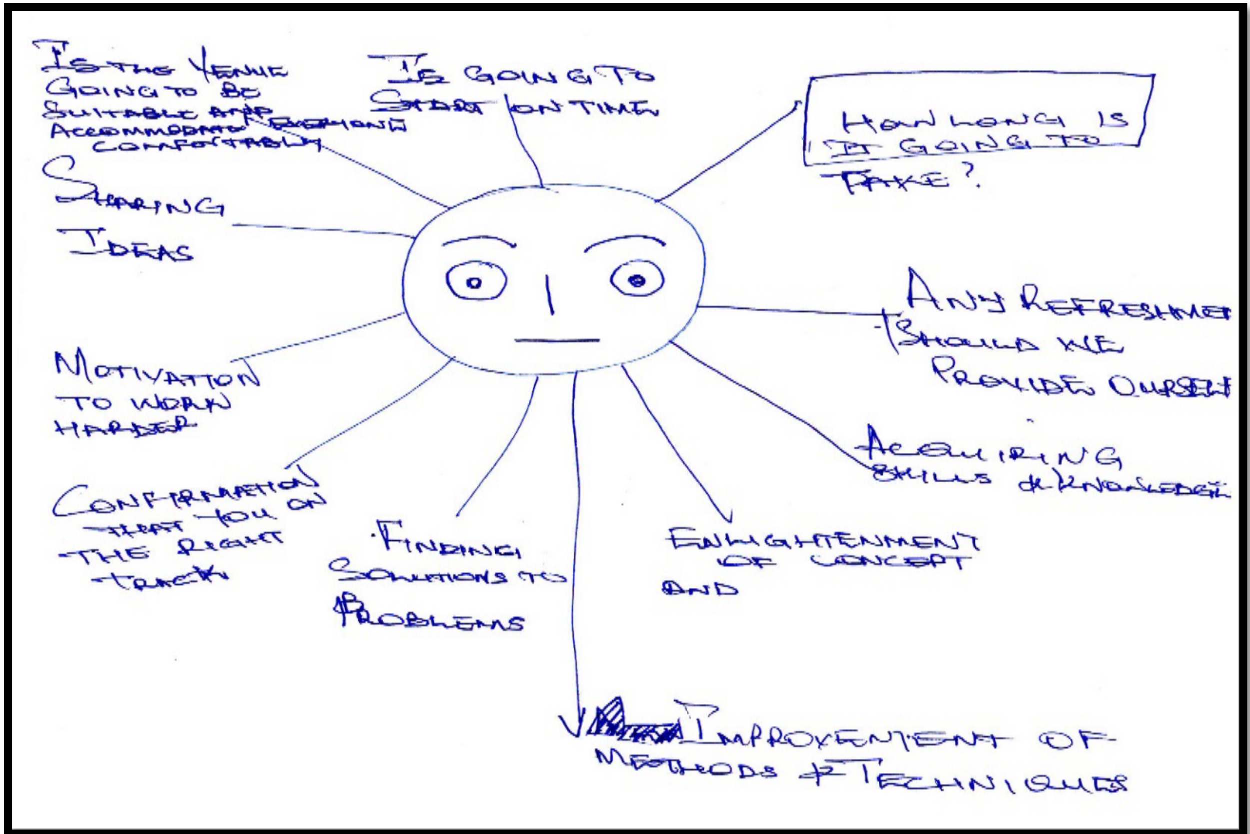


Figure 6.6. ***Anele's self-portrait drawing.***

Anele also raised the issue that at times some subject advisors come to the workshops unprepared. She said that often there would not be enough furniture at the venue, which indicated to the teachers that there was a lack of preparation and planning by the advisors. "*I don't think subject advisors know the number of teachers they invite, but work on estimation per circuit,"* said Zola.

Anele said her main worry was about proper planning on the part of subject advisors. She said that in her drawing, she was asking herself if subject advisors were going to explain concepts, methodology, and strategies well. However, Anele also said that she was happy that that as teachers they might be going to get the opportunity to share ideas at the workshop

The teachers also said that it frustrated them if they had to attend, not knowing the agenda beforehand. Teachers highlighted that the circular would say, for example, that the workshop would be on English FA, but not what aspects of the language would be dealt with. So, they were not able to come prepared. Zola continued to explain her frustrations about outcomes of workshop not achieved.

Anele's thinking was straightforward: *"If subject advisors want to see quality teaching and learning, they need to improve and change the way they conduct professional development programmes".* The point that Anele made was about self-development on the part of the subject advisors. She wanted to see an improvement in us in the way of doing things as advisors.

I realised how important it is to take care of the logistics of how the workshop is organised beforehand. On the circular, it is essential to inform teachers to bring their own lunch. It was also important to tell them that there were going to be security guards to ensure the safety of their cars. I realised that teachers sit in the workshop and you think they were following, whereas they are thinking about the safety of their possessions, amongst other things.

Knox mentioned that she joined Udosi Primary School in January 2014. She had taught for five years in Gauteng Province. She had attended only one workshop ever since she came to KZN province. At this particular school, the SMT decides who to send to the workshop, regardless of the circular that requests all teachers for that specific grade to attend. In this school, the HoD had previously allowed only one representative to attend, and then come back and cascade what had been learnt to the other teachers. I was a bit disturbed about this but remembered that this was not the platform to address that issue.

Knox said that her self-portrait (Figure 6.7) represents the workshops she attended before she joined this school. Amongst other facts, she discussed that the workshops helped her to be creative and become a critical thinker. It was good to hear from Knox that workshops helped to increase her confidence.

Knox said that whenever she was invited to attend a workshop, she would have a picture of a subject advisor in her mind's eye. She said: *"I always wonder about the qualities and expertise of a presenter, what knowledge this person has, to share with us? Is she an organised person, who will come prepared and share conceptual knowledge with us?"*

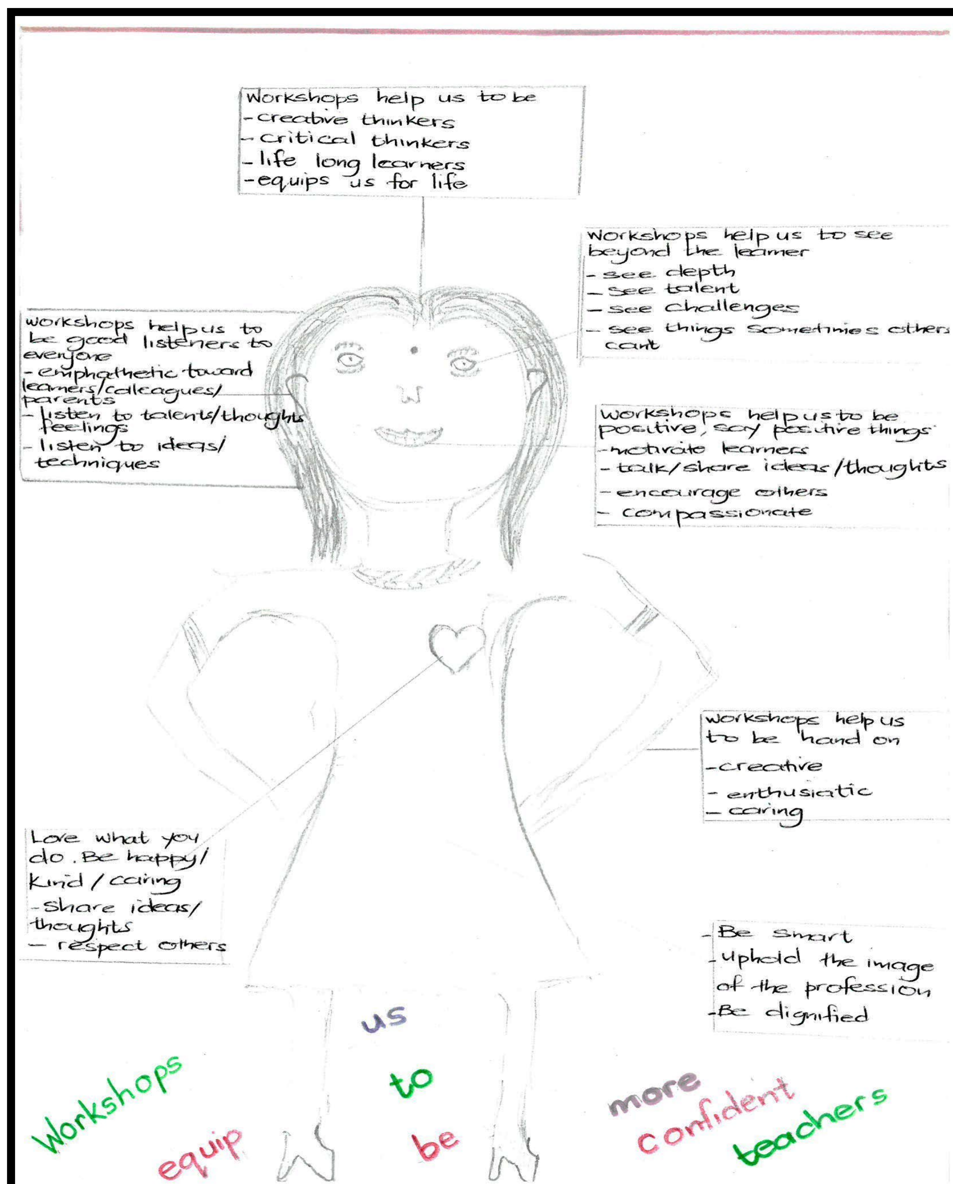


Figure 6.7. ***Knox's self-portrait drawing.***

Knox also thought of the benefits of the workshop to her as a person. The question she asked herself was whether the workshop would change her for the better and enable her to do things differently. Knox highlighted those qualities by saying the following of the subject advisor:

> *She must be presentable with a sense of humour. The subject advisor must be a dignified person who must be able to uphold the image of the teaching profession. A subject advisor must have a big heart. She must love her job, she must be caring for all teachers and be able to respect other people.*

Knox said she always thought of the qualities the subject advisor must have, and the benefits of doing the workshops. She said: *"I wanted more workshops where subject advisors won't only guide us on how to teach learners, but show us by giving examples so that we become better teachers."*

Knox was one of the teachers who held the image of teachers and subject advisors in very high esteem. She believed that by attending workshops, she would be professionally developed. Workshops would aid in her growth as a teacher, and enable her to develop more skills. Knox respected the work that subject advisors are doing, and I was relieved and happy that somebody was acknowledging our work and taking our job seriously. Knox was highlighting the importance of the qualities that subject advisors must have to be able to help teachers. She was also highlighting how the workshops can help teachers.

Involvement in self-portrait drawings assisted the teachers at this school in finding their voice and sharing their concerns (Weber & Mitchell, 2004). The teachers seemed freer to discuss their challenges about the CPTD programmes. I learnt, one again, that what we were doing as subject advisors was not enough for the teachers. Teachers wanted to gain additional knowledge when they attend the CPTD programmes. I realised the crucial areas that needed further attention, and right away, I started thinking about how I was going to address them.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I narrated how the self-portrait drawings helped me to listen to the perspectives of teachers from different schools. I learnt from the teachers that it is essential for subject advisors to visit the venue beforehand to check if it is conducive for learning. I also became more aware that it boosted the confidence of the teachers if the subject advisors were well organised and focused. In listening to the teachers' discussions, I realised that we subject advisors needed to learn, develop and improve our practice. A sociocultural theoretical viewpoint highlighted that professional development programmes must build on local knowledge and address teachers' authentic needs.

Throughout these sessions, my thoughts, feelings and anxiety were represented in what I documented in my journal. It was not a comfortable journey. I realised that my topic was a very sensitive one for me: if someone voices your weakness and failures in front of others, it is human nature that one does not want to accept it well. At times I felt as if I wanted to defend myself and other subject advisors, but the platform I was in did not give me that opportunity to do so. This journey opened my eyes and boosted my thinking and reasoning and will to do things differently.

In the next chapter, Chapter Seven, I describe of how I involved the teachers from the three different schools in creating and discussing collages. The collages and discussions further assisted me in answering my second research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development?*

CHAPTER SEVEN: LOOKING AT THE TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES THROUGH THEIR COLLAGES

7.1 Introduction

In Chapter Six, I described how I continued to involve the FP teachers from the three different schools in assisting me in responding to the second research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development?* I explained how I demonstrated my own self-portrait drawing for teachers, which encouraged them to open up and talk honestly about their views and experiences. To get more information, I asked teachers to create their own self-portrait drawings that described how they viewed PDPs that they had attended. I reflected on what I had learnt from the teachers' self-portrait drawings, as I wanted to understand the teachers' thoughts and feelings as they reflected on their lived experiences of CPTD programmes. A sociocultural theoretical stance encouraged me to give teachers a platform to do introspection, examine their own learning and reflect on professional development programmes conducted by subject advisors. It became clear that teachers were not satisfied with how CPTD programmes were conducted by subject advisors.

In this chapter, Chapter Seven, I explain how the discussions further unfolded through the creation of collages by teachers at the three primary schools.

7.2 Demonstration of my collage

In all three schools, I followed a similar introductory procedure. After recapping what we had done in our previous sessions (as described in Chapters Five and Six), I told the teachers that I appreciated their continued commitment to my research. Also, I reminded them that once I had captured the data from our meetings, I would give them a chance to read it, and we could change it if there was something that they did not feel comfortable with.

I then started that day's activity by presenting my own work. I showed the teachers my original collage (Figure 7.1) and provided a photocopy of my collage for everyone. My original collage was also passed around to all of the teachers to see.

As discussed in Chapter Two, I explained to the teachers that the collage portrayed my lived experience of a CPTD programme I conducted where we invited a few teachers from a ward.

Then, on the day, the venue was full. In the province of KZN there are 12 Education Districts. Our District, Nandi, is divided into three Circuits, each with four wards. Each ward includes 18–21 schools.

Figure 7.1. ***My collage on my lived experiences of continuing professional teacher development.***

I explained to the teachers how frustrating it is when you expect just a few teachers, and you end up with a full house (*showing them a picture of the overcrowding*). There was not enough material for everybody, and we did not have a loudspeaker. It was just chaotic. Some teachers were talking while the workshop was on, and some were on their cell phones. Some left the venue and did not come back. We could not divide the teachers into groups, and no activities were done. I could not get the teachers to ask me questions, as they were smiling and laughing most of the time when I was presenting. I explained how, as facilitators, during the workshop, we do notice when they are not paying attention, and we also see when teachers are not interested in what we are talking about.

7.3 Montana Junior Primary School

I reminded the teachers about putting their thoughts down in their journals and sharing them with me. Sue made a joke and said, *"Journals take us long, now we use social networks"*. I reminded them that I did mention previously that they could send a WhatsApp message or email as their journal entry.

Next, I explained that the purpose of our meeting was for the teachers to make a collage that depicted a PDP they had attended. My explanation was influenced by my reading of how, according to Van Schalkwyk (2010, p. 678), when creating collages for research purposes, "participants are encouraged to include pictures and images that stand out in one way or another, and that represent situations and/or events, feelings, high points and low points in their lives and that tell a story about their development as a person".

I asked the teachers to think back, bring up their memories, and think of any PDP attended that was organised by subject advisors. PDPs are done every year, not once, but maybe twice or three times a year, depending on which subject or topic is dealt with.

For this session, I brought along old magazines for the teachers to use to make their own collages. I did not have an idea of what the teachers would decide to make, and so the magazines were not checked for relevant pictures. I realised this too late when teachers were complaining about not finding images that they wanted to use.

Teachers took out their magazines and paged through them. Everybody was now quiet, trying to find relevant pictures. I could see from their faces that they were looking for particular images, and they did not find suitable ones. I reminded the teachers that a collage can be made up of pictures as well as words that further describe a picture, put together on a piece of paper or separate papers if more space is required. I also explained that there was not only one correct way of designing a collage because I had seen different kinds of collages. And, I reassured them that I was not an expert collage maker myself. I told them that collage making was not done during my primary schooling or my teacher training, but I came to know about it when I was a teacher educator.

Teachers started discussing amongst themselves, asking for help with a particular image in magazines they were paging through. I kept on reminding the teachers that while explaining their collages, they must also share with us their thinking and feelings, and what they would do to change the situation.

I noticed that Micky, as usual, was very quiet, while busy cutting and pasting pictures. She took out words and matched them with her images. She had so many negative words, but was

unable to use all of them because her collage looked complete. This was quite interesting to me. I then asked her whether she needed to page through other magazines. She said: "*I don't want to squash my pictures because they relate to my experiences of these CPTD programmes"*.

Since the beginning of this journey, Micky had become more focused and organised. I could see from her reactions that she was voicing something that had concerned her for quite some time. When she came to these discussions, she was more than prepared. I wondered how organised her classroom was. I wished I could visit her class and spend a day with her and observe her teaching her learners. I wanted all teachers to be like her, as she showed commitment and responsibility in what she was doing.

Micky was a very talkative person who socialised well with other teachers in this research group. Whenever she opened her mouth, everybody just laughed, but she always had facts to debate. Other teachers took more time but were finding it difficult to get pictures and make a collage. I realised that the magazines I had brought did not provide most of them with the type of images they wanted to use; hence I only chose one of the collages to show in what follows.

Figure 7.2. ***Micky's collage.***

Micky was the first to present her collage (Figure 7.2). Judging from her facial expression, I could tell that she was frustrated by CPTD programmes. In what sounded like a dissatisfied voice, Micky said, *"This is the true reflection of what happens when you involve us in CPTD programmes"*. At that time, she was holding her collage up for everybody to see. I wanted to intervene to calm Micky and remind the group of the other cap I was wearing at that time, as a researcher, not a subject advisor. But, I decided not to spoil the mood. I wanted Micky to feel free to vent her emotions and evoke her memories without any fear of being judged. Micky continued by saying, "*Everything was just chaotic; facilitators were disorganised as if they only knew in the morning that there was a workshop and they had to facilitate*".

I then asked Micky to share with the group what her thinking and feelings were when she was developing this collage. Micky responded by saying "*I thought, 'Do you really want to know what transpires in these programmes?' I feel relieved that I am sharing my frustrations with a person who will take it to the upper level"*. I reminded Micky that I was wearing another cap. She must not look at me as an official. She smiled and said, "*I think you will be able to change*

the situation, for better future CPTD programmes". Micky continued explaining that these CPTD programmes had no proper planning regarding how many teachers would be invited: "*You go there, ready to learn new things and ask questions for clarity, but you will never get proper explanation. There will be too many of us in one venue, hence the overcrowding and no time given for questions".* Ellie responded quickly and said, "*It's not about time, usually when questions are asked, subject advisors will put your question in a 'parking bay' and promise to respond later. But, those questions are never answered because people are rushing to leave"*. Kea also indicated that the timing for the workshops was not right when they are tired, hungry, and ready to go home.

Micky resumed her collage discussion and talked about her feelings during the CPTD programmes: "*At times, you feel frustrated, asking yourself whether it's a workshop or a mass meeting".* Sue (*smiling*) said, "*Maybe it will be good if subject advisors can be taught facilitation skills*". I was a bit confused by that statement and did not respond but asked Micky to continue explaining her collage. Micky mentioned that most of the time, the CPTD programmes are disorganised. "*They make us lose our minds and doubt the profession,"* said Kea. *"Yes, they are so boring, and when you sit at the back, you can't even hear the facilitator,"* echoed Micky. *"What is the purpose of these CPTD programmes if they can't develop us as teachers? You sit in these workshops, not hearing a thing because of the number of people, then you become sad. It's like you are hitting a brick wall",* she said.

I sat there listening to all of the concerns, not knowing whether to respond or to defend the role of subject advisors. I was so disturbed, in fact, shattered by the discussions. I could see from their faces and listening to their voices that they were serious about what they were saying, and they were tired of CPTD programmes that are not helping them to improve in their classrooms.

Kea indicated that she did not find relevant pictures to use to make her collage, but managed to place words and some images. I then quickly asked Kea to tell us about her thinking and feelings as she was engaged in this collage making. Kea smiled and said, "*I feel so relieved and excited, thinking that finally, we are addressing the challenges of CPTD programmes"*. Kea continued and explained that during these CPTD programmes both subject advisors and teachers need each other as facilitation is a two-way process.

Immediately Sue responded, and she said, "*Subject advisors come with new information to share, and teachers need to receive that information, but it's not happening".* Sue continued: "*How do you learn when you are told what to do and not given practical examples on how to do it? Subject advisors don't even bother to ask what our needs are and address those needs."* I was lost by Sue's statement and asked her to further clarify it. She said: "*Subject advisors invite us to these workshops and will read the document and do not give practical examples. Nobody is a fool; we can all read documents in our own spare time".*

Each time when the discussions became harsh and heated, I wished I was not a subject advisor. This was hitting me hard, thinking of the sacrifices we make, and our hard work as subject advisors. Then, I remembered that I was not in the position to defend our field as subject advisors. One of the reasons why I chose to do self-study was to improve my practice and be a better person. My aim was to perform my duties better than before.

Ellie was quiet all this time, but nodding her head in agreement. I asked Ellie to tell us what she wanted to see happening. She was silent for a while and then responded: "*I want to see a change in the way workshops are conducted; it's not only me but all of us. I want development, I want to progress. I want to feel good after the workshop that I have gained knowledge and skills that can help me interact well with my learners".* Kea added: *"I want to be involved during a workshop, do practical activities so that I extend my knowledge".*

As I drove back home, I was thinking about our job as subject advisors and was disturbed by the discussions. I realised that our job entails more than I believe and know, but we need to be mirrors of our teachers so that we can take our profession to the next level. Below is what I wrote in my journal on that particular day.

> **Journal entry (11 October 2016)**
> *Subject advisors are also human beings. We also learn from our experience. We try to do our best under difficult conditions to develop our educators. What more do teachers want? What is it that we need to change, to correct the education system?*

7.3.1 My reflections

After the meeting, I acknowledged to myself that although I did understand teachers' concerns, I also thought about how stretched we were as subject advisors. I recalled my discussions with

the subject advisors (see Chapter Four) and realised that we (subject advisors and teachers) were blaming each other for the poor implementation of the prescribed curriculum. Teachers were blaming the subject advisors for not doing their work diligently, and subject advisors were also pointing fingers at the teachers for not implementing the curriculum correctly.

I recognised that our discussion of the collages raised hopes in the teachers that there would be a change in the way CPTD programmes were conducted. The teachers believed that their concerns would be taken to the person at the highest level within the education sector, and challenges would be addressed. I saw more clearly my responsibility for taking the lead in making changes to how PDPs were designed and facilitated.

7.4 Abbib Junior Primary School

Our meeting started later than the usual time in this school. Only Tamia and I were sitting in the room waiting for the other teachers. Tamia indicated that Sally was not at school because she had had a car accident. I sympathised and promised to send Sally a message. Then Zodwa and Cindy joined us. I asked the group whether it would be wise to continue with our research discussion without Sally or whether we should postpone it for another day. The group suggested that we carry on because the exams would be starting in two weeks and they did not know when Sally would be back at the school.

I told the three teachers that I was going to present my collage to them and that I expected them to make their collages and share them with the group for discussion. Zodwa did not look happy, and she said, "Madam, before you present your collage, please explain to us what a collage is? And how are we going to do it?" I was not surprised by Zodwa's question because, as I told them, my own first time seeing a collage was when I was a teacher educator.

I explained to the group that a collage is a technique of making art by pasting pictures and words from magazines or newspapers about a particular incident that you want to highlight. I asked the teachers to choose and paste images and words onto a blank paper, to give meaning. I was not sure if my explanation was clear enough, but I told the teachers not to worry as I would present my collage first.

After I had shared my collage, I gave the teachers magazines and asked them to fetch extra magazines from their classrooms if they had some. Tamia came back with a pile of magazines,

which I realised later did not help much as they were copies of *Men's Health* with pictures of healthy food and exercises for the male body. Teachers struggled to find relevant images. I had realised that at Montana Primary School. I had tried to get some different magazines this time, but again these did not help the teachers. Teachers were involved in discussions, trying to help each other find pertinent pictures. Finally, they asked me whether they could start their conversation, as some had not found appropriate images to make their collage. In what follows, I present the two collages that were completed in this session.

Tamia was the first teacher to present her collage (Figure 7.3). She said that she had put together her collage from right to left and would explain it starting from the right hand side (unlike when writing when you start from left to right). She said her memories went back to when she was attending a workshop on CAPS for Mathematics for the FP. Tamia said: "*I sat there quietly, listening to what the facilitator was explaining. I was lost about her explanation. I sensed that this was adding more administrative work on us as teachers".* Tamia raised her voice and said: "*When are we going to teach the learners and pay individual attention to learners who have barriers in learning if there is too much paperwork?"* Zodwa supported Tamia's statement and said, *"Yes, too much paperwork, but there is no support given by subject advisors".* I then asked Zodwa to explain further about this paperwork. She grinned and said, *"Lesson plans, assessment tasks, marking learners' work, continuous assessment, activities, workbooks, for remediation, 'kuningi, kuningi nje' [it's too much, the list is endless]".*

I explained (*politely*) to the teachers that it was part of their job description to prepare before going into the classroom to teach the learners. They should also assess continuously to check the progress of their learners. I wanted to say more but became conscious that this was not the right time, as I would make the teachers stop venting their frustrations.

Figure 7.3. ***Tamia's memory of CPTD presented through collage.***

Tamia continued and said that while sitting in that CPTD programme she felt that all that the facilitators were suggesting that they must do in their classrooms was adding more load: "*How are we going to do it? Nobody is showing us and giving us clear guidelines"*. Tamia continued her argument:

> *You see, as teachers, when we come to these workshops, we are blindfolded. We can see with one eye, and we are hoping that the subject advisors will help us open our second eye so that we can do our best in the classroom in terms of curriculum delivery. We want to be on top of things, climb to the top, we need subject advisors to lift us up, but some are failing to do their duties.*

I was interested in understanding these duties. Cindy explained: *"It's a waste of time to attend these CPTD programmes. Firstly, its 'timing', they start late and last about two hours, and facilitator reads the document as is, even if she puts it on PowerPoint. We need real-life examples that we can use in the classroom. You leave the workshop with no new knowledge gained, nothing"*. Tamia explained that she felt as if she was in a deep hole and needed help before she would run away from the profession.

Zodwa was invited to present her collage (Figure 7.4). She first explained that she paged through magazines and did not find suitable pictures for her story, so she instead wrote words and drew a picture.

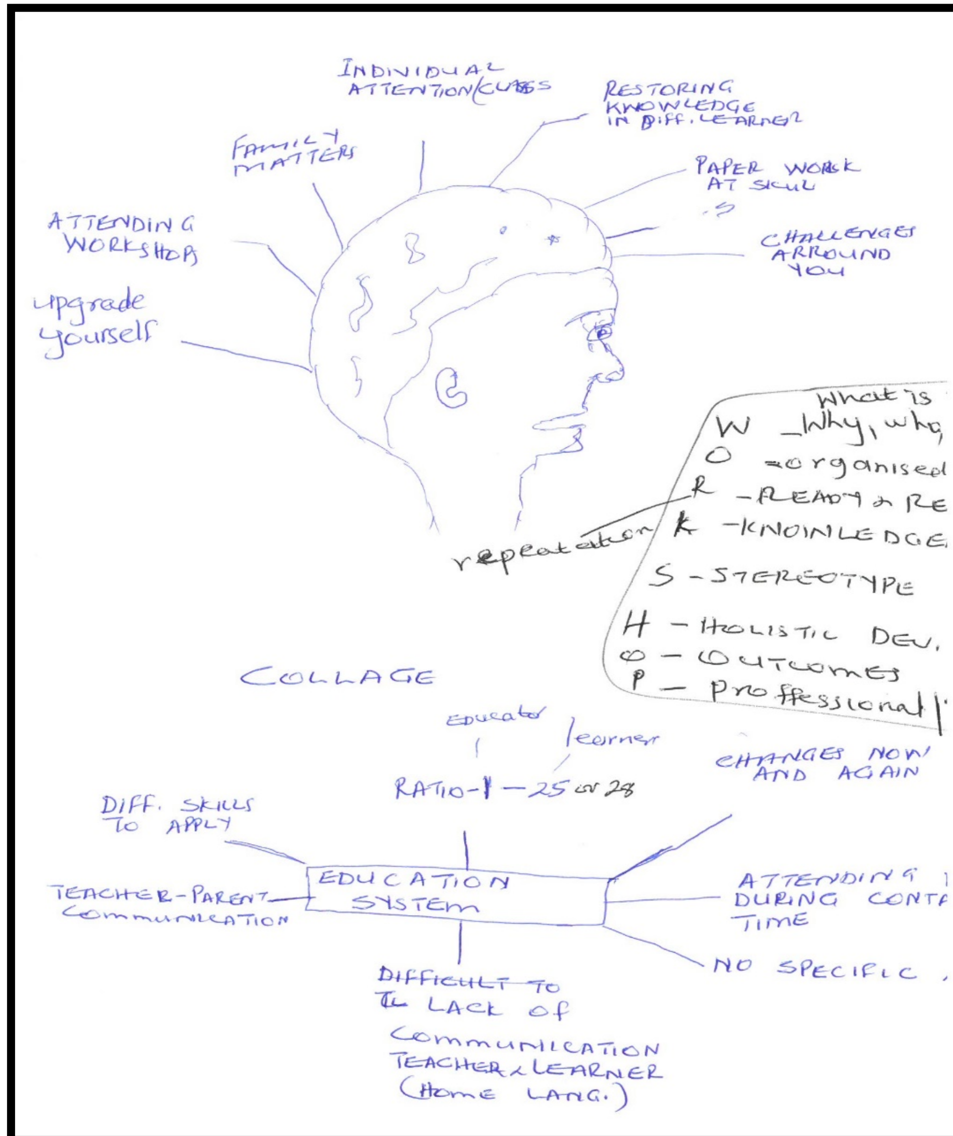


Figure 7.4. Zodwa's memory collage.

Zodwa said her memories went back to when she attended a Home Language workshop and asked herself, *"Why don't subject advisors share with us how to restore knowledge with different learners, especially those who need individual attention?"*. I was astonished by Zodwa's statement and wanted to make sure I understood it. I asked Zodwa to unpack it. Zodwa's home language is IsiZulu, and she teaches in a school where the medium of instruction is English. The learners are predominantly black learners whose home language is also isiZulu.

I predicted that Zodwa needed more support on how to deal with problematic learners. Instead of answering the question directly, Zodwa said: *"As teachers, we think about the challenges we have in our classrooms. Subject advisors are not coming with solutions, but they are telling us what to do that requires more workload and paperwork".*

Zodwa raised an important point that she wants to upgrade and improve her qualification, but because of family matters and the pressure of school work, she cannot. Zodwa continued her argument and blamed the education system: *"When I sit on these CPTD programmes, I always think, do subject advisors know how many learners we have in our classroom? What is the teacher-pupil ratio? I have 56 learners in my class, and here they are not telling us how to deal with overcrowded classrooms."*

Cindy raised a further point that what frustrates them is that during the workshop, they are given activities as a group, and when they present, all groups report back, and no feedback as to whether it is wrong is given.

The discussion assisted me to do self-introspection and I decided to enter my thoughts in the journal:

> **Journal entry (17 0ctober 2016)**
> *Who is to blame here? Many learners are not doing well in their assessments. In some of the schools, teachers are behind in their curriculum content. In some schools, they don't even follow the curriculum. One just wonders where the problem is.*

7.4.1 My reflections

From the discussions with these teachers, I realised that when teachers attend PDPs sessions, they come with different expectations and needs, which sometimes are not aligned with what we subject advisors have planned. This misalignment is reflected in what we encounter as subject advisors when we do school visits, as teachers seem not to do what we think they have been workshopped on. We expect teachers to toe the line in terms of implementing the prescribed curriculum. But, have we bothered to check whether or not teachers gain useful knowledge and skills from attending PDP programmes? I appreciated that all CPTD must be correlated to what teachers need, not to what we *think* they need.

7.5 Udosi Combined School

I was an hour early at Udosi School as I wanted to humbly request Zola, the HoD, to allow teachers to talk freely about their lived experiences of CPTD programmes. Zola had a Master's degree in Education, so I thought she would understand the data generation process. I asked her how I was doing so far in trying to generate data, whether teachers were responding well and felt free to talk, not fearing her or me as their supervisors. She assured me that the teachers were fine and were willing to participate. I relaxed as I thought I had conveyed my message. My concern was that in our last discussion, I had noticed that whenever teachers made a contribution, Zola immediately came in and apologised about the statement. For example, when discussing the roles and responsibilities of subject advisors, Knox had made a statement that it had been a while since she had seen a subject advisor visiting the school. Immediately Zola had jumped into the conversation and said:

> *Subject advisors have not been in a classroom for a while. Please don't get us wrong, subject advisors do come to school and see the HoD, okay. So please, we must not be misquoted. Subject advisors do come to the office to see me. I don't want you to leave here with the wrong impression, subject advisors do come, but they only see me as an HoD.*

I did understand Zola might feel that it was her role to support and protect her teachers. As a leader, you might think that you should respond on behalf of your team if you think that they need your protection. But, I also thought back to my experiences as a novice teacher when I felt that I did not have a voice because I had to just listen and do what the principal told me (see Chapter Three). I realised that Zola might have had similar teaching experiences to mine. Those experiences might have made her think that that it was her responsibility to speak on behalf of her teachers rather than to encourage them to speak for themselves. Still, I hoped that the teacher participants at Udosi School would find their voices in this session.

After my conversation with Zola, the other teachers arrived. I showed the teachers my collage and tried to encourage them to relax and speak freely by asking them to tell me what story the collage conveyed about my lived experiences of CPTD. The teachers were excited and came up with different ideas relating to my collage. Zola said, *"Your workshop was full, and everybody participated".* Knox laughed and said, "*No, I think everything here was chaotic. Some are busy on the cell phone".* Then, I explained the collage as I had done with the other two groups of teachers.

There was silence after I presented my collage. I invited teachers to ask questions for clarity. There was quietness in the room. Everyone was looking at my collage. In the absence of questions, I explained that I wanted the teachers to think of a workshop they had attended together as FP teachers and to share with me their experiences through a group collage. I asked the teachers to start discussing what they would do as a group. I gave them a big chart, magazines, scissors and glue. Then the class teacher of the class where our meeting was held went to her storeroom and came back with different coloured pens for them to use as well.

I had come up with the idea of a group collage for the teachers at this school because I was concerned that they might feel too shy to make and present individual collages. I hoped that making a group collage would give them confidence and the freedom to talk.

The teachers looked at each other and quickly formed a small group for discussion. The voice I heard the most was that of the HoD, who was suggesting how it should be done. I did not want to interfere with their conversation, but reminded the teachers that they had different lived experiences of CPTD and needed to try to put them together. I also mentioned that they could all attend one workshop on the same day but view it differently. I explained that I wanted each one to bring her memories and contribute her experiences of the CPTD programme.

There was a lot of debate in the group, but I could not hear them as they were whispering to each other. I gave them enough time to make sure that they had remembered everything and put it together. After some time, Anele held the collage up and said, "*We are done and we have drawn a hand in the middle of the chart, and it represents the five of us"*.

The chart was colourful, and teachers had really used their creativity (Figure 7.5). At Abbib Primary School, Zodwa had decided to draw and said it was her collage, and I did not want to discourage her as I was not judging what teachers came up with. Here at Udosi Primary, the group came up with another different presentation of a collage. They mentioned that they had not been able to find many relevant pictures and hence decided to use more words in their collage using coloured pens.

Figure 7.5. ***Group collage.***

I had asked the teachers to help me respond to my second research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development?* The teachers did not answer this question as I expected but had their own creative way of approaching the task. They first explained what CPTD should be, then what advantages it has for them as teachers, and lastly, they discussed their lived experiences as they mentioned disadvantages of CPTD. This was also fine with me.

I did not want to discourage them but asked the teachers to explain to me what a collage is. Knox responded: "*A collage is the pictures and words that are placed in a blank paper, those pictures combined with words can tell you a story or an incident"*. After they had finished, we took a picture of the collage. It looked bright and imaginative.

I asked the teachers to tell me more about their collage. I also insisted that since this was the effort of the group, everyone would have an opportunity to say something. Zola, the HoD was the first to comment: "*It was a wonderful opportunity to work as a team. Personally, I have realised the importance of listening to other colleagues."*

I wanted to comment on her statement but felt they might be distracted from their activity of discussing the collage. Zola then explained that as a group, they thought it was essential to give their understanding of CPTD. This would help them understand why it is necessary to attend the CPTD programmes and what benefits CPTD would bring them: "*For us, when we defined CPTD we thought nobody is perfect, this is a lifelong learning."* Thembie supported this, saying, *"Ukufunda akunaminyaka, ufunda uze ufe."* [Education doesn't have a specific age, and you learn new things every day until you die.]

Anele was next, and explained that after they have attended the CPTD programmes, they are expected to go back to their classroom for implementation of policies: "*How can we implement something that we didn't understand? The changes in the curriculum confuse us as teachers with minimum support from subject advisors*." Zola responded: "*You attend a workshop where the circular says 'Assessment workshop' in which, during the workshop it's only 5% content that subject advisors explain procedures of how and what to assess, no practical examples are given*". I grasped that teachers were now specific on certain subject content that frustrated them.

I explained to the teachers, "*Assessment is an integral part of learning and teaching. It can't be dealt with separately, as we assess continuously as we teach".* But then, I realised that I should not have responded in that manner, as it would stop the teachers feeling free to talk about their lived experiences.

Knox explained that CPTD is about holistic development, as she pointed at the picture of the learners: "*New stars. If subject advisors develop us well as teachers, these learners will have a better future".* Lindy explained her point and talked about stimulation: "*I believe these CPTD programmes are designed to stimulate us as teachers, to revive us, provide us with relevant skills and knowledge so that when we engage our learners, we don't experience problems*." Zola responded by saying: "*But that idea has never been realised".*

Thembie explained that the timing of the workshops was terrible. Workshops were starting after lunch, and teachers were leaving before the workshops had finished. It was a relief to me as a subject advisor when Thembie also said that CPTD programmes give teachers a platform for sharing ideas with other teachers; hence in their schools, they attend cluster groups. A cluster group is a group of teachers learning together and sharing views on the curriculum. It is like a 'community of practice' where promising practices are explored and shared. Teachers

come from different neighbouring schools. Usually these clusters will have between 9–15 teachers from the same grade. In these clusters, teachers decide which topics they struggle with and which items they would like to deal with at the next meeting. In my experience, teachers can learn well when they are in cluster groups, and subject advisors can interact effectively with teachers in cluster groups.

Next, Anele responded and said: *"Why constant changes in the curriculum? When you think you understand how to impart your content to your learners, you are called to the workshop, and there are changes*". Quickly Zodwa uttered very softly, "*No support we get from subject advisors".* However, at the same time, teachers were explaining that CPTD programmes inspire them to go back and do the best with their learners because of the knowledge they have gained.

I sat listening to their discussion and was asking myself, "What goes wrong then?" In this particular school, I knew that some teachers had challenges implementing the changes in curriculum policy. The discussions were so interesting – all teachers now seemed open and free to talk. Thembie explained that her lived experience of CPTD was where she attended a Home Language workshop: "*Some facilitators have a language barrier, and they do a lot of code-switching*".

I asked myself, "What did Thembie mean by 'language barrier'"? Then, I thought of myself: isiZulu is my home language, and I carry out my conversations and discussions well in my mother tongue, but when facilitating, I use English as it is the medium of instruction. I must admit that I do a lot of code-switching between English and isiZulu to make sure everyone understands the concepts explained.

Zola continued in a complaining way: "*At times, we don't feel like attending these workshops because of the lack of appropriate methodology. Facilitators fail to distinguish between what is right and wrong. What's the point of groups doing activities during the workshop because at the end, the comment, there will be no comment, except that all groups have done correctly?"*

Anele said her lived experience of CPTD was when she attended a workshop that was so packed, the facilitators could not even walk in between the rows. There was no loudspeaker, and the facilitators were not audible. Anele also repeatedly complained about too many

changes in the curriculum. *"Workshops should be clarifying on concepts that we don't understand, not to add more on our work without clear explanations".*

7.5.1 My reflections

I found that when these teachers worked as a team, they seemed more confident and free to talk. As teachers were venting out their frustrations about PDP sessions, I thought deeply about PDP sessions. I thought about how they must be structured for the teachers to gain more knowledge and skills.

7.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explained how I involved the teachers in collage making and discussions to elicit teachers' opinions and their thinking and feelings about CPTD programmes. Using an arts-based activity assisted teachers to freely discuss the challenges with CPTD and how it impacts on their work as teachers. Teachers had different expectations of how CPTD should be done and what it is supposed to address.

I felt great pleasure in explaining to the teachers the frustrations we as subject advisors encounter when planning and facilitating CPTD programmes. For me, it was an opportunity to pass on a message to the teachers that we sometimes experience hindrances, even if we plan well. For example, some situations are beyond our control, such as the choice of venues. We use sites that are free and available at that particular time because of budget constraints. I had to explain to the teachers that it was not intentional to bring most teachers to one venue, but that teachers will often crowd a particular venue because they feel that it is a safer one or because it is closer to where they live.

Our also discussions helped me to understand the viewpoints of the teachers. For example, I showed on my collage how some teachers are on their cell phones during the sessions. The teachers highlighted that at times they use their cell phones not to socialise, but rather to check on curriculum information and explanations of curriculum terms that subject advisors do not fully explain to them. I quickly thought about how our world has changed in terms of the use of technology and the need for me to incorporate more technology when facilitating CPTD programmes.

The research process of collage making and discussion assisted me in gaining valuable insight into the teachers' lived experiences of CPTD. It helped me to do introspection, and I began to understand more about why teachers behaved in a particular manner during CPTD sessions. My understanding of social constructivism helped me appreciate teachers as critical thinkers who can comprehend and improve their knowledge during professional development sessions.

In the next chapter, Chapter Eight, I move on to responding to the third research question: *How might I use insights into subject advisors' and teachers' lived experiences and perspectives to improve my understanding and practice of CPTD?* I reflect on the Home Language Grade R workshop that I planned with other subject advisors and conducted with the assistance of teachers as facilitators.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONDUCTING WORKSHOPS WITH A NEW OUTLOOK OF COLLABORATION

"Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success" - *Henry Ford*

8.1 Introduction

In Chapter Seven, I described how I continued to involve the teacher participants in discussions and arts-based activities. I narrated how teachers from the three different schools constructed collages to assist me in responding to the second research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development?* The discussions with the teachers assisted me in thinking about new ways of planning and facilitating practical and creative CPTD sessions. I understood that a central part of my role as a subject advisor is to engage teachers in meaningful professional learning activities.

In response to my third research question – *How might I use insights into subject advisors' and teachers' lived experiences and perspectives to improve my understanding and practice of CPTD?* – I decided to start trying out some of the ideas I gained by interacting with teachers and subject advisors. I collaborated with subject advisors and teachers to plan and conduct an English Home Language workshop. My understanding of social constructivism supported my thinking that teachers and subject advisors learn best when interacting with each other. A sociocultural theoretical viewpoint accentuated that teachers and subject advisors could discover new ideas and generate various activities. The activities were developed in a well-planned environment and displayed teachers' cultural backgrounds.

In this chapter, I describe how I organised the workshop first with the subject advisors and then with selected teachers. I further explain how we joined forces to conduct the Home Language workshop in all three Circuit Management Centres (CMCs). I include photographs of resources used in different venues and give some examples of feedback from teachers.

8.2 Starting to put my new insights into practice

From interacting with the teacher participants in my research (as described in Chapters Five to Seven), I learnt lessons: to be patient, to listen, and to think critically about teachers' needs. I realised that there was an urgent need for change, and it had to start with me.

Doing the self-study helped me to look at teachers differently, understanding the frustrations that they were experiencing in their classrooms. I also discovered that teachers have a wealth of experience, and they like sharing ideas.

I recognised that when you conduct a workshop with a large number of participants, there is less interaction and less participation from teachers. I also appreciated that learning becomes exciting when you use real examples and concrete resources. FP teachers appreciate it when you involve them and do practical hands-on activities that are tangible.

After I had finished the data generation sessions with the teacher participants, at the back of my mind, I still heard the teachers' voices complaining about PDPs they had attended. Teachers had lost faith in these programmes. I wished to change the way I had been doing things. I wanted to find new and innovative ideas that would give understanding and motivate teachers and other subject advisors, to rebuild the trust that had been lost and nourish good relationships amongst teachers and subject advisors. I was optimistic that this approach could work for both teachers and subject advisors.

At this time, I had not yet formally met with the other subject advisors to share the teachers' concerns that I had become aware of through my research. There was an upcoming English Home Language workshop for Grade R teachers. I saw this as an opportunity to introduce changes in a way that everybody would embrace.

I wanted to involve both subject advisors and teachers to be part of the planning and facilitating of the workshop, for them to participate and gain more from it. I anticipated that if subject advisors collaborated with teachers, teacher learning could be enhanced, and the needs of teachers in terms of content and pedagogical knowledge could be more usefully addressed (Bantwini, 2019). I hoped that this collaboration would contribute to the professional growth of teachers and subject advisors, including me.

I understood that change was not going to happen overnight – change is a process, and it is a journey. I wanted to travel that journey with my colleagues and teachers. It was clear to me that many subject advisors and teachers were feeling frustrated. But, they were willing to change, and they needed someone to hold their hand and move with them in the right direction.

8.2.1 Planning with other subject advisors

In our subject advisor planning meetings, I suggested some new ways in which the Home Language workshop could be organised and facilitated. I also recommended to my colleagues that we could involve teachers as facilitators in our team. I shared my view that peers can learn well when taught by other peers on the same level.

I suggested to my colleagues that it might be helpful for all the workshop activities to be done practically, using concrete resources. I also proposed that teachers be invited to share their classroom ideas. The other subject advisors seemed to like these ideas. But, at first, they were reluctant to take this new approach because of time constraints and lack of resources.

Although some subject advisors saw this new approach as time-consuming, they were eager to know if it would bring about a change for the better in the workshops. Because of time constraints, we agreed that the activities would be few. We decided that it would be preferable for teachers to leave the workshop venue with some useful knowledge and skills rather than to try and finish the planned programme and only find out later that they had not gained anything. Our aim was for teachers to gain more knowledge and share ideas that they could use in their classrooms.

8.2.2 Planning the workshop with teachers

I was hoping to create a situation where both teachers and subject advisors would assume shared responsibility in collaborating with one another. Samaras (2011, p. 74) asserts that "teachers work in an intellectually safe and supportive community to improve their practice by making it explicit to themselves and to others through critical collaborative inquiries". I anticipated that if I involved teachers and other subject advisors, we would improve our understanding and facilitation skills because of the feedback from others.

Because we had cluster groups where teachers from different schools used to meet quarterly to further discuss the challenges of subject content areas, I revived the clusters. In these cluster schools, I encouraged teachers to share their experiences to improve their pedagogy (Jita & Mokhele, 2014). Teachers found a working space to plan together. The clusters allowed some teachers to manage and lead the groups. That involved setting up dates, deciding on the venue

for their meeting, and discussing with others about a tricky topic to be covered. Some teachers gained confidence, and they became cluster co-ordinators.

I targeted cluster co-ordinators to be part of the CPTD team as a way of also developing them. The other subject advisors and I met with cluster coordinators, looked at problematic content areas, and came up with the training programme for the Home Language workshop.

We first looked at what resources the cluster coordinators had in their classrooms, which we could use during the workshop. We also looked at the activities we wanted to do and developed appropriate materials. It was exciting to create the resources together with the teachers, and I thought that our next workshop with the teachers could be on materials development.

8.2.3 Home Language Grade R workshop

At last, everyone was ready for the Home Language workshop that was going to take place at different venues and times. I understood my purpose and my role, and it helped in building an energetic and motivated team.

The Home Language workshop took place over two days in different venues on different days. Previous workshops were conducted in Circuits. As explained previously, our District consists of 356 primary schools. A District has three Circuit Management Clusters with approximately 120 primary schools in each Circuit. With this Home Language workshop, we decided to combine cluster schools, and workshops were done in different Wards (see Chapter Seven). Workshops were organised closer to where teachers teach, as we do with cluster schools. Subject advisors had to accept shared responsibility for planning and facilitation.

This Home Language workshop was different from the other workshops: it was more hands-on and very practical in nature, where concrete resources were used. As explained above, in addition to us as subject advisors facilitating the workshop, we identified competent and committed teachers to lead with workshop with us.

All concepts were demonstrated practically using resources. We had resources that you can buy from shops and resources made out of waste materials. We encouraged teachers to improvise and make their own using waste materials. In the workshop venue, we set up and

demonstrated how the classroom must be organised and managed. All demonstrations were practical, and they were done by facilitators and teachers themselves.

The workshops took a longer time than usual, but they seemed to be more beneficial to teachers. The teachers were taught in smaller groups, and there was more interaction in developing activities (see Figure 8.1). The number of participants in each group was between 15 and 25 teachers. That allowed teachers more exposure, more deliberation, and more interaction with the subject matter. Teachers themselves had an opportunity to add by sharing their experiences from the classroom.

Figure 8.1. ***Teachers' workshop in smaller groups.***

Figure 8.1 shows teachers sitting in the workshop. This is a smaller group compared to the usual case of a large number of teachers attending at the same venue. There is no overcrowding, as teachers had complained that when there are many attendees, facilitators cannot be heard by those sitting at the back. The teachers were all attentive, and when it was time for them to do activities, it was easier to manage the small groups.

8.2.3.1. The Indoni and Umthebe Circuit workshops

The Indoni and Umthebe Circuit Management Centres (CMCs) were the first Circuits to meet. Despite dividing teachers into different, closer venues, the numbers were still substantial. I also observed that the teacher facilitators were not confident with a hands-on style of facilitation. At Indoni and Umthebe CMC, subject advisors and facilitators preferred to write on the charts rather than to draw a picture that can tell a story (see Figure 8.2). This happened irrespective of how much I had explained to them that we should try and be more practical and use concrete examples for this workshop. I tried to change their minds, but at the same time did not want to interfere with their thinking and discourage them. I knew it would take time for them to understand what I really wanted to see, but slowly they would become more confident.

Figure 8.2. ***Resources made by teachers at Indoni Circuit.***

When you look at the resources made by Indoni facilitators (Figure 8.2), you will notice that there are no pictures and no concrete objects. Facilitators agreed that their information should be written on a large chart. It must be noted that as subject advisors, we were responsible for individual Circuits. Although all of us were present in the workshop, planning, and choice of

resources were decided on by the subject advisor for that Circuit. We still have the challenge developing teachers in the Indoni Circuit. This Circuit is more rural, and the schools tend to be less well resourced.

I had explained to the subject advisor and teacher facilitators who were solely responsible for the Indoni Circuit that the workshop must be more practical with the help of resources. However, they decided to put their facts on large charts. For me, this was almost the same as just reading the policy document to the teachers. Nevertheless, looking at the photographs of the Indoni Circuit workshop helped us as subject advisors to reflect, and at the next workshop for the Qhakaza Circuit, there were significant changes.

8.2.3.2. The Qhakaza workshop

All subject advisors were present during the Qhakaza workshop. Working with Qhakaza teacher facilitators was very exciting as they had creative ideas to share. The Qhakaza CMC has more advantaged schools. I thought, in the future, if we worked more closely with teachers from advantaged schools, it could help us develop and grow more as subject advisors, and my own practice would improve.

The inclusion of Mrs Pitcher as part of our facilitating team was brilliant. Mrs Pitcher was an experienced teacher who had taught for 22 years in the FP, with experience of teaching in all Grades from R–3. She was very active in her cluster. She was responsible for inviting her cluster group to their meetings, where she would share and facilitate problematic subject content areas. At times she would request an expert to come and share with the teachers how to deal with learners with barriers in learning. She was enthusiastic and had exciting ideas.

I wanted Mrs Pitcher to share her creative ideas with other teachers. I also thought it would help other teachers to learn best when their colleagues at the same level were facilitating. I hoped that they would feel free to ask questions and to argue if the need arose, not being afraid of being reprimanded.

Teachers did seem to feel free to share their concerns. For instance, some teachers revealed that they had trouble with introducing phonic sounds to learners. (The English Home Language policy document is silent about this.) For example, Mrs Ryn asked: "In what order should the phonic sounds be taught in the Foundation Phase?" It was exciting to see teachers sharing ideas

about what works for them in their classrooms. Some teachers said they start with the phonic sound ‘l’ because it is easy to write and remember. Some teachers mentioned that they teach the five vowels first because most words have these vowels.

Mrs Naidoo asked this question: “Which writing script is good for Foundation Phase learners?” Most teachers agreed that they use Nelson script, as it makes cursive writing easier. Mrs Van Rensburgh asked: “Should Grade R be taught uppercase and lowercase letters when writing and reading?” Mrs Pitcher was able to respond to these questions very well, also sharing her classroom experience. During the workshop, I gathered that teachers felt free to ask questions and were eager to participate and to share ideas.

Figure 8.3. ***Resources made by teachers at Qhakaza Circuit.***

Two phonic tables with objects and pictures starting with the phonic letter sound ‘b’ and ‘l’ were set up before the workshop began (see Figure 8.3). Participants were shown a phonic table set up with concrete objects starting with the letter ‘b’, for example, a ball, bat, bag. It was shared that learners can set up their ‘b’ objects for show and tell to develop learners’ listening and speaking skills. Facilitators (subject advisor and teachers) used practical examples and concrete and semi-concrete resources when introducing the phonics sound ‘b’. We showed the teachers a ball, then a picture of a boy kicking a ball. The letter-sound ‘b’ was also pasted on

the whiteboard for teachers to see. The facilitator showed teachers how to write the sound, also moulding the letter using dough to develop teachers' creative skills.

The response from teachers was excellent and they also gave more ideas on the subject content. Teachers demonstrated how they, for example, teach different sounds and then words to form sentences in their classrooms. This was a fantastic life experience for me. Teachers were critically reflecting on their own practice.

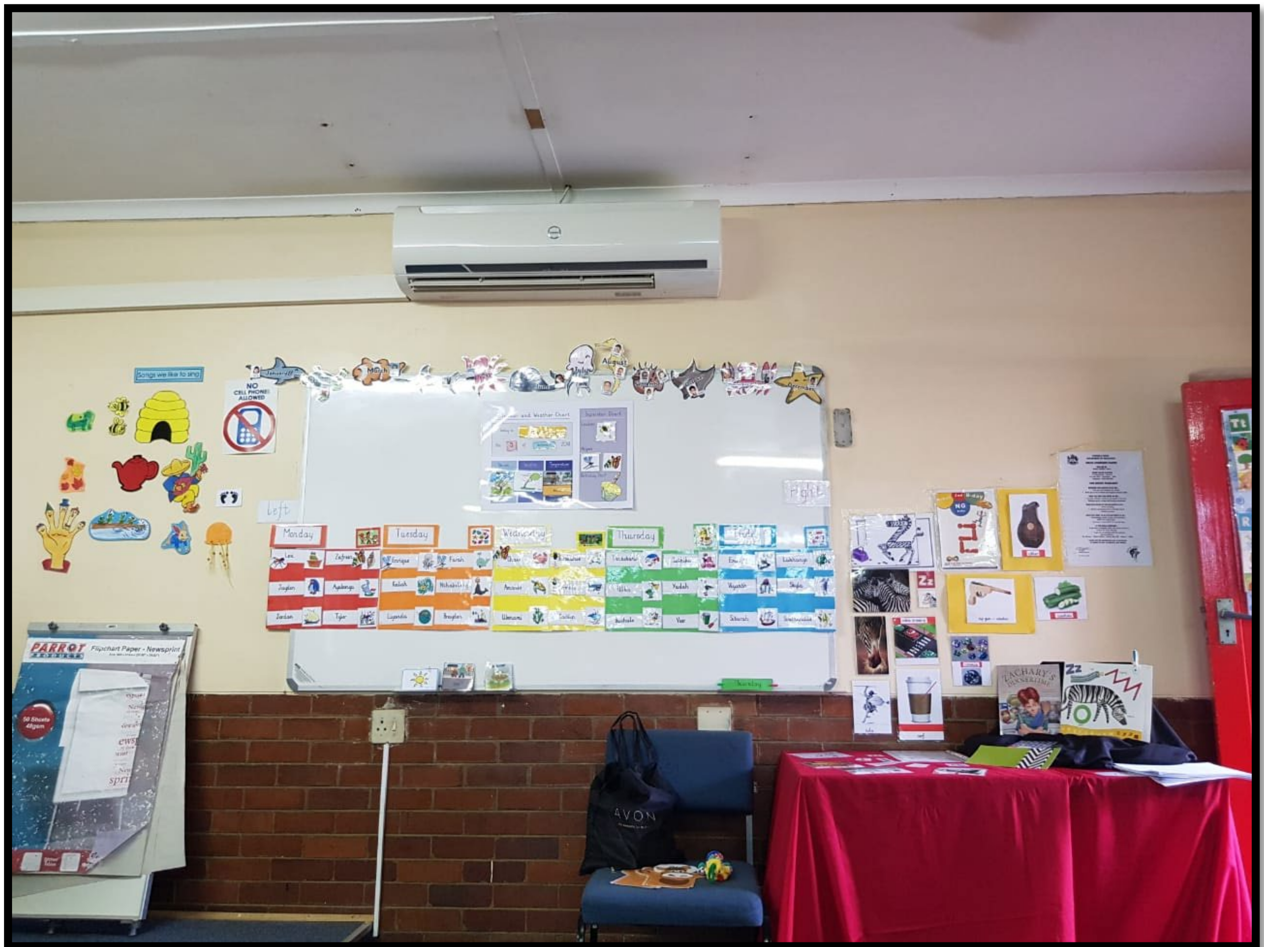


Figure 8.4. ***Resources created by teachers.***

Figure 8.5. ***Concrete resources.***

Concrete resources (Figure 8.5) were shown to teachers so that they could be used in developing learners' fine motor skills. One facilitator came with a polystyrene meat tray where she had used a hairpin and wool to thread through it. She emphasised to teachers that if they do not have money to buy resources, they can improvise.

This workshop showed my colleagues and me that teachers have a wealth of experience. It is crucial for us as subject advisors to listen to and learn from them. I saw teachers as resourceful and arriving with a problem-solving approach. Teachers shared brilliant ideas. We decided that all the practical examples would be collected in the form of a booklet. This could then be used by novice teachers and those who were still struggling to come up with their own ideas and make their own resources. The collaborative approach of working together during planning assisted us to share our expertise to be a strong team.

After the workshop, the teachers even sent me spontaneous messages of appreciation through email and WhatsApp. I believe that they were anticipating more communication from me. I hoped that I had been able to start to create a long-lasting relationship based on credibility, trust and respect.

8.2.6 Feedback from teachers

At the end of the workshop, teachers were given evaluation forms to complete. After looking at the completed evaluation forms, I decided to group teachers' responses and came up with three broad categories to summarise their feedback:

- Sharing of ideas
- Using concrete resources
- Demonstration of activities

8.2.6.1 Sharing of ideas

Teachers learn best when ideas are shared. It also helps the novice teachers who are still new in the profession to get more ideas on how to introduce a specific concept. When teachers leave the workshop venue, they should have different ideas about teaching different concepts. They can also learn from others how to deal with learners who are slow in grasping concepts, something that is not covered in the curriculum policy document.

8.2.6.2 Using concrete resources

The 'show and tell' method is suitable for the learners, but it is also useful for the teachers. Teachers appreciated the use of concrete objects during the workshop session. Teachers were also allowed to feel and touch the resources. They also gained more ideas about making resources using waste material.

8.2.6.3 Demonstration of activities

The setting up and arrangement of the classroom aroused the teachers' interest. All FP teachers, irrespective of space and number of learners, must have a print-rich classroom. The demonstration of activities helped teachers to link theory with practice.

It was then clear to me as a subject advisor that teachers do not need to be told but want to be involved in activities. Activities cannot only be explained. The facilitator needs to do a

demonstration and also needs to ask teachers to come up with their own examples to add to the existing activities. This experience gave me the idea of modelling lessons when I do school visits. I reorganised that the usual procedure of coming with a school visit form that requires checking and ticking off what the teacher has done or has in her classroom was not assisting either the teachers or the subject advisors.

8.2.6.4 Telephonic messages and emails

I was excited when I received spontaneous text messages and emails from teachers about how they benefitted from the workshop. Below, I have included some examples of the text messages and emails I received. I had never before received such feedback in the 17 years that I had been a subject advisor.

Teachers expressed how they liked the workshops because they shared ideas about what works best in their classrooms. They felt that the workshop had further developed them. They emphasised that the use of concrete resources helped in making the workshop successful. Teachers were excited about bringing and demonstrating in tangible objects

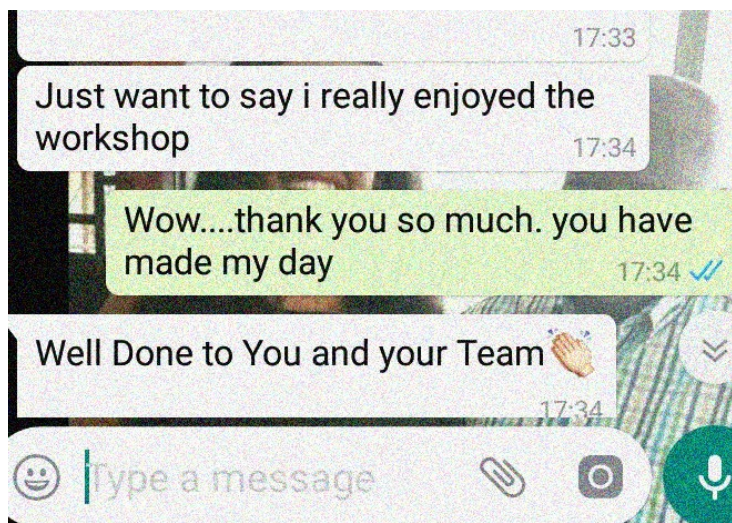
> Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android
>
> ----- Forwarded message -----
>
> **From:** "xxxxxxxxxxx " <xxxxxxxxxxxx@gmail.com>
>
> **To:** "Hlengiwe Mhlongo" <hdbmhlongo@yahoo.com>
>
> **Sent:** Sun, 30 Sep 2018 at 20:32
>
> **Subject:** Report on Language workshop
>
> *I am a grade R educator for the past 23 years.*
>
> *I must compliment the ECD unit at the District for the manner in which their recent Language workshop was conducted. Although the CAPS document gives guidelines and how to determine the readiness of Grade R learners at the end of the year, as an educator I am always looking for new innovative and creative ideas to teach my learners. Thus achieving desired results in a fun-filled way. The workshop held at Qhakaza Circuit on the 5 and 6 September 2018 was designed in such a way that the facilitators spent the bulk of the time-sharing ideas with participants. Only 10 minutes was used to give an overview of CAPS. This was a wise decision taken while planning. Participants felt motivated to share their experiences with others also. This ensured*

that everyone took back new ideas for both learning activities as well as teaching resources.

We had a phonic table set up and many educators remarked that the idea and manner it was set up is great and that they would use it in their own classes. The phonic table was used to show how new phonic sounds can be introduced. Facilitators provided examples of ready-made resources with instructions for use. They then gave ideas for making of own resources from anti-waste. The facilitator emphasised that in the absence of 'fancy' resources, as educators we should be creative and improvise, thus ensuring that 2018 grade R learners will be ready for Grade 1 in 2019.

Mrs Pitcher unpacked what emergent reading and writing skills for Grade R means. She used a hand-out which she designed specifically for the workshop. In between reading the handout, she included a question for participants.

To the subject advisor, once again, thank you and your facilitators for an informative workshop.



From: "xxxxxxxxxxxx" <xxxxxxxxxxx@gmail.com>

To: "hdbmhlongo@yahoo.com" <hdbmhlongo@yahoo.com>

Sent: Sat, 8 Sep 2018 at 21:02

Subject: Ecd workshop

Hi, Mawi. I trust you are well.

I would like to thank you and your team for facilitating the two-day language workshop at the Education Centre. I really enjoyed the workshop. It was well planned. The set-up of the venue was enhancing. Interaction between the educators and facilitators was amazing because of the physical evidence of ideas that were shared.

I have done a report back on this workshop to my school management team and I most definitely mentioned the knowledge and creative ideas that I have accomplished.

Well done to you and your phenomenal Team. God's blessing upon yours.

Kind Regards

8.3 Conclusion

At this PDP, I observed that teachers and subject advisors gained in confidence. Teachers and subject advisors cooperated, learning became fun, and they grew as professionals. I wanted both teachers and subject advisors to be reflective practitioners, to reflect critically on their own practice. The aim was for subject advisors and teachers to work together in collaborative professional learning.

I gained valuable insights into the value of constructing knowledge collaboratively with teachers and subject advisors. A sociocultural theoretical stance helped me realise the importance of teachers and subject advisors sharing ideas to solve learning problems in context-appropriate ways. My understanding of social constructivism assisted me to better understand how teachers and subject advisors gain more knowledge through interacting with one another as construct meaning. I observed how teachers could understand and adapt knowledge they acquired through practical demonstrations for their own contexts.

I realised that it was important that I motivate subject advisors to conduct CPTD programmes of quality rather than quantity. This workshop assisted me to reflect critically on what I had done before and opened up new avenues for how I personally can continue to improve and perform better as a subject advisor. The workshop allowed me to change and understand teachers and other subject advisors better and value their contributions.

In the final chapter, Chapter Nine, I review my thesis by referring back to the main points previously discussed. I illustrate my personal-professional learning, methodological learning, and conceptual and theoretical learning.

CHAPTER NINE:
CONSOLIDATING MY LEARNING AND LOOKING FORWARD

9.1 Introduction

This self-study research was about my learning by extending my understanding of teachers' and subject advisors' lived experiences of CPTD programmes. The main focus was on my growth and improving my practice as a subject advisor.

I intended to find out the challenges and hindrances, including the weaknesses that teachers and subject advisors encountered regarding CPTD programmes. The purpose was to learn and see how I could improve the CPTD programmes conducted by myself and other subject advisors. I wanted to improve my own practice and share my learning with other subject advisors.

I aimed at looking into the ways that I, as a subject advisor, could better support teachers in finding solutions to the professional problems they experienced in their daily teaching and learning. By doing this, I wanted to find ways to help teachers maximise their professional growth through attending effective, sustainable CPTD programmes.

In the previous chapter, I described and reflected on a Home Language Grade R workshop that I planned in collaboration with teachers and other subject advisors. This workshop was designed and conducted after listening to the concerns raised by my research participants. I appreciated how important it was to listen to and involve teachers and other subject advisors during the planning and conducting of CPTD programmes.

In this last chapter, Chapter Nine, I review all of the chapters of this thesis, summarising the context of each chapter as it relates to my research topic. I share my personal-professional learning and reflect on how this will influence my future educational practice. I reflect on my use of self-study methodology and how it assisted me in understanding and improving my practice. I reflect on my conceptual and theoretical learning and explain how this supported my thinking as I responded to the research questions. I discuss learning about my role as a subject advisor as I improve my practice.

9.2 Review of the thesis

9.2.1 Chapter One: Understanding the importance of continuing professional teacher development

In Chapter One, I explained to the reader the focus of the study as looking at the lived experiences of teachers and subject advisors concerning CPTD programmes. I explained my personal and professional decisions to embark on this study, which came out of the complaints of teachers participating in poorly planned and executed workshops conducted by subject advisors, identified in my Master's degree studies. The rationale for doing this study was for my own professional learning and improving my practice as a subject advisor. I explained the key concepts that supported my views throughout this study, such as teacher learning, teacher knowledge and professional development. Finally, I described theoretical perspectives on constructivism and sociocultural theory that supported my understanding and practice throughout this study.

9.2.2 Chapter Two: My self-study research methodology

In Chapter Two, I explained the self-study methodology and methods used in generating and analysing my data. I presented my own understanding of the self-study research process and why I chose it as the methodology that supported this research. I explained the research settings, detailing the context and socioeconomic status of the three schools that were involved in my research. I also described my participants.

The research practices I used to generate data involved audio-recorded conversations with teachers and subject advisors as my research participants. I created my own self-portrait drawing and collage that explained my lived experiences of CPTD. I also invited teachers to create their own self-portrait drawings and collages to share their lived experiences of CPTD. Throughout my research journey, I used a journal to document my personal thoughts and feelings and encouraged my research participants to keep their own journals.

An exciting methodological aspect of this journey was portraying my experiences using self-portrait drawing. At first, I was scared and not sure what a self-portrait drawing should look like. I was worried that the self-portrait that I had created was not going to be acceptable to my supervisors. I thought you needed to have a particular skill to be able to create a self-portrait. However, I was reassured by Mitchell, Theron, Stuart, Smith and Campbell (2011, p. 5), who assert that "self-portrait drawings focus on the content of drawing not on the quality

of it as drawing". I understood that I did not have to possess a specific skill to be able to do a self-portrait drawing; what was important was to visualise and think critically about the message I wanted to convey artistically, using paper and pencil.

9.2.3 Chapter Three: My memorable journey as a teacher, teacher educator, and a subject advisor

In Chapter Three, I describe how I wanted to gain a better understanding of how I was shaped by the experiences and circumstances that I came upon in my professional career as a teacher, teacher educator, and subject advisor. I undertook the process of reflecting on my lived experiences of understanding CPTD programmes. I wanted to reflect on my own learning and understanding of the process of my personal and professional development.

One of my most useful discoveries concerning my research topic was that as a teacher, I was not allowed to voice my ideas and concerns. I had to listen to my Principal and take his instructions without further questioning him. The Principal's instructions were final: no suggestions were received from subordinates. Subordinates had to listen and act accordingly.

In recalling my experiences as a subject advisor, I discovered that during CPTD sessions, I did not allow teachers to ask me questions, as I thought my voice was the final one. I thought I was the only one with the information that I could share with the teachers. My involvement in self-study assisted me in understanding things differently. I learnt to listen without judging teachers or subject advisors and to take advice as part of my learning and growth. I now see teachers and other subject advisors as my partners in professional growth.

Through my personal history self-study, the new insights gained concerning my practice were to show teachers by action and through discussion that we all have valuable experience and ideas to contribute. I realised that I had to level the field in such a way that there will be less top-down delivery of information. Although at times, I will still have to take a leading role, I hope to change my practice so that teachers not only look at my position as a subject advisor but also see me as someone who is still learning together with them. In the future, I will continue to promote teachers and other subject advisors working together during planning to improve CPTD programmes.

Retracing my personal history supported me in transforming my thinking and way of doing things. Looking back assisted me to better understand my practice and my role as a subject advisor. I reflected on my own practice as a mentor, supporter, motivator, and advisor of teachers and subject advisors' learning. These identities were vital for me as a subject advisor as they assisted me in gaining insight and thinking about my own development. I had never thought about my beliefs and values before using personal history self-study. Using personal history self-study supported me as I reflected to understand and relook at the events that shaped me to be a certain kind of a subject advisor.

9.2.4 Chapter Four: Looking at the lived experiences of subject advisors

In Chapter Four, I responded to the first research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of subject advisors in relation to CPTD?* I involved subject advisors in conversations to detail their lived experiences of CPTD programmes. I discussed the challenges encountered in meeting with other subject advisors within the District. I provided detailed information regarding the professional experience of the subject advisors. I explained the context of the Districts where these subject advisors were based. I reflected on my discussions with these subject advisors and realised the need for us to work as a collective, to establish our community of practice as subject advisors.

The conversations I had with other subject advisors assisted me in reflecting on the difficulties encountered during CPTD sessions. These conversations made me think, question and become more critical about my practice as I work on strategies to overcome those challenges.

I understood that when CPTD programmes were offered with a lower number of teachers as participants, they can gain more knowledge (refer to Chapter Eight). The venue must be conducive for facilitating CPTD programmes, with appropriate resources. I learnt that it was essential to have relevant information and be prepared every time for every session when planning and conducting CPTD programmes.

My most useful discovery was that as subject advisors, instead of looking at the contributions and support we were supposed to give to the teachers, we often blamed ineffective CPTD programmes on external factors, such as the timing of workshops and the number of teachers attending at one venue. Conversations with other subject advisors made me appreciate that at times we focus more on things that are outside the actual PDP. I became aware of how

important it was for me to reframe my thinking based on the new insights gained during our conversations.

I recognised that it was essential for me to provide support to other subject advisors. I realised that it was convenient for me to blame other subject advisors rather than discussing, demonstrating, and supporting them as we continuously learn together. I thought all subject advisors are experts in their field, but if they suggested some change, I was not open enough to take their suggestions. Working together to learn more about understanding curriculum concepts and providing effective CPTD programmes is necessary for our growth and development as subject advisors.

9.2.5 Chapter Five: Understanding teachers' lived experiences of continuous professional teacher development

In Chapter Five, I discussed how I involved FP teachers from three different schools in helping me respond to the second research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development*? I explained why it was essential for this research that rapport was established with FP teachers. I included a detailed schedule in table form for the meeting sessions with FP teachers. I explained why teachers needed to receive this complete schedule at our first meeting.

In this chapter, I included teachers' understanding of what CPTD meant for them. I also presented one teacher's definition of professional development for each school. I explained how we came up with our working definition of professional development after looking at similarities and patterns in teachers' interpretations.

My most useful discovery was how important it is to assist teachers in understanding my role as a subject advisor. When I do school visits, teachers must not see me as an inspector coming to look for faults. During my visits, I must try my level best to support teachers when they share their challenges. I must demonstrate to other subject advisors how to support teachers, share information and provide direction without judging them. I have to model to other subject advisors by visiting the school as a team, and show them how to monitor and support the work of teachers rather than fault-finding. I should explore with other subject advisors on how to assist teachers in sharing their work challenges without fear during school visits.

I also discovered that it is essential for teachers to understand why they attend PDPs. I realised that at times I misjudged teachers as if they did not see the value in attending PDPs. The conversations with the teachers helped me in understanding that teachers became frustrated at how these professional development sessions were conducted. They are committed to their learning and development as teachers. If they attend effective CPTD programmes, it will assist their professional growth and development.

9.2.6 Chapter Six: Looking at the teachers' lived experiences through their self-portrait drawings

In Chapter Six, I continued to discuss how I involved the FP teachers from the three different schools in responding to the second research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development?* I started off by demonstrating my own self-portrait drawing so that teachers could be open and honest in talking about their personal lived experiences. Drawing a self-portrait assisted me to reorganise my thinking, and I was able to remember significant incidents that I wanted to share about my lived experiences of CPTD. I then found it easier to discuss lived experiences by referring to the self-portrait drawing that I had created.

To get more information, I asked teachers to create their own self-portrait drawings that described how they view PDPs that they had attended. I reflected on what I learnt from teachers' self-portrait drawings, as I wanted to understand teachers' thoughts and feelings on their lived experiences of CPTD programmes. It was clear to me that the teachers were not satisfied with how CPTD programmes were conducted.

I also encouraged teachers to discuss their lived experiences of CPTD programmes using self-portrait drawings. I realised that teachers were open and honest as they debated their lived experiences of CPTD programmes using their self-portrait drawings. However, it was not all smooth sailing for teachers to create self-portrait drawings. Not all teachers felt able to draw. This differed from group to group, and there were some tensions that I had to address. I had to assure teachers that I was not looking for a perfect drawing but wanted them to share their thinking through drawing. Teachers felt more confident after I had presented my self-portrait drawing.

A great discovery was recognising the value of using art as a discussion and reflection tool for both myself and the teachers. The self-portrait drawings assisted me in doing self-reflection, as I came to understand more about my role as a subject advisor concerning CPTD programmes (see Chapter Five).

9.2.7 Chapter Seven: Looking at the teachers' lived experiences through their collages

In Chapter Seven, I described how I continued generating data for my self-study research journey. I continuously involved teachers in discussions and using arts-based activities to express their lived experiences. The teachers and I were still exploring my second research question: *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development?*

To respond to this question, I made a collage about my lived experiences of CPTD. I enjoyed the process of looking at different pictures, cutting and pasting as I collated a collage about my lived experiences of CPTD. I gained valuable insight as I arranged images and words that told my story. The process assisted me to reconstruct my experiences, and I began to understand who I am and would like to be as a subject advisor.

I shared my collage with the teachers before I asked them to make their own collages. I involved teachers in collage making about their lived experiences of CPTD. I realised how exciting it was for FP teachers to cut and paste pictures to make a collage. It was easy for teachers to perform this exercise as they were able to tell stories from their collage. I learnt that the use of collage allowed teachers to freely discuss their lived experiences of CPTD. They were able to share their feelings and thoughts through their collage making. Different ideas were portrayed through the development and presentation of diverse collages.

Teachers showed dissatisfaction with how CPTD programmes were conducted by subject advisors. They felt that most concepts were not explained and demonstrated well. Teachers found difficulty in implementing curriculum changes in their teaching. Teachers appreciated having a platform to voice their concerns so that they could be conveyed to top management.

I reflected on the teachers' discussions regarding their experiences of how CPTD programmes had previously been conducted. In this chapter, it was evident that there was a disconnect

between subject advisors' and teachers' experiences of how CPTD programmes must be directed.

9.2.8 Chapter Eight: Conducting workshops with a new outlook of collaboration

In Chapter Eight, I attended to the third research question: *How might I use insights into subject advisors' and teachers' lived experiences and perspectives to improve my understanding and practice of CPTD?* I described how I decided to start trying out some of my new ideas by designing an English Home Language Grade R workshop with other subject advisors and teachers. I then shared some of the feedback received from teachers after the workshop was conducted.

My most useful discovery was that teachers and subject advisors can take ownership if they are involved during the planning and conducting of CPTD activities. I realised how important it was to include teachers and other subject advisors during the initial stages of designing a CPTD programme.

I observed how useful it was to use practical examples and tangible resources that could be actively demonstrated during CPTD sessions. If teachers learn through hands-on experience, they learn better and understand the concepts more quickly. The use of practical, concrete resources was more effective because teachers demonstrated active participation. If teachers cooperate, learning becomes fun and they grow as professionals.

I discovered that teachers have a wealth of knowledge that they are willing to share if given an opportunity. I learnt that teachers became motivated and were more eager to participate and learn more if they work as a team. Teachers were able to share, support, and give each other feedback as they worked together. I also encouraged teachers and other subject advisors to collaborate effectively with one another and facilitate change. It was imperative to promote collaboration amongst teachers and subject advisors as they continue to construct their knowledge socially.

9.3 Personal-professional learning

This self-study research supported me to discover the 'self' of how I conduct PDPs. It assisted me in learning and understanding more about teachers' and other subject advisors' perspectives. I decided to represent my personal-professional learning using two self-portrait

drawings. The first portrays how PDPs were conducted before I engaged in this self-study, and the second depicts how a recent PDP was held when I started to effect changes (as described in Chapter Eight).

I found it accessible for this self-study to use self-portrait drawings to express the change in my practice. Mitchell et al. (2011, p. 2) maintained that *"*drawing exists precisely because the idea is not easily expressed in words". Weber (2014, p. 10) concurs that "art-based approaches to research expand our knowledge base by including many of the neglected, but important ways in which we construct meaning through artistic forms of expression". Similarly, Pithouse (2011) asserts that creating self-portrait drawings allows one to think about a specific thing as you check on the challenging and beneficial aspect of your practice to find ways to improve it. My first self-portrait drawing shows a very challenging situation, where no active learning took place because of overcrowding (Figure 9.1).

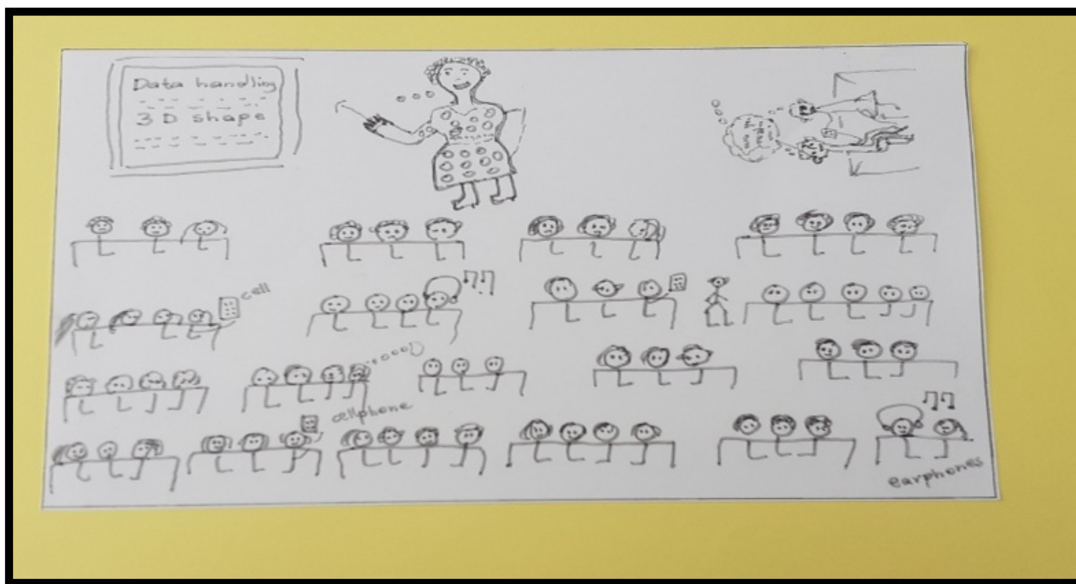


Figure 9.1. ***Self-portrait drawing showing the set-up as I conducted a PDP before I engaged in this self-study.***

This was the first self-portrait drawing done to show my CPTD practice before I engaged with this self-study. In this self-portrait, as a subject advisor, I am standing in front of the teachers during a CPTD session. Teachers are sitting quietly in rows, where tables are squashed next to each other, leaving no space for me to move around. One notices that teachers sitting at the back are busy with their cell phones and are not interested in the training. On the side, another

two subject advisors are seated at a table at the front; they should be supporting me, but are busy chatting and minding their own business. They are not listening to what I am sharing, which makes it difficult for them to give input when questions were asked by teachers that needed explanations and clarity.

This self-portrait drawing shows overcrowding and no interaction between the participants and myself as a facilitator during CPTD programmes. I am standing at the front of the class, delivering curriculum information. Teachers are not gaining knowledge because there is no active participation.

When I look at this self-portrait drawing, I immediately identify the challenges faced by teachers when they attended PDPs (as expressed in Chapters Four to Seven). My engagement in self-study research assisted me in identifying and acting on those challenges as quickly as possible.

My second self-portrait drawing (Figure 9.2) shows how my practice of CPTD has improved, allowing teachers to enjoy the session while gaining knowledge.

Figure 9.2. ***Second self-portrait drawing showing a useful PDP being conducted.***

This self-portrait drawing portrays my practice in a CPTD programme that now caters to a learner-centred approach (Kunene, 2009). In this case, I refer to teachers as learners because

they are in a learning space. As much as I am leading the team, I am doing it in a different manner, where everyone contributes. We are all sitting engaged in our work; nobody is just standing watching others. Every member of the team participates freely and they can ask questions (look at the teacher raising her hand). This self-portrait drawing shows collaboration among the team members as they share information. Some are busy modelling what happens in a Grade R class, and some are busy painting while other participants cut and paste pictures.

This self-portrait represents the collaboration that emerged between me, lead teachers, and other subject advisors as we planned a new approach for CPTD programmes (as described in Chapter Eight). Pithouse (2011, p. 43) explains drawing as a way "to portray and engage with emotions that give life to personal experience". Presenting the self-portrait drawing assisted me in sharing my inner feelings. The picture allowed me to express how I am transforming and gaining confidence through this self-study as I improve my practice.

In this self-portrait, I am wearing glasses and sitting next to the teacher who has raised her hand; this shows that I have a new way of looking at the CPTD programmes. I am improving the way I prepare and conduct these CPTD programmes. I am inviting teachers from different social backgrounds to work collaboratively with subject advisors to effect change. I am gaining confidence by joining forces with other subject advisors and teachers.

In reflecting on my two self-portrait drawings, I was able to identify five main personal-professional learning areas that developed through my involvement in this self-study, which I outline below.

9.3.1. Learning about my role and practice as a subject advisor concerning pedagogy

In the FP (Grades R–3), the success of a quality programme is centred on active learning. At their stage of development, young learners are busy and need to be given activities that will develop them holistically. As Fayombo (2012, p. 126) explains, "active learning strategies are effective in engaging [these] learners and assisting them in creating their own learning experiences in the changing environment". In the FP, learning happens through using the senses; hence young children learn better when they do exciting activities, manipulate objects, observe and touch things as they learn about different concepts.

It is essential to support FP teachers to manage and participate in active learning. Active learning strategies can assist teachers in understanding learner-centred pedagogy and motivate their interest. In changing my practice of CPTD, I planned for and used concrete, practical objects when unpacking the activities of the curriculum. I demonstrated the activities practically to increase their knowledge. I learnt that if teachers are exposed to a practical approach during CPTD programmes, they can internalise what they are learning. Being exposed to doing their own reflection and learning from others during CPTD sessions assisted the teachers.

My role is to empower teachers to gain skills, knowledge and values that are offered through a visual, auditory and kinaesthetic play-based approach. This approach assists teachers to be actively involved in creating activities. I recognised that in the future, I should offer teachers a variety of resources in different environments (indoors and outdoors) to help teachers engage and explore how to develop children in multiple ways. I realised this requires careful preparation and planning to assist teachers in catering for diversity as they prepare for the teaching activities.

I discovered that for teachers, just to attend the CPTD programme is not enough. What is important was for teachers to participate actively and be involved during the workshop to gain more knowledge. And the success of active CPTD programmes depends on the proper engagement of teachers and subject advisors in meaningful planning. Teachers should collaboratively assist in identifying needs to be addressed in workshops. I understood through discussing with the teachers and subject advisors that it was necessary to plan how to model what happens in the FP classroom when conducting CPTD sessions. Teachers should also be involved in facilitating the programmes.

The practical CPTD programmes that I organised and facilitated with other subject advisors and lead teachers assisted other teachers in learning new knowledge in a fun and productive way. Through this self-study, I discovered that when teachers have attended effective CPTD programmes, they gain practical experience (Kelly, 2006). According to Kelly (2006, p. 515), sociocultural theories provide insights that “teacher learning involves teachers engaging in the process of knowing-in-practice to allow their full participation in classroom activity”. My learning was that if CPTD programmes are conducted effectively, teachers can gain content

knowledge and improve their teaching skills as they interact with one another. I discovered that there can be full, active participation by teachers and subject advisors.

9.3.2 Learning about my role and practice as a subject advisor concerning relationships

Through self-study, I came to understand that my position as a supervisor to other subject advisors must not deceive me into acting as if I know everything. I must listen to and learn from my colleagues and the teachers. I discovered that teachers and my colleagues have a wealth of experience that must be utilised and extended. This self-study research assisted me in accepting other people's ideas without criticising, and I grew as a person. I saw the value of being a good listener without judging teachers or subject advisors.

I came to the understanding that CPTD was also crucial for professional growth and development for me as a reflective subject advisor. Samaras and Freese (2006, p. 109) assert that "as we interact with others, we reframe and reconstruct our understandings with the aid of other perspectives and insights besides our own". This was a real breakthrough for me as I realised that observing teachers co-facilitating with other subject advisors assisted me in gaining a different perspective. This helped me to value teachers and other subject advisors and change the way I used to think about them.

Being involved in the self-study of practice showed me the importance of openness and collaboration in professional learning (Samaras, 2011). A vital part of my role is to collaborate with teachers and subject advisors to develop and share content knowledge and pedagogic strategies. Bantwini (2011) emphasised the importance of ongoing professional development activities for teachers to develop content expertise and pedagogical know-how. As subject advisors and teachers, we can share responsibilities as we involve ourselves in brainstorming and discussing how to teach specific concepts (Lo, 2010). Such collaboration can promote professional growth and personal satisfaction amongst teachers and subject advisors.

I involved other subject advisors and teachers in co-facilitating CPTD programmes. I encouraged teachers and other subject advisors to work as a team and to critique the strategies we were going to use and highlighted how other teachers could benefit from using those strategies. This assisted us to trust each other and to be more open as we shared our fears, weaknesses, and dilemmas. It was not easy to open up to each other and discuss our

shortcomings or failures, but working together assisted us in overcoming our fears. This process allowed me to test my assumptions, as I deepened my thinking and reflected on my experiences.

Building and maintaining healthy working relationships is critical to motivating teachers to keep them going. As I interacted with teachers, I discovered how important it is for subject advisors to have good working relationships with teachers. My role is to ensure that relationships between subject advisors and teachers are based on trust, for continued support and professional growth. As Vilakazi (2015, p. 75) emphasises, “subject advisors need to have a positive working relationship with teachers in order to manage to promote a positive learning climate at school level”. Hence, I must also encourage other subject advisors to be transparent and to open lines of communication with teachers.

Mansfield, Beltman, Broadley and Weatherby-Fell (2016, p. 21) asserted that “social competence is an important personal resource for the development of relationships, which are developed in school contexts through interactions with colleagues, mentors, and school leaders, and outside the school with family, friends and social networks”. These relationships require a protected space in which to develop; learning happens within an environment that is safe and secure. I recognised that positive relationships support growth and create positive understanding in a working environment. My role is to support CPTD programmes so that they can happen in situations that feel safe and encourage relationships based on mutual trust and respect. It is essential to ensure that there is co-operation, independence, and responsibility amongst teachers and subject advisors. Here is an example:

> *At the beginning of the year 2020, the Department of Basic Education requested the Provinces to comment about the use of workbooks and indicate which activities teachers think can be changed and why. I wrote an email to all schools requesting teachers to highlight the challenges they encounter in the workbooks. I designed a tool for reporting, which was going to make it easier for teachers to comment. Teachers are the only people who use these workbooks with the learners and can give honest comments. Only a few ex-Model C schools responded.*

This showed me that some teachers fail to do things on their own. They need support from other teachers. They want to be engaged, and they need a platform where they can discuss

things together. This self-study has encouraged me to involve teachers through collaboration if I need their input. I then planned cluster meetings, where I included teachers in discussions about workbooks (Figure 9.5), and teachers responded generously, giving valuable contributions because they were in a supportive environment (Samaras, 2011). This proved to other subject advisors and me how important it is to involve teachers through collaborative processes.

Figure 9.3. ***Teachers giving input on workbooks through collaboration.***

My involvement in self-study assisted me in having a positive influence and collaborating with other sister Departments, including Education Districts. Through my participation in this self-study of practice, I saw how important it is to share information through CPTD sessions with other sister Departments. The new approach that was taken in the Home Language workshops (Chapter Eight) was shared with other subject advisors from other Education Districts, who are now willing to join our next workshop so that we can learn together.

9.3.3. Learning about my role and practice as a subject advisor concerning logistics

My conversations with other subject advisors and the teachers highlighted the importance of a suitable venue and times for the CPTD programmes. For the Home Language workshops, I worked with other subject advisors to ensure that the sites were within the teachers' vicinity.

I also realised that it was important that the logistics be planned in advance so that teachers could be given a schedule of all workshops for the whole of the coming year. In Chapter Five,

Kea made the following statement: *"The workshops organised and conducted by unions were much better than the workshops organised and facilitated by the Departmental officials"*. Ellie supported this by responding: *"The union invites fewer teachers and brings experts in that particular subject, unlike the workshops where the Department invited more than 80 teachers in one venue"*. In Chapter Six, Anele made a comment that *"You sit in a workshop wondering, not even listening, because you are thinking whether by the time the workshop has ended, your car will still be there"*. All of these statements highlighted the issue of logistics, including whether the venues we use for CPTD programmes are safe and secure. I understood that I needed to formalise the use of clusters for CPTD activities with fewer teachers so that they would not have to travel long distances. I realised that if the venue was to be conducive to learning, teachers from neighbouring schools could utilise the services of one of the schools for CPTD.

I learnt that if I want teachers to learn and develop as individuals and as a team, I need to consider the context of their schools as I plan and design learning activities for CPTD programmes. The atmosphere in which CPTD programmes are conducted must be conducive to teaching and learning, not forgetting the background of where teachers come from. Below are some of the problems that I realised can disturb or negate the effective planning of CPTD activities.

9.3.3.1 Overcrowding

As I was listening to teachers complaining that some workshops were disorganised because of overcrowding, I recalled that at times there were too many teachers in one venue, which resulted in some teachers not receiving materials for that particular workshop. Teachers sitting at the back could hardly hear the facilitator because of the lack of a sound system. This was the result of poor planning and led to teachers not grasping or gaining new knowledge. Some subject advisors also raised the issue of overcrowding in some of their workshops, irrespective of how hard they struggled to invite teachers according to their wards. For example, in Chapter Four, subject advisor, Toto indicated as follows: "*The challenge was overcrowding in some circuits irrespective of how we tried to invite schools as per their wards. Teachers are all connected, so they share information through their cell phone messages"*.

Teachers preferred to attend the workshops of their choice. Some teachers decided to occupy themselves with their cell phones because they did not find the workshops interesting, and they

left the workshops without acquiring any new information or knowledge. I recognised how important it is to stick to smaller numbers of participants when CPTD programmes are organised. Teachers learn best and can interact with each other in smaller groups. My role is to identify and train teachers on facilitation skills to assist smaller CPTD programmes for their neighbouring schools.

9.3. 3.2 Timing of workshops

Teachers raised concerns about workshop time(s). Teachers were not allowed to be taken out of school during teaching time. The workshops started at 13h00 and teachers wanted to leave before 15h00 because of transport problems or lift clubs. Teachers indicated that by the time the workshop started, they were already exhausted from the full day of teaching, and they found it difficult to concentrate. Teachers were then unable to participate fully during the workshop session. I also raised concerns about teachers coming to the workshops late and leaving early because of transport problems. Some did so because of other commitments, such as having to fetch their children at a particular time.

In Chapter Four, Toto mentioned that "*the timing of the workshops was not good, and teachers don't attend if you plan training on Saturdays*". She further explained that "*as subject advisors, you are expected to start the workshop at 13h00, and yet teachers expect to be dispersed by 14h30 because of transport problems*." I realised that teachers do not gain information when workshops start after lunch. I am going to recommend that CPTD programmes should rather be planned in the last week before school closes. I will coordinate it so that the teachers in cluster groups share activities two days before schools open.

According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017, p. 2), significant professional development involves "structured professional learning that results in changes to teacher knowledge and practices, and improvements in student learning outcomes". I learnt that when teachers attend well-planned and structured programmes, active learning can take place while gaining more content knowledge, and their professional growth increases. This self-study research changed my outlook, as I understood the importance of structuring CPTD programmes effectively.

9.3.4 Learning about my role and practice as a subject advisor concerning curriculum

After listening to teachers' lived experiences, I reflected on my way of doing things. I saw that it was critical for me as a subject advisor and my colleagues to be clear on content and

pedagogical understanding of curriculum policies to share these with the teachers (Shulman, 1987). I reflected on all of the concerns that teachers raised and tried to find ways in which I could start slowly addressing them.

This self-study research supported my learning, as I had to rethink and restructure CPTD programmes. It gave me space to look with an open mind at the 'self', my behaviour and what I believed was the correct way of doing things. Bantwini (2010, p. 90) asserts that "teacher involvement in the conceptual and development stages of the reforms is advised". I appreciated the importance of involving teachers during the planning stage, as then they get a sense of ownership and obligation in ensuring the success of the curriculum implementation.

Kelly (2006, p. 507) asserts that "experts do not simply have more knowledge than novices, the structure of experts' and novices' knowledge differs". I recognised that all teachers – the experienced ones or novices – have some knowledge; they need to be given the opportunities through planned CPTD activities to share this knowledge and improve their understanding. What can help the teachers is their engagement in "constructing and reconstructing professional knowledge using different perspectives" (Kelly, 2006, p. 509). Opfer and Pedder (2011, p. 379) mentioned that in explaining professional teacher learning, we need to consider teachers' "local knowledge''. It is essential for us as subject advisors to involve teachers as local knowledge experts in CPTD.

The success of any curriculum reform depends mainly on teachers as curriculum mediators. Bantwini and King-McKenzie (2011, p. 20) assert that "no matter how promising the new policies are on paper, they do not guarantee successful teacher learning and change required for the classroom practices". Khoza (2014, p. 14) highlighted that "workshops are used as vehicles to convey circular changes designed by experts from the DoE; teachers as implementers are not consulted to contribute beforehand". He further explained that during these workshops, teachers were often not active nor given a chance to ask questions.

I believe that teachers are capable of reading any policy document. I have learnt that it is vital that teachers actively contribute to the workshops, and that the workshops are not just used to relate information or to read the policy to the teachers. Kalaivani (2016) concurs that if teachers are well involved in CPTD programmes, they will become active in transformation in education.

Professional development should be the cornerstone of teachers' professional growth and development. Samaras and Freese (2006, p. 109) assert that "self-study is a form of professional development that can lead to meaningful change as we better understand what we do, why we do it, and how we can improve our teaching". My self-study research assisted me in understanding that there was not going to be any professional growth if teachers were not involved in productive, structured PDPs. Loughran (2014, p. 273) asserts that "it is not difficult to see then that the work of teacher education is not about 'upskilling' staff to perform in new ways in response to mandated changes in curriculum, policy, or practice, it is about an ongoing process of learning, development, and change driven by the players central to that work". I recognise a need to assist and develop teachers with the challenges they experience in dealing with curriculum, as they continue learning.

9.3.5 Learning about my role and practice as a subject advisor concerning leadership

I learnt through this self-study how important it is to involve the School Management Team SMT to promote leadership in schools. The FP HoDs must be engaged in giving teachers direction on curriculum implementation from Grade R to Grade 3. Teachers are the custodians of the curriculum, but they must be monitored, guided and supported by HoDs. The HoDs are the immediate supervisors of teachers at the school level and should be leading by example in doing their work with teachers (time spent on tasks, doing what they require their teachers to do). The teachers need to be able to feel confident in their SMT leadership, and this is encouraged by showing a willingness to listen, learn and have an understanding of what policy requires. I grasped that HoDs must be knowledgeable about the FP curriculum, and hence should be involved in planning and facilitating CPTD sessions. I will encourage HoDs to contribute to future CPTD programmes.

I grasped that for me to improve my practice as a leader, I needed to unlearn to learn new ways of doing things. Akkerman and Bakker (2011, p. 146) assert that "transformation leads to profound changes in practice". Similarly, Lyons, Halton and Freidus (2013, p. 163) argued that "transformation involves becoming reflective and critical, open to the perspectives of others and accepting of new ideas". I need to lead in developing a transformational, shared vision for the improvement of teaching and learning. Mhlongo (2013, p. 15) mentioned that in transformational leadership, "the followers feel trust, admiration, loyalty and respect towards the leader, and they are motivated to do more than they originally expected to do". As a

transformational leader, I have to motivate teachers and subject advisors to work together to increase their morale.

9.4 Methodological learning

Through self-study methodology, I learnt to take criticism as a learning experience. Self-study is about opening yourself to critique (Samaras, 2011). At first, I found it challenging to listen and accept the negative things teachers were highlighting about some subject advisors and the way we conducted CPTD programmes. It was tough when I had to listen to teachers as they shared their negative comments. But, I learnt that it is vital to listen, reflect and take advice from teachers and other subject advisors.

I wanted to defend my role by responding to negative comments but considered my position of being a researcher. The self-study methodology assisted me in taking criticism positively with an open mind. I learnt to accept my weaknesses. I motivated teachers and other subject advisors to be open to criticism for professional growth and development.

Self-study methodology provided me with a space to reflect on the CPTD programmes conducted. I came to appreciate the importance of reflecting on my own practice (Samaras & Freese, 2006). I shifted the focus from me and I became conscious of the challenges teachers face. I recognised that my negative thoughts about teachers and other subject advisors were not all correct. I used to think that teachers were lazy and did not want to do their work. I learnt not to judge teachers and other subject advisors but to work on my negative beliefs and practices to change my thinking and practices.

Self-study methodology assisted me in learning from my mistakes. I gained confidence and gradually improved my practice. Samaras and Freese (2006, p. 110–111) assert that “self-study of teaching practices begins to build the muscle for professional development as a life-long process”. It was through understanding and using self-study methodology that I appreciated the importance of my own continuing professional development.

Before this self-study, I used to visit schools and interact with the HoDs about the performance of teachers in an understanding that HoDs would promote the development of teachers. I discovered through using self-study methodology that it was necessary to have a direct relationship with the teachers at the school level. I involved teachers and other subject advisors

in planning and we became partners through collaboration. We learnt from each other through cooperation and collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994; Datnow, 2011; Samaras, 2011).

9.5 Conceptual and theoretical learning

Throughout my self-study journey, I learnt from a sociocultural theoretical perspective and social constructivist theories. I realised that these theories were interrelated to each other, and they fitted well with my self-study research journey. In asking questions, I wanted to know about the lived experiences of teachers and subject advisors concerning CPTD.

A sociocultural perspective assisted me in understanding teachers' social and cultural learning backgrounds. It helped me to plan and structure relevant practical learning activities during CPTD sessions, with an understanding of where these teachers and subject advisors were coming from. This understanding assisted me in considering local concrete resources to use as I develop activities.

In understanding social constructivism, I discovered that teachers learn better if they interact, as they construct knowledge together. The issue of subject advisors and teachers' cultural backgrounds also plays a central role in constructivism. It was then necessary that I created opportunities for both myself, other subject advisors and teachers to engage each other through collaboration. I grasped how teachers learn through the construction of their own knowledge from the environment where they are coming from. I came to the understanding that I was learning and improving my practice through interaction with teachers and other subject advisors. I gained more content knowledge as I interacted and observed teachers co-teaching and sharing practical ideas.

I learnt through understanding the sociocultural perspective that teachers have an active and productive relationship with their professional knowledge, which they construct in their own way, in their particular circumstances, intending to address the specific problems of practice they have identified (Kelly, 2006; Richardson, 1997). Teachers are unique, and the way they understand and use curriculum concepts will be different from each other. As a researcher and a subject advisor, I, therefore, aim to open up opportunities in meeting teachers' needs by involving them in a variety of teaching strategies.

In taking a socio-cultural perspective, I understood that teachers come from diverse social backgrounds where the context of their living, culture and teachings were different. I know

that I should cater to and extend this socio-cultural knowledge as we work together as teachers. Kortjass (2019, p. 13) affirms that "cultural sensitivity does not mean inclusion or exclusion, but it is trying to bring them (teachers) all together". During CTPD programmes, I now aim to provide examples that accommodate all teachers from different social and cultural backgrounds.

In understanding professional development, I realised that it was important for teachers to be actively involved in the planning and delivery of their own teaching. Korthagen (2009, p. 195) stipulated that professional development can be fruitful if "it is grounded in the needs and strengths of the people involved and builds on a supportive interpersonal relationship". I learnt to respect teachers and other subject advisors and value their contributions. I understood that communication must be a two-way process, teachers must be allowed to express their challenges, and I must listen to them. For teacher learning to be effective, I must consider teachers' wants, how they feel and the way they think (Korthagen, 2017). Teachers need someone who will dedicate her time and listen to their challenges and act accordingly. This research made me appreciate how important to spend valuable time in supporting teachers.

Looking from a socio-cultural perspective, I involved myself and my teacher participants in creative arts. The creative arts helped us to start our discussions. In the future, I will try to be even more creative when dealing with teachers. According to the socio-cultural approach, teachers have an active relationship with their professional knowledge (Kelly, 2006). Teachers can learn more during the collaboration process as they show their innovation and creativity.

9.6 Conclusion

My first research question was, *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of subject advisors in relation to CPTD?* In responding to research question one, I started with myself, studying my own experiences. I retraced my own lived experiences through personal history self-study. Recalling my personal experiences allowed me to reflect, contributing to the way I conducted CPTD programmes. Identifying significant experiences assisted me in being aware of my development as a teacher and the influences that shaped me to be a subject advisor.

In my conversations with other subject advisors, I saw that we are not always giving our full attention to the development of teachers. We became distracted by the external factors that we had no control over. We sometimes failed to concentrate on our task of ascertaining that

teachers were well-grounded in pedagogical and content knowledge. I thought of how I could work with others to assist and resolve the challenges related to CPTD programmes. There were many challenges that we faced. The shortage of human resources made it difficult to facilitate effective PDPs. This resulted in overlooking the needs of teachers and concentrating more on programmes completed for reporting purposes. I grasped the need to open lines of communication and develop more productive working relationships with subject advisors and teachers.

In responding to research question two, *What are the lived experiences and perspectives of teachers in relation to continuing professional development?* I gathered that many teachers did not value CPTD programmes because they were dissatisfied with how they were presented. Our CPTD programmes were often ineffective because there were limited hours of contact time and no proper explanation of concepts given to teachers. Teachers felt hopeless because of lack of support and no follow up sessions from subject advisors after CPTD sessions. I understood teachers must be encouraged to attend and contribute to CPTD programmes to improve their professional learning. It is essential to sensitise teachers that participating in CPTD programmes can assist them in their personal-professional growth. Teachers should be supported to look at CPTD as a resource that will generate knowledge and add to their growth and development.

Teachers highlighted the frustrations and confusion they have as they attend CPTD programmes. My role and responsibility are to implement change and demonstrate to the other subject advisors and lead teachers on how to conduct CPTD programmes using practical, concrete examples. I have to provide exciting experiences of CPTD for teachers to see the value of attending these programmes.

In responding to research question three, *how might I use insights into subject advisors' and teachers' lived experiences and perspectives to improve my understanding and practice of CPTD?* I worked to establish an excellent working relationship between subject advisors and teachers through collaboration processes. Collaboration in designing and facilitating CPTD sessions played a vital role in uplifting subject advisors' and teachers' morale. Using concrete, practical resources and demonstration proved to be helpful for teachers to improve and gain content and pedagogical knowledge.

Overall, this self-study of CPTD was vital for me as a subject advisor, as it supported my development and growth as I continued learning. One of the new insights I gained was the need to be a good listener and to act to meet teachers' needs. I moved away from my comfort zone and explored and tried new ways of designing and facilitating workshops. I have explained my learning process in detail so that other subject advisors could draw information and learn from my study to improve their own practice.

There have been numerous studies conducted that showed the weaknesses of the continuing professional development programmes and curriculum implementation support offered to teachers in South Africa (e.g., Bantwini, 2011, 2015; Bantwini, & King-Mckenzie, 2011; Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018; Steyn, 2010). As far as I am aware, this is the first study by a South African subject advisor that explores and shows how changes in CPTD can be made. This thesis demonstrates the power of self-study to facilitate a process of learning, whereby improvement in practice can be achieved as we discover context-appropriate ways of bringing about changes in offering CPTD in challenging circumstances. Through self-inquiry, we can begin to reframe our thinking and to advance our practice as we construct new ways of conducting CPTD programmes as subject advisors.

As Bantwini and King-McKenzie (2011) pointed out, there tends to be an assumption made by subject advisors and other Departmental officials that teachers are resistant to change. We tend to focus on the lack of implementation of the prescribed curriculum and not ask questions about the causes thereof. This study demonstrates how we can start to value teachers' voices and input in planning and facilitating future programmes that are more inclusive and participatory, and that address teachers' genuine concerns. In getting teachers to play an active part in the CPTD programmes, subject advisors can gain opportunities to learn alongside those we serve.

Policy developers, subject advisors, teachers, and other education stakeholders can learn from the professional development experiences I shared in this thesis. Thinking about who teachers are and their needs can provide a starting point for authentic professional development. Collaboration between subject advisors and teachers can help them share beneficial practices and come up with creative ideas.

Reciprocal professional learning is essential for teachers to gain content knowledge and develop skills. This must be enhanced by collegiality and teamwork between subject advisors and teachers.

Using arts-based approaches made me see, when you involve teachers in artistic actions, they open up and contribute more than just spoken words (Butler-Kisber, 2008). This can help us pay attention to issues that might not be easily spoken about but are imperative in bringing about change for the better.

In conclusion, the process of self-study research enabled me to change as I had to go deep and examine my own practice to reconstruct my thinking of how I have conducted PDPs. I gained confidence and valuable insights into my ways of doing things. I am becoming a reflective subject advisor as I come to understand more about teachers and subject advisors' experiences of CPTD. This self-study opened up my mind, and I was able to step back and look at my practice using a different lens, be honest, and accept criticism. I noticed my own growth, both personally and professionally.

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APPENDICES

APPENIDX A

Informed consent letter for teacher participants

18 Kite Place
Woodhaven
YellowoodPark
4004

Dear Teacher

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Hlengiwe D.B. Makhanya I am a Teacher Education PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus, South Africa.
I am interested in learning about how subject advisors conduct Continuing Professional Teacher Development programmes, and how teachers receive these training programmes. I will be engaging Foundation Phase subject advisors and teachers from Umlazi District schools. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions and involving you in some art — based activities.
Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as teachers' opinion.
- The interview/art activities/discussions may last for about 2 hours for 4 days.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research.
  You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- The research aims at understanding continuing professional teacher development in the Foundation Phase, and how we as subject advisors can better improve.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, and be involved in activities please indicate (by ticking as applicable) whether or not you are willing to allow the discussions to be recorded by the following equipment:

- Before I finalize my research results, I am willing to share my data with you as my participants, for your approval.

	willing	Not willing
Audio equipment for recording		
Open Discussions		
Art based Drawings		

I can be contacted at:
Email: hdbmhlongoØyahoo.com: Cell Number: 0827061440 or 0314626480.

My supervisor is Dr. Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan who is located at the School of Education,
Edgewood campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
Contact details: email: pithousemorgan@ukzn.ac.za Phone number: 031 2603460

You may also contact the Research Office through:
Marriette Snyman
HSSREC Research Office,
Tel: 031 260 8350 E-mail: snymanm(@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you in advance for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

1(full names of

____

participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT (Teacher) DATE

………………………………………… ………………………………………

APPENDIX B

Informed consent letter for subject advisor participants

18 Kite Place
Woodhaven
4004
Tel.: 0314626480 (H); 031 9188601(W)
Mobile: 0827061440

Dear Subject Advisor

REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO USE FINDINGS FROM FOUNDATION PHASE ADVISORS - GROUP DISCUSSIONS

I appreciate your willingness to participate in my study entitled "Understanding continuing professional teacher development as Foundation Phase: A self- study of a subject advisors ". This study is supervised by Dr. Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, a senior lecturer in the School of Education, UKZN. Dr. Pithouse-Morgan can be contacted telephonically on her office number 0312603460 or via email at pithousemorgan@ukm.ac.za

In this study I intend that we work together as subject advisors in exploring how we can improve our practice in guiding and facilitating continuing professional teachers' development, especially in the Foundation Phase (R-3).

If I do receive your consent, I will use this data in a way that respects your and privacy. Your name or any other information that might identify you or your institution will not be used in any presentation or publication that might come out of the study. Please note that you have no binding commitment to the study and may withdraw your consent at any time if you feel the need to. If you withdraw your consent, you will not be prejudiced in anyway.
There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. However, I hope that this study will make an important contribution to research on continuing professional teacher development. If you have any questions relating to the rights of research participants, you may contact Ms. Mariette Snyman in the UKZN Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Office on 031-2608350. Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of the Study: " *Understanding continuing professional teacher development as Foundation Phase subject advisors: A self—study* "

I, ____hereby
confirm that I understand the contents of this letter and the nature of this study, and do consent to allow you in conducting this study.
I understand that participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time if they wish to without any negative or undesirable consequences.

____
Subject Advisor

Name and Surname: Date:

_________________________ ________________

APPENDIX C

Ethical clearance certificate 2014

UNIVERSIÏY OF KWAZIJLU-NATAL

INYUVESI YAKWAZULU.NATALI

09 June 2014

Mrs Hlengiwe DB Makhanya (8831140)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0104/014D
Project title: Understanding continuing professional teacher development in the Foundation Phase: A subject advisor's self-study

Dear Mrs Makhanya,

Full Approval — Expedited Application In response to your application dated 16 January 2014, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted FULL APPROVAL.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/lnterview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

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

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

School Pietermaritzburg

"ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P Morojele
Cc School Administrator: Mr Thoba Mthembu

Humanitles & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Posol Address: Private Bag , Durban 4000
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: j snymanm@qkzn.ac.za mohunp@vhzn.ac.za
Website: www.uKzn.acza

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APPENDIX D

Ethical clearance certificate – change of title 2019

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU•NATAL

INYUVESI

YAKWAZULU-NATALI

25 October 2019

Mrs Hlengiwe DB Makhanya (8831140)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mrs Makhanya,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0104/014D
New project title: Improving continuing professional teacher development in the Foundation Phase: A subject advisor's self-study

Approval Notification — Amendment Application This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 12 July 2019 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in Title

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

Professor
Urmilla Bob
University

100 YEARS

Medical School

Dean of
Research

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Ansurie Pillay
Cc School Administrator: Ms M Ngcobo

Humanities & Social Sciences Research
Ethics Committee Dr Rosemary
Sibanda (Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki
Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001,
Durban 4000
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za I snymanm@ukzn.ac.za I
mohunp@ukzn.ac.za Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

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APPENDIX E

Professional editing certificate

L. Gething, M.Phil. (cum laude)

WHIZZ@WORDS

PO Box 1155, Milnerton 7441, South Africa; cell 072 212 5417

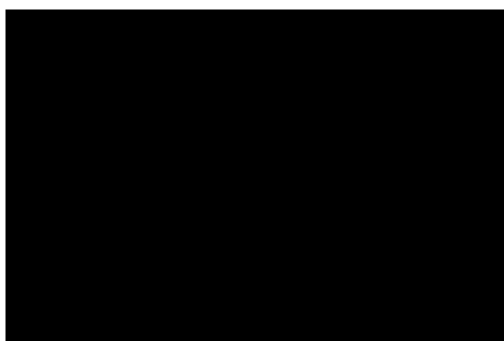
Declaration of editing of PhD thesis by self-study on the lived experiences of teachers and subject advisors on CPTD, 267 pages

I hereby declare that I carried out language editing of the above thesis on behalf of the author, Hlengiwe Makhanya

I am a professional writer and editor with many years of experience (e.g. 5 years on *SA Medical Journal*, 10 years heading the corporate communication division at the SA Medical Research Council), who specialises in Science and Technology editing - but am adept at editing in many different subject areas. I have edited a great deal of work for various academic journals and universities, including many theses.

I am a full member of the South African Freelancers' Association as well as of the Professional Editors' Association.

Yours sincerely



LEVERNE GETHING leverne@eject.co.za

APPENDIX F

TurnItIn report

Turnitin Originality Report

Thesis by Hlengiwe Makhanya

From Chapter drafts (Phd)

- Processed on 11-Sep-2020 10:10 AM CAT
- ID: 1384411705
- Word Count: 71703

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sources:

There are no matching sources for this report.

paper text:

IMPROVING CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL TEACHER DEVELOPMENT IN THE FOUNDATION PHASE: A SELF-STUDY OF A SUBJECT ADVISOR ABSTRACT I am a subject advisor in the Foundation Phase (Grades R–3) in the Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa. For this study, the focus was on my practice and learning as a subject advisor concerning the continuous professional teacher development (CPTD) programmes for teachers conducted by subject advisors. I looked into how I, as a subject advisor, could better support teachers. This study was situated within the methodology of self-study