

**AN EXPLORATION OF A NARRATIVE PASTORAL APPROACH
TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF FEMALE TEACHERS IN
THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT**

by

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY - WITH SPECIALIZATION IN PASTORAL THERAPY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROF M E BALOYI

2017

DECLARATION

I declare that this research on **HOW A NARRATIVE PASTORAL APPROACH CAN BE EXPLORED TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF FEMALE TEACHERS' LIVES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT** is my own work and that all the resources that I have quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

22 June 2017

Liezel Stapelberg

date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the course of this research, I met many people who participated, guided, taught, nurtured and supported me. Without them, I would never have plunged headfirst into the studies. I want to express my gratitude:

To Professor Elijah Baloyi – who held steady. He was not only my supervisor, but also a supportive companion at every stage of this research journey. I was fortunate that he was willing to take me on board as a student. From our first communications, struggles through the proposals, through to the final editing of the last page of this research thesis, Prof Baloyi believed in my capabilities to complete the project. You challenged my thinking and expectations of myself. Thank you.

To Dr Celene Hunter, who carefully edited the thesis: I appreciate your eye for detail in the grooming of the research report and refining of ideas.

To the research participants, the teachers of Beaumont primary school – without none of this would have been possible. I hope you realize how special each of you are as teachers and especially as women.

A special dedication goes to my friend and teacher, Ana, who participated in the research, but sadly passed away before she could read the report. Your life was a true reflection of your passion for teaching and love for people.

I thank my family. You cheered me on when I needed it most, constantly willing to listen to my ideas. I can truly say you generously gave your love and support throughout my studies. I am blessed to have a family that loves to learn as much as I do.

To my heavenly Father. Although I had many health challenges, I could feel that you protected and guarded me and gave me the strength to stand up each time. I honor your holy name.

ABSTRACT

This Qualitative research investigated and explored using a Narrative approach with teachers to find ways to improve the quality of teachers' lives through the use of stories in Pastoral Counselling. A small group of teachers from a local primary school were invited to share their stories as a means to explore care and support actions for other teachers in the South African context. Statistics seem to point to a crisis in the South African education system, especially regarding the well-being of teachers. Various factors contribute to this including issues of diversity in the teaching context and challenges posed by inclusive education. It is my belief that a Narrative approach can assist Practical Theology to make a significant contribution towards helping struggling teachers nurture resilience and create more meaningful lives.

Narrative Inquiry, a relatively new Qualitative methodology, was used to study the teachers' experiences. This required a "collaboration between researcher and participants" which happened over time, in a particular context (Beaumont Primary School in Somerset West) and in social interactions with the research participants: a small group of teachers from Beaumont Primary School. African and South African views were investigated. Data collection methods included: interviewing; attentive listening; and observation, through which stories (data) was collected from the focus group.

After analysing and interpreting the research data, an integrated Narrative Pastoral model was constructed which could assist Practical Theology and Pastoral Counselling to better equip teachers to deal with the challenges they are facing. It is hoped that this model will ultimately help the teachers involved in this research project to grow into integrated, whole (quality) beings who can make a difference where they work and live. The vision is that this model can also be implemented in the rest of South Africa's teacher population.

Key words

Narrative, Practical Theology, Pastoral Counselling, teachers, struggles, stories, diversity, Narrative Inquiry, attentive listening.

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1 Introduction

The term *Rainbow Nation* was first introduced by Archbishop emeritus Desmond Tutu (Tutu 1994) as a metaphor to describe post-apartheid South Africa after the country's first democratic elections in 1994. President Nelson Mandela proclaimed in his first month in office: 'Each of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as are the famous jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of the bushveld – a rainbow nation at peace with itself' (Tutu 1994). The symbolic meaning of the term *Rainbow Nation* was intended to unite South Africa - a country once dominated by the divisive apartheid policy – into a multi-cultural South African nation. Tutu first described South Africa as a *Rainbow People of God* in a television interview, and used the Old Testament story of the rainbow following Noah's Flood as a metaphor for the rainbow of peace which he believed would ensue this country.

1.1 First things first: education

The first steps which the new democratic government took to implement this *Rainbow model of united multi-culturalism* were in the educational sphere, where it adopted a policy of inclusion for school children. The principles of inclusion are rooted in the right to education as enshrined in Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.¹ In the South African context, first to be addressed were those inequalities that resulted from apartheid as well as the economic deprivation that impacted the availability and provision of education for all learners. According to Dalton, McKenzie and Kahonde (2012), the Department of Basic Education adopted a two-legged strategy to implement inclusive policies. First, *The National Strategy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS)* which focuses on early identification and support for learners, teachers and parents. Second, *The Guidelines for Responding to Learner Diversity in the Classroom through Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements*, which provides practical guidance to teachers and school management in meeting the needs of a diverse range of

¹ **Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights: (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.**

learners. This document was replaced by the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement* (CAPS) which was introduced in 2012.

1.1.1 Looking back

In 2016, twenty two years after Mandela's *Rainbow Nation* was born, the implementation of inclusive education² has been slow and partial (Wildeman & Nomdo 2007). There are many concerns. Although education receives the largest slice of the South African government's budget, academics and politicians, such as Ramphela (2012:162) suggest that: 'the key to underperformance of our educational system is the quality and motivation of teachers, for no system of education can function well with largely under qualified, demoralized and ill-disciplined teachers.' Professor M. Oliver, educationalist from the University of Nelson Mandela Metropolitan's qualitative research project, found that the many challenges teachers in South Africa face are mainly due to inadequate training in inclusive education (2007). Engelbrecht, Swart and Eloff (2001) issued papers which concluded that teacher training programs do not appear to be adequately addressing inclusive education.

Research in America shows that even after thirty-seven years of implementing inclusive education, their school system is still inadequate (Reynolds, Wang & Walberg: 1987).

1.1.2 The impact of problems in our education

The impact of South Africa's inadequate Education system cannot be ignored anymore. South Africans are bombarded weekly by media reports about violence and problems in our schools. Headlines like 'A Bad week for education' (translated from *Die Burger* 3 September 2013); 'Everyone is suffering in our schools' (translated from *Rapport* 10 March 2013); 'Schools need more than money (translated from *Rapport* 3 March 2013) reflect how teachers and learners are exposed to traumatic stress in the school environment. This includes primary stress, such as assaults, threats of violence and intimidation; and secondary stress, such as hearing news or

² **Inclusive education, within the South African context, involve the rectifying of inequalities resulting from apartheid and economic deprivation which had a significant impact on the provision of education for learners traditionally seen as having special needs. It involves the creation of a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners, irrespective of race, gender, disability, religion, culture, sexual preference, learning styles and language (Frolin, Douglas & Hattie 1996; National Department of Education 2001).**

stories of violent and distressing events and witnessing how others experience trauma (Fisher 2001:12). According to Smylie (1999), people who are responsible for other people – such as teachers being responsible for children – also experience systemic stress. The heightened expectation of job performance and emotional availability (see also 2.3; 2.4) – including factors such as long hours, heavy workload, low pay and the complexity and diversity of teachers' work - places enormous stress on teachers (Gallen, Karlenzig & Tammey 1995b: 2-4). Technological advances have shrunk our world to an interconnected global village. This also poses massive challenges for teachers' perceived professional incompetence (Fimian & Santoro 1983:336).

1.2 Motivation for the study

As a qualified teacher and Pastoral Counsellor for over twenty years, I have borne witness to the various internal and external factors that have shaped the teaching environment in South Africa. In my opinion, these factors have increased teachers' stress significantly, more especially in recent years. The internal factors arise mostly from political and social changes. As a white South African, I was privileged to have schooling readily available to me. During my school years, my mother told me that I was always a 'bit rebellious.' Although I never expressed this rebellion in negative ways – especially because I was never allowed to behave 'unchristian – like,' nevertheless I was very expressive in my opinion about the school system and the church. I was especially upset about the non-visibility of women in positions of authority both in the church and in schools. I could not understand that women were not allowed to become ministers or school heads. After I finished school, I wanted to become either a minister (dominee) in the church or a pilot. I was told both by my father and educational psychologists that my career choice was not an option for a young lady at that time: instead I could become either a teacher or a nurse. With these as the only options, I chose teaching: it felt familiar and I thought that perhaps I could make a difference there. But I discovered that studying teaching (B Prim Ed) was even worse than going to school. I felt punished every time I had to endure long days of classes; the teaching practicums we had to do at local schools were pure agony.

The only subjects I enjoyed studying were Psychology, Pedagogy and School Management. Once I finished my degree, I vowed never to work for a discriminatory education department in this country and began studying further in Management and Psychology instead.

In those days, the discourse that a girl should find a good Christian young man and get married as soon as she finished studying was strongly entrenched in my social circles. I too found a good Christian young man (an engineer) on a Christian camp for young people. I married him and, believing that we should start a family early, I had my first son when I was twenty-two years old. My daughter was born two years later. After five years, another surprise: I gave birth to another son. I studied and took courses throughout those early child rearing years and then, once my children went to school, I was thrown into the post-apartheid school system. It was also at that time that I was introduced to Narrative Therapy during my Master's Degree. As I found the approach very fitting for the context in which I was working, I began Narrative Pastoral Counselling with children and their families from different schools in the area where I lived. I also started writing articles for our local church of 3000 members.

As market research revealed a massive shortage of pre-primary schools in the area where we lived, I decided to take the opportunity to start a pre-primary school. I bought a house (with a loan from ABSA bank) across from our local primary school and, after negotiating with the local municipality (and paying a lot of money), the property was re-zoned as an 'institutional/residential' facility. We started with seventy children in pre-primary and sixty in aftercare. I employed three teachers and three assistants, an administrative manager and secretary, a 'house manager and two aftercare people. As the school's principal and business manager, I was involved full time; I also continued providing pastoral counselling for families when I could. My close working relationship with my own pre-primary teachers, with the primary school teachers at de Hoop Primary - the school across the road from my premises - and my first-hand experience as mother of three children in the school system, revealed how external factors - such as globalization and multi-culturalism - had not only changed the teaching environment in South Africa but were also contributing significantly to teachers' increased stress.

1.2.1 The importance of the study

Although I was aware of teachers' increased stress, it was only recently that I discovered the extent of this problem. In October 2012 I was invited by the principal and teachers of Beaumont Primary school in Somerset West to help them implement a new values system in the school. This afforded me the opportunity to participate in meetings, to observe teachers and to give an inspiration presentation at the beginning of 2013. Much of the rest of my time was occupied by conversations and counselling sessions with the teachers. Their problems were complex; their challenges went beyond technology and science, beyond politics and philosophy. The challenges facing teachers could be compared to those problems of pandemic proportions – such as HIV and AIDS - except that in this case, there was not yet a name to describe this *dis-ease*. Some researchers use words like stress or burnout to describe this *dis-ease*. But whatever the name used, the quality of life of teachers (Pelsma & Richard 1988) in South Africa is having a profound effect on the education system in general and ultimately on our children. It would seem that inclusive education has brought with it many hidden stress factors that have not been investigated adequately yet.

When I talked with teachers at Beaumont and other schools, they would often tell me that they were struggling, but that they did not know why. Weil (1986:72) calls this phenomenon a 'silent cry' or trying to locate an answer to the question: 'Why am I hurting?' Research done by Chorney (1998:2820) to investigate the cognitive factors affecting individual susceptibility to stress amongst teachers shows teachers' response to being a 'good teacher' are associated with words such as 'must' and 'need'. This implies that teachers are more vulnerable to stress as a result of their own internal attributions: they blame themselves for difficulties and choose rather to hide their own struggles than to acknowledge them. I have talked to teachers who are seriously thinking about leaving teaching as a career. Moreover, I could not explain to my fourteen year old son why his school's Grade One teacher, the Grade Four teacher and the deputy headmaster (all women) had died of cancer within three months of each other. Sadly, we did not even know that they were sick. The only sense that I could make of this was that many teachers who suffer, do so in isolation, rejection and silence.

1.2.2 Statistical research

The above-mentioned teachers' deaths, together with the interactions I had had with Beaumont Primary's teachers, prompted me to find out whether there was any statistical research that had been done on teachers leaving the profession in South Africa and on what teachers' medical condition looked like. I found a survey commissioned by the Education Labour Relations Counsel in 2003 (Paulse 2005:7-90). The survey involved 21 358 educators from 1 714 randomly selected schools. Figures 1.1 and 1.2 highlight the survey's findings:

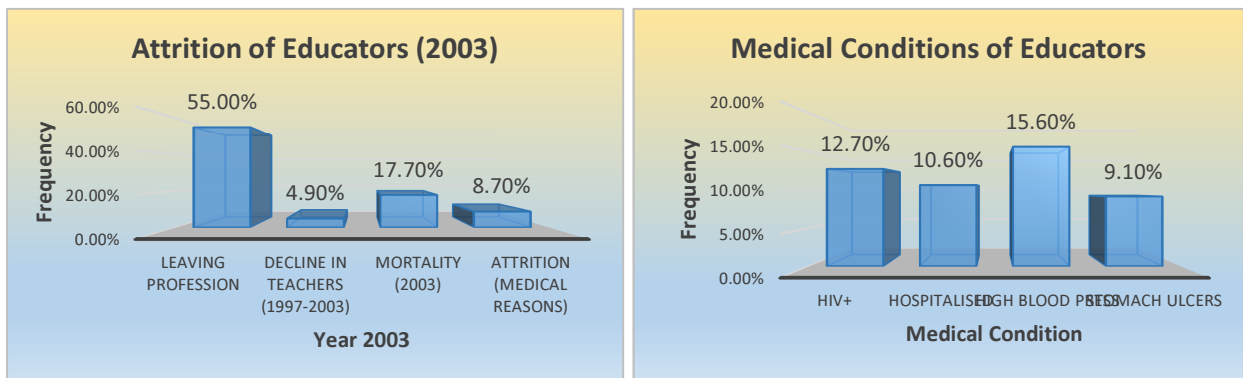


Figure 1.1

Figure 1.2

Figure 1.1 reveals that fifty-five percent (55%) of teachers have considered leaving or have left the profession due to numerous factors including: inadequate pay; increased workload and administration duties; lack of career opportunities and development; lack of professional recognition; dissatisfaction with education policies; and job security. Over the previous seven years, the number of teachers entering the profession declined from 386 735 to 368 548. The proportion of attrition due to mortality increased from 7.0% in 1997/1998 to 17.7% in 2003/2004. Over the same period, the proportion of attrition due to medical absence grew from 4.6% to 8.7%.

Figure 1.2 shows how the health status of teachers is generally poorer than the general population: 10.6% had been hospitalized in the previous twelve months. This is higher than the 7% hospitalization observed in the general population. The most frequently reported diagnoses in

the last study were stress-related illnesses such as high blood pressure (15.6%) and stomach ulcers (9.1%).

1.2.3 The challenge of Pastoral Counselling as Practical Theology

The findings from these research statistics confirmed what I had experienced with the teachers at Beaumont Primary School. These alarming statistics, together with all the challenges I had witnessed teachers facing, spurred me on to find ways in which Pastoral Counsellors and the church as a whole could respond to this issue.

In my opinion, society and the church need to face these challenges squarely. Even more urgent is the need for our churches and the wider society to become more open to taking responsibility to reflect Christ's love and compassion to teachers. The 'silent pandemic' of teachers' struggling is a clarion call to the church to wake up: to become more aware of the effects which this silent pandemic is having on our children and the wider society, instead of being prejudiced, ignorant or uninformed. Professor Nico Koopman, former Dean of the Theological Faculty at the University of Stellenbosch wrote in *Die Burger* (2013:15):

We have a prophetic responsibility to our schools. We can prophetically criticize and protest against what is wrong in our education system, schools and society. We have to stand together and people have to see it. We have to take part in open conversations about our education situation and through that, make an impact on how people think and what they want to do. We have to search for solutions in a prophetic way and take hopeful action (*my translation*).

Koopman also referred to Philippians 2: 13, when he argues that God wants us to 'want the good and to do the good.' As both a theologian and a researcher, I could not ignore this call to get involved and try to find solutions for the crisis facing our education system.

How can we become involved and be more creative and innovative in our approach to people - such as the teachers in our country - who are afflicted with many problems and challenges? I concur with Clinebell's (1984:9) suggestion that 'pastoral counseling must broaden its conceptual base and revise its working model in order to flourish more fully.' The invitation here is to always be inspired and creative in our ministry to make Pastoral Counselling more holistic in its methods.

1.2.3.1 Practical Theology

Practical Theology became a vehicle by which I as researcher could investigate ‘What *appears* to be going on and what is *actually* going on’ when I worked with the teachers of Beaumont Primary School (or with any other teacher). Over the years, however, Practical Theology has been challenged and criticised for its emphasis on, and employment of, secular approaches such as Psychology (Fowler 1981; 1987; 1996); Social Science (Gill 1975; 1977); Gender Studies (Ackerman & Bons-Storm 1998); Philosophy (Foucault 1997; 1980; 1988); Narrative (White & Epston 1990) and other Pastoral Theologies (Brueggemann 1993; Patton 1993). Whether such critique is unfair or good is debatable; nevertheless this challenging and constructive criticism has been enriching for Practical Theology as a whole. Gerkin (1986:11) suggests that Practical Theology had developed and blossomed so much by the 1940s and 1950s that even he was interested in these ‘newfound horizon’ for pastoral care and ministry because they ‘seemed to offer exciting new possibilities for making ministry more relevant to human needs.’ I agree with Swinton (2007:67) observation that the work of Practical Theology spans the theological spectrum – from liberalism to conservatism - but ‘irrespective of the theological and methodological diversity, the common theme that holds practical theology together as a discipline is its perspective on, and beginning point in, human experience and its desire to reflect theologically on that experience.’

Clinebell (1984:9) suggests that the church needs to be more creative in her approach to people who are afflicted by problems and challenges of life. As teachers in the present South African context fall into this category, the churches would do well to follow Clinebell’s suggestion that we should find ways to care, heal and grow with teachers in their context and needs. We should look for creative models and methods of Pastoral Counselling that are more integrative, broad and holistic in their approach (1984:1). I believe such an approach can be found in the Narrative arena.

1.3 Narrative approach

The word ‘Narrative’ has been used in the academic arena by Sociologists, Psychologists, Philosophers and Theologians (in Herman, Jahn & Ryan 2005). Morgan (2000:5) defines

narratives as ‘stories consisting of *events *linked in sequence *across time *according to a plot. Narrative is like a thread that weaves the events together, forming a story.’ In this research, I used the Narrative approach as a way to do Pastoral Counselling with teachers. The Narrative approach allowed the teachers’ stories to be told; metaphors they used to be heard; and riddles, art, songs, plays and other lived experiences to be witnessed. (See also 3.6). To form a better understanding of this approach, we will now explore the origins of the Narrative approach.

The Narrative approach was derived from postmodern Social Construction discourse, meaning that people build or construct their lives through social interaction with other people. Narrative as a therapeutic tool has mainly been developed by White and Epston (1990). They used the work of Foucault (1980), a French philosopher and historian, to shape the development of Narrative Therapy. The work of White and Epston has been widely implemented in schools in Australia and New Zealand schools. Many books and articles have been published through the *Dulwich Centre*. For example: *Narrative counselling in schools. Powerful and brief*. (1995).

Their work and the workshops that I have attended by White when he visited South Africa in 2001, inspired me to implement Narrative as a guiding methodology (see Chapter 4) in this research. The approach takes the view that people are always centred in conversations, that the ‘client is the expert of his/her life.’ I used Narrative questions – characterised by their generative rather than interrogative effects – to form the building blocks as I invited the teachers in the research project to consider their past, present and possible future and in doing so, an ‘alternative story’ of their lives began to surface.

Spirituality was one of the main themes that arose during conversations with the teachers in this research. Louw (1998:15) reminds us that ‘the task of pastoral care is helping people to locate their personal stories within the framework of the Christian Story.’ The Christian story, however, is presented to us in the form of biblical narratives which resonate with many stories in our lives.

1.3.1 Biblical Narratives

One of the creative methods that teachers use in their teaching, is stories. Stories are very important, especially for young children. Even adults love a good story and that is perhaps why

movies and books like *The Chronicles of Narnia* or *Harry Potter* with good storylines will always be popular. Biblical narratives or stories can be found from the book of Genesis to Revelation. These stories teach us about ways of living a life that is worthwhile and whole. They show us real peoples' experiences from different backgrounds and contexts. They show us multi-cultural interactions between individuals (for example, Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well in John: 7 and 8) and interactions within communities (for example, the Israelites and the Egyptians in the book of Exodus). Healey and Sybertz (2005: 32-33) call this the 'inculturation' of the gospel. The Gospels that recount the life of the Messiah (Jesus) are especially full of narratives. The Messiah used stories, parables, proverbs and sayings from the Old Testament to teach his disciples. Haley and Sybertz (2005: 32-33) observe that without parables, Jesus did not teach anything. (See also 2.9 Jesus as teacher). Jesus' stories or narratives have been regarded as some 'fifth gospel' through which God reveals himself through the experience of people.

Two biblical stories stand out for me and guided my use of the Narrative approach. The one is Noah's Ark (Gen: 5-7) and the other is Jacob's struggle with the 'Angel.'

1.3.1.1 Noah's Ark

As a child I was fascinated by the story of how Noah and his family and all the animals survived a catastrophic event such as the flood. I always wondered how Noah managed all the different animals in such a relatively small container like an ark. My questions were always: 'Didn't the animals get scared? Didn't they fight with each other?'

Interestingly, Noah's story popped up again when I established the pre-primary school. The building we bought for the pre-primary looked like an 'ark' with a little hall in the middle and classrooms to the sides. Many visitors commented on the building's resemblance to an ark. The name that was painted on the building when I bought it was: 'Tula', which means to 'shut up' or 'be silent.' I prayed for a name for the school which would be the opposite of silence. The Hebrew phonetic name for 'shout to the Lord,' – *Rooha* - came up. For me, *Rooha* signified my dream that every child who came through this school would use their voices to 'shout to the Lord.' *Rooha* Pre-Primary School turned ten years old in 2015, and is still going strong.

1.3.1.2 Jacob's struggle

The story of Jacob (Genesis 32: 24-32) is another example of a biblical story that describes a struggle and that also resonates with the Narrative approach of this research:

And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

I resonate with this story because 'One day, my body broke down, forcing me in fear and frustration to ask, what's happening to me? (Frank 1991:8). In 2008 my liver and pancreas showed signs of distress and failure. I was forty years old. I lost twelve kilograms in one month and was told that I could possibly have cancer. Frank (1991:8) articulates my own experience:

What happens when my body breaks down happens not just to the body but also to my life, which is lived in that body...even when medicine can fix the body, that doesn't always put life back together again. Medicine can diagnose and treat the breakdown, but sometimes so much fear and frustration have been aroused in the ill person that fixing the breakdown does not quiet them. At those times the experience of illness goes beyond the limits of medicine.

I remember my husband praying and preparing our children that I might die. But I haven't died yet. It is now 2016, and I am still living with the proverbial sword over my head. On 24 April 2016 I had a mild stroke, described as an 'unusual event' for someone of my age. I spent four days in hospital and made a full recovery, with no permanent damage. I believe that – like Jacob - I have struggled alone at night with the 'Angel.' And, although my struggles have left me physically weaker than before, I discovered a renewed resilience and commitment to speak about our responsibility towards becoming conscious, aware and alert to the struggles faced especially by female teachers in the present context. My own experience also resonated well with what the statistical analysis above (1.2.2) and the recent headline in the Sowetan (2015:2): 'Teachers cannot cope with the demands of their jobs.' In this article, the author proposes that 'unrealistic' demands and conditions are the main cause of teachers' ill health. This immediately raises the question: Why is the experience of teachers different from other professions?

1.4 Why teachers?

The teachers' stories I have heard over the years, together with my own experience and background, have motivated my search for a different approach to address the problems mentioned above and to discern which approach is more applicable in the teaching context. The Narrative approach, with its use of metaphors and stories, continued to attract my attention and led me to the following conclusions:

1. Narrative is an appropriate approach when working with teachers and children in a classroom or counselling context. Families and communities are usually included in the counselling.
2. The approach forms part of a wider perspective and, especially in our postmodern times, has been applied in different fields such as Psychology, Theology, Sociology and Philosophy.
3. A Narrative approach invites people to engage in a relationship that will build a meaningful story of hope for the future of a person or communities' life.

Who were my research participants and how I did I become involved in their world?

1.4.1 Introducing the research participants

The reality of the problems confronting many teachers in South Africa (see 1.2.2) as well as my own experience (see Chapter 2), have fuelled my desire to research, explore, examine and evaluate how a Narrative approach in Pastoral Counselling with teachers could contribute to teachers finding solutions that would enable them to live lives of worthiness, self-esteem and wholeness. The teachers from a local primary school, Beaumont Primary in Somerset West, became willing participants in this research.

1.4.2 Moment of insertion

For most Pastoral Counsellors, there is a 'moment of insertion' (Cochrane, de Gruchy & Peterson 1991:17) which activates our pastoral response: we begin to get in touch with what people feel; what they have experienced; how they perceive things; and how they respond to challenges. As both a teacher and a Pastoral Counsellor, I became 'inserted' - or became part of - Beaumont Primary teachers' experiences when I helped them implement their values program.

As I listened and interacted with them, I felt so much compassion with their struggle as teachers in post-apartheid South Africa that I could almost feel their pain. I can compare this moment of insertion to an injection. When I was experiencing so much pain after the possible cancer diagnosis I remember the doctor gave me an injection for the pain: as the medication coursed through my body, it seemed to ‘take over’, taking away the pain for a few hours. This strange substance seemed to spread throughout my body and bring momentary relief. Similarly, when I talked to the Beaumont Primary teachers and listened to their stories, it was as if I was ‘injected into’ their lives. They felt that they could just let go for the moment:

...changing traumatic experiences occurs when one feels the pain of another person...acknowledges one’s pain and finds joy in listening to others, challenges meanings and experiences that emerge out of the conversations with each other.

(Kotzé and Kotzé 2001:3)

A more detailed overview will be given of the teacher research participants of this study in Chapter 2 (2.2.1).

1.5 Research problem

South African teachers are struggling. Despite the Education Department receiving a significant proportion of the national budget, and the fact that the system has been reformed into an inclusive model, teachers continue to leave the profession or become sick or even die (see 1.2.2). There seems to have been few effective ways of working with these struggling teachers. The church, and especially Pastoral Counsellors, need to find alternative or broader ways that might be effective in the ministry to and working with teachers. This research explores an alternative model: how a Narrative approach could provide an effective response to those struggles experienced by the teachers in this research project.

My assumption - that a Narrative approach could be a possible way in Pastoral Counselling with teachers – seems especially applicable to the whole South African context. In every area of South African life - from President Zuma’s story-telling songs to the Afrikaner’s story telling around

the braai - we see daily expressions of the Narrative approach in the lives and experiences of this nation.

South Africa is culturally diverse. Our *rainbows* include eleven 'official cultures' and an 'unofficial' combination of many more. Since 1994, South Africa has also become home to immigrants from all over Africa. Schools have had to accommodate learners from many different cultures, each reflecting their own culture and environment. Our inclusive education system requires our teachers to deal with problems, difficulties and challenges in appropriate ways.

The context in which people are embedded forms an important consideration for Practical Theology. Although the postmodern world has become a global village, in which people have close knowledge of each other through (social) networking, people still live according to their own context and background. Thus Practical Theology must always be cognisant of the practical implications of contextualization.

While we can take advice and knowledge from countries like Finland, America and Australia, we cannot only implement models from other countries in our unique education context: we have to find our own solutions for the problems and challenges facing our teachers in South Africa. This research project is part of that struggle: to find appropriate and adequate ways to deal more effectively with the 'silent pandemic' facing our teachers in the South African context.

1.6 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to explore adequate and effective ways to counsel teachers pastorally in a *rainbow nation* education context. A Narrative approach - which involved stories and metaphors - allowed the research participants to express their issues in a way that is natural to all human beings from the beginning of time. This method enabled teachers to begin the healing process through a better understanding of themselves and others.

The different philosophies, methods and techniques embraced by a Narrative approach have profoundly influenced my work and life as Pastoral Counsellor in schools. I no longer try to 'fix' problems. Instead, I ask people to tell me their stories. Together we explore how they have become afflicted by the problem and then how they can re-write their story in a way that allows

for new interpretations and new modes of behaviour. White (1994) states that human beings are interpretive beings; story telling ‘actually shape[s] our lives, constitute[s] our lives, and they “embrace” our lives.’ Involving the teachers in this research project - to interpret and re-interpret their own stories - gave them a sense of achievement. This in itself was healing. Moreover, this process enabled the whole school to tell a new story about itself: a healing story of hidden power and resourcefulness. By replacing the story of hurt, guilt and blame, this new story created a new reality. McTaggart (1997:2) suggests that such research becomes participatory through action: it can help to change not only individuals, but also the institutions and societies to which they belong.

The purpose of this research did not, however, involve changing the structures of the institution we call a school or even the education system. The research used Practical Theology to weave theology into the fabric of teachers’ lives, a theology that did not remain a noun – a thing - but also became a verb: it was put into practice.

1.7 Objectives of the study

This research project had the following objectives:

To identify those ways that could be most helpful for reaching out pastorally to teachers who are struggling in an inclusive education system such as we have in South Africa. In order to accomplish this, as researcher and Pastoral Counsellor, I had to employ methods and theories found in:

- Theology, such as Practical Theology (Schleiermacher: 1768-1834; Gerkin 1968; Heitink 1999; Swinton 2006; and others; see also 3.7.2); Pastoral Theology (Ramsay 2004; Patton 1990; Louw 2008; see 3.7.3); Post foundational Theology (Van Huyssteen 2006, Müller 2009; see 3.4); African Theology (Mbiti 1989; Mwenisongole 2010; see 3.8 and 3.9.2.1.1); South African Theology (Tutu 2000, 2004; Baloyi 2013; Cochrane, De Gruchy & Peterson 1991; Nouwen 1990; see 3.9)
- Interdisciplinarity (De Lange 2007, Drake et al 2006; see also 3.4.2)

- Psychology and Social sciences. Examples of these methods/models can be found in Postmodern approaches (Anderson 2004 and others; see 3.2); Social Construction (Gergen & Gergen 2003; see 3.3); Narrative Therapy (White & Epston 1990); Psychotherapy (Jung 2006),
- Existing models by South African scholars, like the Letsema Circle Model (with its healing approach), founded by Mamphela Ramphele (2012); see 3.9.4

Another objective for this study was to investigate the intertwined worlds of the teachers in the research project through understanding and identifying the discourses which were shaping how they lived. Discourses are networks of ‘taken-for-granted’ understandings that develop into ‘truths’ we live by (White 1995:215). These discourses continue to function and impact people’s lives long after the historical purpose that shaped them has expired (White 2000:35, 36). My objective was to offer a selective interpretation, using the practices of three approaches, to ‘make visible the otherwise “hidden” social and political processes’ (Parker & Shotter 1990:7). First, I used Foucault’s (1977) technologies of ‘truth’ which lead to the pathologizing, medicalising, controlling, isolating and intensified study of the human body and behaviour. This was meant ostensibly to ‘cure and ameliorate’ but tended rather ‘coerce and legislate’ (Graham 1996:21) to deconstruct the ‘truths’ we live by (see 3.3.1.1). Second, Derrida’s deconstruction of contradictions was used to show that ‘presence and absence’ are not opposites, but ‘rather...there is an inevitable defining of the one through the other’ (Sampson 1989:12) (see 3.3.1.2). Third, Feminist deconstructing for liberation was used as a feminist theology of praxis. This is ‘embodied practical theology’ (Ackermann 1998:87) because ‘we are bodies’ (see 3.3.1.3). By attuning myself as researcher to the discourses through which my own life and the lives of the research participants had been constructed, I was able to stand with them and to find support for myself as I challenged my own limiting and oppressive ideas.

The final objective for this study was to provide an adequate model for Pastoral Counselling and for Practical Theology as a whole for working in healing ways with the teachers in the South African context. It was my assumption that the Narrative approach would play a major role in achieving such a goal, in finding possible solutions and in making suggestions for Pastoral Counselling and for the church as a whole. Since these objectives are related to each other and

cannot be separated, they were thus integrated to make my ministry more effective. The following questions guided my research.

1.8 Research questions

Although I could have asked many questions concerning this research, the following needed to be asked based on the objectives mentioned above:

- In what ways can a Narrative approach with teachers in a Pastoral Counselling context be explored to improve the lives of teachers in South Africa?
- How will this research contribute and impact the wider teacher community in South Africa?

I had a few concerns regarding the limitations and validity of the findings in this research, which I will discuss next.

1.9 Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of the study was that it was confined to those teachers at Beaumont Primary School in Somerset West, who had volunteered to participate in the research. They were mainly white teachers who came from a so-called middle-class privileged environment. South Africa's apartheid history - and the advantages which most white teachers had received under that regime - could raise a potential problem: this research could be viewed as limited or narrow in its application. In this regard, I acknowledge the fact that some teachers were advantaged during apartheid. But as researcher and teacher, I agree with an American Native Chief's comment that 'we [as teachers] are part of the same thread - any damage to part of the thread affects us all' (Ramphele 2012:162). In my view, South African teachers - regardless of race and gender, privilege or under-privilege - are part of the same educational thread. Our connectedness is such that it became a good reason for me to investigate our corporate sadness and anger. We can try to sidestep this kind of research or try to put distance between us by blaming others or

apartheid but, as Ramphele (2012:162) so accurately concludes: ‘We cannot erase the impact of social pain.’

The limitations of the study can however be put into a broader perspective by showing some of the benefits of the study as well. The general aim of research about teachers is based on developing the professional disposition of learning, reflexivity and mindful teaching – in other words a self-transformation process (Mills 2000; Stringer 2007). Because teachers are the ones mostly affected by research done on tertiary level about them and have to implement the policies derived from such research, it seemed fitting for the participants in this research (teachers from Beaumont Primary school) to have the opportunity to contribute to the discourses based on their lives in teaching. This was done by me, the researcher, through interviewing and informal conversations with the teachers. The data I collected suggested evidence of the teachers becoming more reflective, more mindful and more deliberate in their approach to their struggles (see chapter 5). They were able to form a better understanding of themselves and this led to significant change in their practice. Furthermore, their voices provided an insider perspective which could address their struggles (see chapters 5 &6).

Although this research project can be criticized for focussing too narrowly on one gender (female teachers) and one nationality, I believe it contributed hugely to the recent discussion in the well-being of teachers in South Africa and worldwide. The view can be held that when presented to a wider practice setting, validity may be questioned. However, the research and the findings of the research must be viewed as more than action or activity, it must be seen as reflective, speculative, questioning and theorizing. I believe when teachers form reciprocal relationships with other teachers, they can increase the likelihood of developing richer understandings of their shared struggles. For example, Beaumont Primary school (research participants) developed relationships with teachers from Bergvliet Primary as well as schools in Singapore. I concur with the comment that

If teachers research are to make a large-scale impact, they need to have appropriate and accessible outlets for their discoveries...little teacher research of any kind that is generated in local settings for local purposes gets published, though much of it is shared

orally at regional and national teacher research or teacher conferences

(Stremmel 2002:7-8)

Although the different teaching challenges and issues teachers face in South Africa cannot be generalized and compared between schools such as Beaumont Primary school and township or rural schools, it is my conviction that the empowering inquiry nature of this study demonstrated how teachers took their lives seriously and generated knowledge and understanding to improve the quality of their lives.

I read a great amount of literature which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, but next I will provide a short overview of why and how I selected the literature material.

1.10 Preliminary Literature review

Mouton (2001:179) says that literature reviews are ‘studies that provide an overview of scholarship in a certain discipline through an analysis of trends and debates.’ A literature review should relate and include the literature which the researcher uses in his/her research project or that is relevant to his/her studies. Since the different theories I explored and examined were for the sake of building up the research project and objectives which had been set up, this seems to reflect Kiniki’s (2006:21) assertion that ‘ a literature review..., is written from the perspective or standpoint of the reviewer.’

During the research I looked at the theories which different scholars in Psychology, Sociology and Theology have used or developed in their particular fields (see Chapter 3). The aim was to evaluate the different theories in order to compliment my own research objectives, as stated above (see 1.7).

The following theories stood out because of their relevance to my research:

1.10.1 Postmodern umbrella

Postmodern refers to the family of concepts or theories that have been developed by scholars within the fields of Psychology, Social Science and Psychotherapy. It calls for an ideological critique or a questioning perspective about ‘truths’ in people’s lives. It mainly challenges the truths and centrality of the individual’s knowledge, the objective world and language as the carrier of truth (Gergen 2001: 803-813). Adopting a postmodern approach in this research helped me to challenge ‘truths’, not only in the participants’ lives, but also in my own.

1.10.2 Social Construction

Together with a postmodern approach, Social Construction takes a sceptical stance regarding established truths and is especially concerned with the power and authority that these truths award. A Social Constructionist view proposes that the universal and taken-for-granted truths that we inherit in our world are not inevitable, fixed or stable. Instead, truth is communally constructed. Social Construction places emphasis on activity and social change. Shotter (1994: 52-53) suggests that ‘all actions by human beings involved with others in a social group in this fashion are dialogically or responsively linked in some way, both to previous, already executed actions and to anticipated, next possible actions.’ Adopting a Social Constructionist stance as a researcher enabled me to view on how certain ‘truths’ were constructed socially by the research participants as well as the greater society.

1.11 Interpretive process

Understanding is an interpretive process in which knowledge and meaning are created communally and relationally through ideas of multi- or plural authorship. This means that people create multiple realities and that possibilities for ‘newness’ can emerge from dialogue. Anderson (2007:13) says that ‘these ideas gave my colleagues and me a new language for describing our clinical experiences of how stories are told and retold and how new versions or new meanings of old ones emerge from the telling and retelling.’ In this research the interpretive process highlighted the multi-layered dimensions in the narratives of the lives of the research participants.

1.11.1 Narrative

In this research, I used Narrative as a form of discourse which gives meaning, understanding, structure and coherency to the circumstances, events and experiences in our lives (Goolishian & Anderson 1994). The narratives I used included our (research participants' as well as myself) descriptions and the vocabulary we used to describe our understanding of human nature and behaviour. White (1994) describes Narrative as a process rather than a template that is created, experienced and shared through our interaction with other people. For White (1994), Narrative is about our interest in people's accounts of their experiences. For Narrative Theorists, 'the problem is the problem, the person is not the problem' (Morgan 2000:2). This makes Narrative an essential part in the Pastoral Counselling process.

1.11.2 Narrative Pastoral Counselling

Gerkin (1984), a pioneer in Pastoral Counselling, highlights that Pastoral Counselling is about understanding a person and what is going on in that person's life. Through proper ways of conversation, the hope is that the gospel will shed its light on that person's life (Gerkin 1984:116). The individual should act as:

...[i]nterpreter of its own experience and of life of the soul as that arena in which the self's interpretive process must find whatever resolution is possible to the force/meaning dynamics of human existence in the context of its life in God (Gerkin 1984:116)

Louw (2003), a South African theologian, speaks about models which can help Pastoral caregivers assist people in their experiences and meaning making. Louw (2003:1-2) is aware of the challenges presently facing Pastoral Theology which arise as a consequence of globalization. He looks for better models to interpret the gospel which will suit the yearning which people have in their specific social and cultural contexts.

Clinebell (2004:183) calls for transformation in Pastoral Counselling. He challenges the pastoral ministry 'to develop and test new therapeutic methods which use the symbols, stories, archetypal images and other resources of our biblical, historical and liturgical heritage directly in counselling and growth facilitation.' In this research, Narrative Pastoral Counselling has

provided a vehicle for the teachers to talk about their faith and how the gospel has ‘shed its light’ on that teacher’s life.

The Narrative approach, however, is not a new concept, especially in Africa. Narratives are not only used to communicate daily, but also as a way to convey and preserve knowledge

1.12 An African view

When it comes to an African view or model for counselling people pastorally, we need to move away from the western worldview of individualism to a model that will suit the context. Berinyuu (2002: 20) suggests that, despite differences, African psychotherapy can be combined and integrated with the western therapy models. Through an integration of models and approaches, Pastoral Counsellors can make Pastoral Counselling more effective according to the context of the people. Mucherera (2001:172) writes, ‘narratives (stories) come naturally to most Africans...In some cases, the narrative may be presented in the form of a traditional fairy tale, story, or sometimes...proverbs or sayings.’ Narratives guide people’s lives and through narratives people can communicate with each other and God.

According to an African worldview, when it comes to a person’s wholeness - mental, physical, spiritual, social and environmental - a person is expected to be at peace (whole) with creation and society:

Pastoral care must liberate itself from its dominant middle-class, white, male orientation and become more inclusive in its understanding, concern and methods. It must become transcultural in its perspective, open to learning new ways of caring from and for the poor and powerless, ethnic minorities, women and those in non-western cultures. On a shrinking planet, our circle of consciousness, and caring must become global.

(Mwaura 2004:65-69)

The above quotation highlights the importance for every culture in our postmodern times to get involved in people’s struggles. The church should get involved in the struggle our teachers face in dealing with issues such as multiculturalism, gender et cetera in South African schools. The focus should be on Africans and Westerners coming together to deal with the difficulties.

1.12.1 A South African view

Although I have not experienced the Letsema Healing Circle (developed by Mamphela Ramphele 2012:182) as a social model of healing, this model appealed to me because it has been experimenting with how ‘wounded’ people can heal in South Africa. The creators of this model took the similarities between our post-apartheid experiences with those of Nicaragua and the Canadian First Nations and created the Letsema Healing Circle. This approach ‘starts with an understanding that before you can walk together as people you need to sit together. The African traditional dialogue platform is the circle.’ Although the model is focused more on political healing, I think that the model fits well with the Narrative Pastoral approach underpinning this research. It was my opinion that this model could be studied in finding ways to deal with the struggles our teachers face in South Africa. I did just this in this research. Together with the research participants, I developed a model (see Chapter 6 for further reference and recommendations) that seemed to concur with Ramphele’s (2012: 209) suggestion that:

We need to stretch our imagination beyond the comfort zones of today’s realities. We need to root out those approaches and practices that hold us back from openness to new and different ways of tackling our own challenges. First and foremost, we need to change our mindsets and embrace the values of our democracy and learn to live them out in our daily encounters: at home, in communities, in our workplaces and wider society.

I acknowledge the contribution of my supervisor, Professor Baloyi, in the way I am thinking through and have composed this research project. His articles on counselling to abortion patients; the woman from John 8:1-11(2010); menopausal women and patriarchal structure (2009) have helped me to look at struggling and healing in different ways (see Chapter 5). His views and knowledges on African ‘ways of being’ informed and inspired me in this research project.

1.13 Proposed methodology

It was always difficult to find a route into research that would keep me as researcher ethical: that would honour the people I studied and that would benefit them in the manner they choose for it to do so (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:7). The ideas that shaped this research happened through my exposure to Practical Theology, Postmodern philosophy, Social Constructionist discourse and

more specifically, Narrative practices. The research philosophy that seems to interweave these ideas is a multi-dimensional and interactive approach found in Qualitative research:

Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter...qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use of and collection of a variety of empirical materials ...that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives. (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:2)

1.13.1 Research design

As the above definition suggests, the qualitative researcher looks for ways to understand people in their natural habitations. It emphasizes how people do things through their use of language instead of through the use of numbers or quantity. This is about the quality of how people live their lives. Qualitative research fits this research project because I strove to look at ideas, theories, concepts and other ways of understanding (Mouton 2001:107) the teachers of Beaumont Primary school. It helped to explore and examine how their struggles could be addressed more appropriately to improve the quality of their lives as well as other teachers in South Africa (Mouton 2001:161).

Whereas Quantitative research rests in positivistic and post-positivistic assumptions, Qualitative research forms around assumptions and interpretations and human action. As the nature of this research project was qualitative - interested not so much in predicting or controlling, but rather in understanding – it required me to use a qualitative form of inquiry in the research. As such, Narrative Inquiry seemed to be the best fit.

1.13.2 Narrative Inquiry

The research methods used by Clandinin - with her twenty years of Narrative Inquiry in schools - made a huge contribution to my understanding of Narrative Inquiry. Clandinin worked and learned alongside schools for extended periods of time. She used the narrative-constructed theoretical background of personal practical knowledge; professional knowledge landscapes; and stories to provide a language and a framework for understanding lives in schools. Her research was helpful for me in this project, especially because she also worked with some complexities

and diversities in multicultural schools in Canada (Clandinin 2007:3) similar to what we have in South Africa.

Narrative Inquiry fits well into this Qualitative research project because words were used in the analysis through which the collection or construction of stories about the teachers in the study presented itself. However, the counts of stories, the kinds of stories in the study and the methods that I used, varied. Within such a framework, researchers usually use a number of research approaches, strategies and methods (Lieblich, Mashiach-Tuval & Zilber 1998).

Narrative Inquiry sees narrative as both the phenomena and the method of study. I paid attention to analysing and understanding the stories lived and told by the research participants - the teachers - and therefore it were placed under the label of Qualitative research methodology:

Narrative inquiry begins in experience as expressed in lived and told stories. The method and inquiry always have experiential starting points that are informed by and intertwined with theoretical literature that informs either the methodology or an understanding of the experience with which the inquirer began. In essence, narrative inquiry involves the reconstruction of a person's experience in relationship both to the other and to a social milieu. (Clandinin 2000:3)

As Narrative Inquirer, I used four themes to guide the research:

1. The relationship between me - the person conducting the research - and the persons participating as the subject - the teachers. Heshusius (1994:19) speaks of a 'participatory consciousness' that renders the act of knowing an 'ethical act.' This 'participatory consciousness' makes the research quite personal: the teachers I was studying, were not faceless or nameless. I could not impose myself through uninformed questions, but first had to allow them to 'let me near'.
2. The shift away from the use of numbers (as is typical of quantitative methods) towards the use of words (qualitative) as data. Clandinin (2006:9) urges researchers to think 'narratively about a phenomenon' so that the shifting, changing, personal and social nature of the phenomenon under study can be highlighted: 'Thinking narratively about a phenomenon challenges the dominant story of phenomenon as fixed and under unchanging throughout the inquiry' (2006:9). Ideas in this research were drawn from

‘self-facing, liminality, relational knowing, travelling, truth as communal, un-knowing and not-knowing’ – all ways to describe the data that emerged from the inquiry with the teachers.

3. A shift in focus: from the general and universal towards the local and specific. While a considerable amount of field texts and notes are composed by Narrative Inquirers with participants as well as in the literature study, the notes that became part of this research text were usually only a small portion of the overall data (see Chapter 5). I followed Gergen’s (2003:272) warning - that the ‘analytical method of deconstructing stories into coded piles’ should not be ‘the aim of the research’ - because then it would direct my attention away from thinking narratively about the research. Instead, metaphors, visual and textual products, word images, transcripts and letters showed the multi-layered storied nature of the teacher’s experiences and created a research text that truly represented the complexity of their lives and experiences.
4. Exploring alternative epistemologies or ways of thinking. ‘The knowledge developed from narrative inquiries is textured by particularity and incompleteness; knowledge that leads less to generalization and certainties’ (Clandinin & Murphy 2007). Narrative Inquiry research informed from other epistemological and ontological assumptions, such as Practical Theology, strengthened this research project. For example, I applied the different skills and methods of Narrative approach in Pastoral Counselling - such as deconstruction and finding the alternative stories in their lives - with the teachers.

Although Narrative Inquiry provided me with a lens to look at the teachers’ stories in different ways, it was also important to examine what the Narrative process looked like.

1.13.2.1 What did the Narrative research process look like?

This is a challenging question. As Clandinin & Connelly (200:97) suggest, each Narrative Inquiry ‘has its own rhythms and sequences, and each narrative researcher needs to work them out for her or his own inquiry.’ I found the following table a starting point from which I was able to find my way and destination in this research. Creswell’s (2008:526) comparison of Narrative Inquiry to Qualitative research and to the research process in general, pulls these together well in the following summary:

Table 1. The research process, the characteristics of qualitative research, and the characteristics of narrative inquiry.

<i>Phases of the research process</i>	<i>Characteristics of qualitative research</i>	<i>Characteristics of narrative inquiry</i>
Identify a research problem	A qualitative problem requires exploration and understanding.	Narrative researchers seek to understand and re-present experiences through the stories that individual(s) live and tell.
Review the literature	The scholarly literature plays a minor role. Qualitative researchers use the literature to justify their research problems.	Narrative researchers foreground the participant's story and background the scholarly literature. For example, they may find direction or underlying structure for their research reports through the participant's story rather than through a conventional literature review or theoretical framework. The scholarly literature may offer guidance for how to interpret the participant's stories (i.e., find deeper meaning or new understandings through them).
Develop a purpose statement and research questions	The qualitative purpose statement and research questions are broad and general. The qualitative purpose statement and research questions seek participants'	Narrative researchers seek to explore the meaning of the individual's experiences as told through a story or stories.

	experiences.	
Collect qualitative data	<p>Qualitative researchers collect data following protocols developed during their studies.</p> <p>Qualitative data collection involves gathering text or image data.</p> <p>It also involves studying a small number of individuals or sites.</p>	<p>Narrative researchers collect field texts that document the individual's story in his or her own words (e.g., interview transcripts, letters, and journal entries).</p>
Analyse and interpret qualitative data	<p>Qualitative data analysis consists of text analysis.</p> <p>Qualitative data analysis consists describing information and of developing themes.</p> <p>Qualitative interpretations situate findings within larger meanings.</p>	<p>Narrative researchers analyse the participant's stories by retelling or 'restorying' them into a framework that makes sense (e.g., chronology, plot).</p> <p>This often involves identifying themes or categories of information within the participant's stories (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene).</p> <p>Researchers may then rewrite the participant's stories to place them within a chronological sequence (beginning, middle, and end) and/or a plot that incorporates a main character who experiences a conflict or struggle that comes to some sort of resolution.</p>

The Table on the previous page was taken from Creswell, 2008; and 2007: 56.

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The Narrative research process cannot exist without data, in this case, the stories of the teachers involved in the research project. It is therefore important to discuss how I collected the data and how I explored Narrative as a means to do so. Because South Africa's teaching profession is multi-cultural and my sample group was not, I felt that I at least had to consider and examine the African, as well as the South African view on Narratives. I found many correlations with the narrative techniques of a data collection as will be discussed below.

1.13.3 Data collection techniques – how did I explore narratives from a multi-cultural view?

Because I am South African born, it was necessary for me as researcher in South Africa to provide a rationale for my decision to explore how African (see chapter 3) and South African's (see chapter 3) use of a narrative approach is part of an inherited culture which can teach and inform an integrated model (with western models) for teachers who are struggling in our education system in South Africa (see Chapter 3).

In invoking African culture idioms we are heeding Carl Jung's injunction to acknowledge that our heritage from previous generations is not only genetic, but includes the important element of cultural heritage that helps us to be a rooted people. By leveraging Africa's strong cultural heritage we are able to draw everyone into closer encounters on a level playing field (Ramphela 2012:182).

The following techniques proved very helpful in this research :

1.13.3.1 Attentive listening

Silverman (1993) urges researchers to not just 'listen' to the content of what the research participants are saying and then summarize the content in a 'crude empiricist' way. Rather, we should be sensitive. I found that through narrative deconstructed listening, I could open up spaces for aspects of the teacher's life narratives that had not yet been storied. In other words, the data (stories) were still being shaped. I hoped that the research participants would 'experience

[that] their stories are something that they have a hand in shaping, rather as something that has already shaped them' (Freedman & Combs 1996: 46). Boyd (1996: 20) argues that through the biblical concept of 'agape-listening', we can grow from our conversations with people. He proposes that 'agape-listening' begins with empathy and proceeds in mutuality toward transformation in the process. Baloyi (2012: 5-7) builds on this concept by saying that 'the better part of counseling should be dominated by listening.' This kind of listening should be done in a non-judgmental attitude on the part of the counsellor. Each 'patient' has their own reason for doing what they do and 'careful listening' can help each person to 'tell and explain' their actions. Baloyi warns, however, that this process will take time, especially because 'spiritual fragmentation' can develop between the patient and God. The counsellor can assist in the process of repair by hearing out 'every detail of the story and giving relevant assistance.'

An important element of the Letsema Healing Circle model (Ramphele: 185) is to allow a ten to fifteen minute silence or listening period for participants. These moments of silence create an 'imagined space' that is challenging in many ways, because the participants usually live in overcrowded noisy spaces and are not used to listen in silence. I discovered this also to be true with teachers today. It was interesting to see their experience of listening in such a way. Listening can be much more; it can also be a source of healing, as will be explained next.

1.13.3.2 Listening as source of healing

Listening is one source of healing that does not cost anything and that can be offered by anyone. We do this creatively and individually and it helps people to heal:

In listening, we remain open to the experience of others. And when we are tuned with their language, we begin to open significant words, in order to find other words in their words.

(Penn 2007:99)

My listening with the teachers became a primary form of healing, care and witnessing in this study. I experienced that they 'felt understood.' I reflected on how I felt when I was very sick: that being understood was a way of feeling I was still 'morally worthwhile.' This worthwhileness gave me the courage to include what was 'not absent' or visible or allowed or unspoken. This became an important point which I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 5.

1.13.3.3 Listening to the ‘absent but implicit’

White (2000:37) suggests that by ‘closely listening to people’s expressions we might have the opportunity to engage with them in conversations that are identifying of the relationship between what they discern in these expressions, and the absent but implicit descriptions without which discernment could not be arrived at.’ Listening to/for the ‘absent but implicit’ proved especially true in the analysis of the data (see Chapter 5). For example, if teachers spoke of ‘despair,’ I wanted to understand as best I could what their experience of despair looked like and how it manifested in their lives. This allowed context, power relations, and cultural and socio-economic discourses that could be foregrounded and addressed in a variety of ways. I made inquiries through questions which brought forth a range of ‘absent but implicit’ concepts like ‘hopes’ and ‘dreams’ and ‘promises.’ These contributed to a ‘rich’ description of the teacher’s lives.

It is my view that as Pastoral Counsellors, we have an even greater responsibility to really listen to the people we work with. This responsibility is connected to how God invites us to listen: to she-ma/to listen to God as well as our neighbour.

1.13.3.4 We are commanded to she-ma (listen) in the Bible

In Deuteronomy 6:3 God instructs Israel to listen/*she-ma* (Hebrew). Stern (1998:204) thickens what this call to listen involves:

‘Therefore listen, Israel, and take care to obey, so that things will go well with you, and so that you will increase greatly, as Adonai, the God of your ancestors, promised you by giving you a land flowing with milk and honey.’ The next verse is the famous ‘Sh’ma Ysra’el! Adonai Eloheino, Adonia echad,’ which translated, means: ‘Hear (listen), Israel, your God is One)’ and you are to love Him with all your heart...and your neighbor as yourself.’

The She-ma is the central prayer in the Jewish prayer book (Siddur). It is also the first verse of Scripture that a Jewish child learns. The word ‘echad’ in Hebrew can imply a unity in diversity. For example, in Exodus 26:6 the parts of the tabernacle are to be constructed so that it ‘shall be one (echad).’ The prophet Ezekiel (Ezk 37:19) spoke of two ‘sticks’ (representing the fragmented Israel) being reunited into one: ‘...and they shall be one (echad) stick in My hand’

(Parsons 2006:218). These words moved me and made me wonder what could happen if we really listen/she-ma with God and each other in the South African context.

As Pastoral Counsellor in this research, it was also very important for me to she-ma and really 'hear/listen' to God's voice in the lives of the teachers and in my own life. I found this to be a great challenge, especially because we prefer to take control in situations.

When I think about listening as a method of gathering information, I also automatically think about looking/seeing as well. So, the next data collection method I included in this research, was observation.

1.13.3.5 Observation

In Qualitative research observation connects to Ethnographic Inquiry. It required activities and actions – both of me as the researcher as well as the participants – that would enable us to get to know each other's ways of doing things. For instance, this meant that I would be sitting in the same chairs, drinking the same coffee, touching the same things the teachers participating in the research project touched. This is not observation from a distance: I prefer to think of it more as a Participatory Observation and it became a data gathering method I used in this research. This process came to be known as 'talk-in-interaction' (Psathas 1995) and involved interacting and talking with the teachers in usual and unusual circumstances such as athletics meetings or sport days. Their knowledge patterns helped to explain why some actions took place at certain times and why others were omitted contextually. An example of noteworthy actions in this specific research were:

- What every teacher did, for instance when entering a meeting
- Where each teacher sat during break times in the staffroom
- How certain responsibilities were structured
- Who did what at certain events and who did not do anything
- What the sequence of interaction looked like when a teacher left the school or died

Participatory observation and ‘talk-in-interaction’ is a rigorous stance:

...there is always much more to content than lexical information, and with regard to interaction and ethnomethodological approach to capturing and analysing data of interaction, that the very form, the very template of interaction, is already a main stakeholder in the meaning-making process. Add to that the socially constructed content and the other major template – discourse – and interaction becomes at least a three-layered process for social sciences.

(Henning 2004:94)

1.13.3.6 The White/Epston interview

It made sense to choose interviewing as a method of gathering data in this research, because it allowed me to use the techniques of Narrative interviewing that has been developed by White and Epston (1990). The White/Epston technique follows three steps and involves an ‘unusual use of language’ and questions. Morgan (2000: 3) describes the three steps as:

1. Externalizing the problem (naming the problem as something outside of the person)
2. Mapping the influence of the problem in the teacher’s or family’s life
3. Mapping the influence of the teachers and their families’ in the life of the problem

I adapted these techniques for interviewing individual teachers in this research. I used their language, techniques and approaches to hear the dominant stories and to find the alternative stories that lay hidden behind: I waited to be told. All my experiences were documented/recorded for future reference. Although this process is not an ABC formula, I have worked through it in a natural way as it flows from researcher to research participant, in this case the teachers. I took Mwenisongole’s (2010:111) advice to heart: ‘...one just needs to be attentive and sensitive to see what is going on and not take the process in a rigid way, otherwise it might harm positive relationships...’

1.14 Validity and reliability of methods

Validity points to the ‘the degree of fit between the conceptual and operational definitions of the construct, and the instrument should be usable for the particular purposes for which it was designed’ (Durrheim & Painter 2006:147). This means that the ideas and objectives that I have

set forward as researcher should be suitable for being measured by the proposed methods. The arguments that I have shown above, have shown the validity of this research.

Reliability 'refers to the dependability of a measurement instrument; that is, the extent to which the instrument yields the same results on repeated trials' (Durrheim & Painter 2006:152). I have used reliable measurements to verify the research (See Chapter 5).

Narrative Inquiry has provided, collected and presentation the data, allowing a clear platform for addressing questions of trustworthiness of the data and their interpretation. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) propose that the 'three-dimensional' character of questions, explanations and meanings constructed, provide a way to uncover and reveal issues of meaning, value and integrity. Similarly:

Researchers who desire a deeper opportunity to establish the authenticity and trustworthiness of their findings may move toward formats of research that allow research findings to be presented in the words of the participants in ways that represent the experience of the researcher and allow evidence of the quality of the interaction and relationship to emerge in the research report.

(Kirk & Miller 1985)

It is my belief that the research methods and the findings used to investigate the struggles of the teachers in this research project, were stable.

1.15 Sampling techniques

1.15.1 Purposive sampling

In order to get a valid finding in Qualitative research, it is not necessary to gather data from everyone in a specific community, even if this is possible. The research objectives and the characteristics or diversity of the study population determine which research participants are selected and how this is done. In this research, I used the three sampling methods usually suggested in qualitative research: Purposive sampling, Quota sampling and Snowball sampling (Bernard 1995:5)

I used Purposive sampling to group participants in the research according ‘to a preselected criteria relevant to a particular research question.’ The characteristics of the research participants included age; place of residence; gender; class profession etcetera. These criteria allowed me to focus on the people I thought would be most likely to experience, know about, or have insight into the research topic. In this research, teachers of a specific school (Beaumont Primary) were the sampling group. I believe they were able to help me reach the objectives (above) I set forth in this research.

1.15.2 Snowball sampling

Snowball sampling is a type of purposive sampling, which refers more to a ‘chain effect.’ In this method the research participants with whom contact has already been made, use their social networks to refer the researcher to other potential participants. Snowball sampling is mostly used to identify ‘hidden populations,’ that is, groups that are not easily accessible to the researcher. My initial contact with Beaumont Primary School’s teachers did not involve research. That is something that developed out of my involvement with them as consultant and Pastoral Counsellor. After a while, I identified the teachers as possible participants in the project and obtained permission from the principal and governing body to do the research. I also discovered that in future this sampling technique could possibly be even more applicable to this research: the unpredictable nature of qualitative research meant that teachers from other schools may be included to participate.

Once I had gathered the data, it had to be analysed and interpreted (see chapter 5).

1.16 Data analysis and interpretation

Narrative Analysis seemed to be the logical way to analyse or interpret the stories of the teachers in this research, largely because Discourse analysis and Narrative analysis share some characteristics.

1.16.1 Narrative analysis

Although Discourse analysis and Narrative analysis share some characteristics, in this research I chose to use Narrative analysis as a specialized form of Discourse analysis. In other words, the meaning the research participant's made of their lives were presented in story form. This did not mean, however, that the Narrative Analysis did not have any form, or were just stories.

Narratives or stories have structure, known as the 'story grammar' with a natural form and expression (Henning 2004:122). 'Story grammar' or 'types of language action' in a narrative is governed by 'sets of rules.' For me, the sifting through the stories to find the story grammar was significant for my analysis. I had to recognize the meaning-making units of discourse that appeared in the personal narratives of the teachers' lives. Although I could not avoid interpretation, I had to focus on understanding the meaning which their stories had for them. This meant that I had to turn my back on the 'expert' filter (Freedman & Combs 1996:45).

Furthermore, I looked for the discourses that shaped their stories: that is, those types of language action teachers who struggled used to reflect their social lives and conditions. According to the narrative analyst Catherine Riessman (2002:705):

Personal narratives are, at core, meaning-making units of discourse. They are of interest precisely because narrators interpret the past in stories rather than reproduce the past as it was.

To start off the analysis, I selected any stories with narrative potential. It was not essential that everything came from one interview only: it could come from other stories, or parts of stories, or even talk-in-action. What was important was the story itself or, as Henning (2004:122) calls it, the performance, of the teachers who struggled. As researcher, I looked at how the teacher's stories showed as 'events, linked in sequence, across time and according to a plot' (Morgan 2000:5).

The next step involved the systematic extraction of content from the story elements. I then selected content analysis and searched for 'story quality' and categories and patterns of meaning. For example, understanding and meaning could come for the teachers in this research. Whereas previously their agency had become blurred within the bigger school-life picture and rendered

them helpless, they now came to see themselves as agents in their own real life stories. In trying to see the patterns of the narrative of the teachers who struggled, I constructed categories (networks) and extracted meanings. Following Henning (2004:124) the categories constructed and the meanings extracted ‘... should show regularity, rhythm and cohesion. Its main template for meaning making is the story, and as template it may also be used to filter non-narrative [information].’

1.17 Ethical considerations

The well-being of research participants must be our top priority whenever we conduct research with people. The research question is of secondary importance. This means that if a choice must be made between harming the participant and doing harm to the research, the researcher has to sacrifice the research.

As postmodern researcher, I strove to value and acknowledge the relational meaning of my own subjective experiences in the research with the teachers. It was clear that as the initiator of this research project I could be perceived by the teachers as an ‘expert’ and my ideas, beliefs and intentions could easily impose, manipulate and overrun the study. It was therefore necessary for me to engage with the teachers in ways that were:

- transparent: to establish where power imbalances were and what kind of actions they thought were needed.
- open: to suggestions about the ways the research interactions and support could be done.
- imaginative: to imagine ways of engaging in reflective practices with their interaction with each other.
- curious: to explore and identify oppressive discourses or actions.
- respectful: to ask questions in a way that would avoid imposing my ‘truths’

- collaborative: to enter into a two-way narrative practice of mutuality, where the existing power imbalance between therapist / 'expert' could be addressed
- empowering: for the research participants to have the freedom to perceive what they wanted my role to be in this research: how they elected to include or exclude me as participant.

1.1.7.1 Ethical considerations regarding the sampling process and the focus on female teachers

As indicated in the title of the thesis, the focus of the study shifted from teachers in general to female teachers. The question may arise why male teachers was not included in the research and if this was at the expense of female teachers. At the beginning of the research process the principal of the school where I did the research invited all the teachers of the school to participate. This was done at a meeting in the staffroom (see Appendix A). I noticed that all the male teachers sat together at a table and they did not volunteer to participate in the research. as a result, the focus of the research shifted to female teachers. I realize that this could create the impression that pragmatic considerations played a part in the sampling process. I concur with Kvale's statement that

In searching for the truth of knowledge claims with a pragmatic character, usability of knowledge is primary and the actions that stem from that need to bring desired results – which puts the whole notion squarely in the domain of ethics in research

(2002:327)

In other words, pragmatic consideration and validity has to do with the usability of data and the empowerment of the research participants, in this case the female teachers who volunteered to take part in the research. Kvale (2002:324) argues that 'pragmatic truths' can 'assist us to take

action and produce results'. By giving the female teachers the opportunity to voice themselves in this research, certain important aspects were highlighted which otherwise perhaps may not have been. For example, issues regarding unequal gender balance within the teaching community and physical and emotional struggles around menopause.

Williams (2014) studied the problems associated with gender and teaching. She found that many male and female students' gendered expectations lead them to approach a female teacher as a peer and not as an academic authority figure – male teachers and professors on the other hand were seen as “brilliant”. They are less likely to be critiqued for their dress code and faced less resistance from students. These findings place female teachers in unique ethical dilemmas because as Lee and Johnson-Bailey (2004:62) argues:

[C]lassroom power struggles often mirror those of society in that women have limited power in affecting the teaching setting. So when students perceive us as having less authority and power, to what extent should we share power with them?

The kinds of interactions, frustrations and power struggles female teachers experience, affect them on a daily basis. One may wonder how male teachers contribute to student bias or mainly remain oblivious to the ways in which they benefit as a result. Unfortunately, due to the lack of participation by male teachers in this research I did not have the opportunity to hear their personal experiences regarding gender issues in teaching. The possibility exists that there may be fear to open up to critique and discuss openly issues about gender in teaching because many teachers already face so much scrutiny from society. Further research would definitely be recommended.

1.1.7.2 Ethical framework and procedures

With the focus on human rights and security, I had to follow a clear ethical framework in this research. For example, written permission by participants and the school were obtained. Appendix A and B describe the procedure I followed in this research.

1.18 Chapter layout

In Chapter 1, I have focused on the introduction and background for the research. Descriptions of the context of the research participants as well as the significance of the study have been discussed. This chapter also included the research questions, as well as general descriptions of the research approach. Ethical considerations also formed an important part of Chapter 1.

Chapter 2 will provide further reflection on the philosophical and theoretical ideas that support and braid my praxis as teacher and Narrative Pastoral Counsellor. I will discuss the influences and knowledges that shaped my thinking about the teachers who struggle.

Chapter 3 will consist of a literature review about theories and models that support and braid my praxis as Narrative Pastoral Counsellor to the research participants. I will also discuss the influences that have shaped my thinking about teachers who struggle.

Chapter 4 unpacks the methodology and research design in more detail.

Chapter 5 offers stories, tellings and interview reflections from the research participants (mainly female). The research participants – who were all teachers from Beaumont Primary School – will be introduced, and will share their struggles. We will also focus on analysing, interpreting and giving meaning to the findings in the research.

Chapter 6 will show how the research participants co-constructed a ‘model’ to help them discover ‘agency’ and to stand against dominant discourses in their lives.

Chapter 7 consists of my reflections as researcher participant in this research. Also, since time is frequently an issue for teachers, I suggest that research projects be conducted over longer periods of time. Similarly, because the teaching environment creates a potential power situation, more ways of communicating narratively with teachers should also be explored further.

I will also recommend that Practical Theology find ways to become more visible in our teaching environments, perhaps through forums with teachers and principals or visiting schools on a regular basis and talking to teachers and children.

CHAPTER 2

Educating the mind

without

educating the heart

is no education at all

- Aristotle

2 Introduction – context of the study

This chapter is an attempt to give the reader an understanding of the context of the study and where the research was undertaken.

The failure to transform our education system successfully since the advent of democracy in South Africa (1991) can be seen as a betrayal to future generations and society as a whole (Ramphela 2012:133). John F Kennedy, President of the United States of America before he was assassinated in 1963, once said:

Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education. The human mind is our fundamental resource.³

It is my conviction that we cannot ‘inject’ ethics into our children by teaching or preaching it in schools. Far more powerful are the impressions children learn about everyday experiences and relationships with significant adults in their lives - such as their teachers, sports coaches and parents. That knowledge, together with academic knowledge, nurtures excellence in all areas in their lives. Only then, will we be able to see the results of such actions and the transformation in our youth in our societies and nation as a whole.

I concur with the National Planning Commission’s (NPC) statement (2011:11) that the post-apartheid government has failed to invest in the quality of education by promoting an educational

³ J F Kennedy, *Special message to the Congress on Education, 20/02/1961*, as quoted by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *op cit*, p103.

and training system which is based on low expectations of what our children can achieve, both ethically as well as in their relational skills.

In addition, many studies have shown that schools' performances or underperformances are linked to the role that teachers play. 'The way teachers are' in the classroom - if they are feeling sick, going through a divorce, experiencing menopause or other health challenges - can influence the quality of schooling. This raises the question: if teachers know how the quality of their lives can influence the children they are working with, how do they motivate themselves and their learners to use their restricted/unrestricted resources every day?

Experience worldwide points to the capacity of children to rise to the expectations set for them in an environment that encourages and rewards effort and innovation. Even in our country, 600 of the total of more than 26 000 public schools consistently outperform their peers to produce close to 100% pass rates and higher maths and science outcomes. The key difference between these 600 high-performing schools and the rest is the quality of leadership and teaching, with leadership ensuring discipline in the classroom and in the conduct of both teachers and learners.

(Ramphele 2012:137)

The conclusion is inevitable: we have to go back to the drawing board - or, in the case of education, to the black board - and focus on the vision we have as a society. Do we want South Africa to be a democracy in which all people rise to the responsibility of finding ways to improve the quality of our teachers' lives? The result hopefully will be a national system of values that will improve all levels of children's development path, so that they can feel loved, valued and respected and grow up into young people 'with the capabilities and capacities to fulfil the roles of citizenship and responsible adulthood' (Ramphele 2012:142).

In the next section I will focus on my understanding of what teaching is. I will then introduce the teachers in this research project, discuss research studies and reflect on my personal resonance with the research about the struggles facing teachers today.

2.1 What is teaching?

‘Teaching in essence consists of initiating the young into a worthwhile way of seeing the world, of experiencing it, of relating to others in a more human and understanding way’ (Pring 2001:106). In their journey to find meaning, learners will not necessarily arrive at an ‘outcome’ or predetermined ‘product’, because in their quest to make sense of different subjects, they will encounter the messiness of life:

... [in] schools, opportunities ought to be opened for learners to use their imagination, construct meaning, and explore. When a teacher’s role is limited to the realm of explanation, verification and specific outcomes he or she seldom reaches the deeper spiritual level of teaching, namely, that of understanding, wisdom and meaning. This can often lead to teachers not experiencing their work in a wider context and to the realisation that they are not true to their calling (De Klerk-Luttig 2008:512).

2.1.1 Teaching in Post-Apartheid South Africa

I (the researcher) am a teacher, who have attended and worked in a variety of schools in South Africa for about twenty years. These schools vary from pre-primary schools, and primary schools to a juvenile detention school (Faure Youth Centre in Eersterivier, Cape Town). As I reflect on the South African education system since 1994, it would seem that teaching is no longer regarded as a valued profession, despite the fact that South Africa has one of the highest rates of government expenditure in education in the world (Ramphela 2012). Racism, violence, anti-social behavior, learner boycotts, educator strikes and shortage of skilled personnel trouble our education. Moreover, ‘[t]he failure to transform socio-economic relations inherited from the apartheid state has made freedom [and education] an empty dream for the majority of South Africans’ (Ramphela 2012:117). I believe everyone can sense and hear that there is a crisis in the teaching profession in South Africa. During a teachers’ indaba hosted by the Department of Basic Education in Pretoria in 2015, Enoch Rabtopi said that ‘teachers are taking sick leave a lot, indicating that their general well-being was not good’ (*Sowetan* 2015:2). Henry Hendricks (2015), the executive director of National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa, commented in an article in the *Sowetan* newspaper that ‘the burden of teachers carried impacted negatively on their mental health.’ He is of the opinion that nine out of ten teachers over the age

of thirty-five were on hypertension medication while others didn't even know they had hypertension (*Sowetan* 2015:2).

Over the years, and also during this research project, I have watched and witnessed hierarchical interactions between administrators and teachers and have listened to teachers talk about their jobs. What I heard troubled me: it portrayed teachers who talked about resigning; how they regarded teaching as highly stressful; how they experienced burnout;⁴ and feared eventual ill-health or death. Osher et al (2007:1263-1278) argues that when the classroom climate deteriorates, it triggers a “burnout cascade” in the teacher. The teacher then becomes exhausted as he/she tries to cope.

..., burnout takes a serious toll on teachers, students, schools, districts and communities. Burned-out teachers and the learning environments they create can have harmful effects on students, especially those who are at risk of mental and health problems

Jennings & Greenberg (2009:492)

Teachers know that something is not right. My conversations with them over the years often touched raw nerves and unmasked an anger that lay just below the surface. They felt that few people respected them; few valued their knowledge or ‘voice’; few understood their difficulties in our current educational process. They felt that the cumulative daily experiences of negativity together with taxing work related experiences was what caused some of their emotional exhaustion. It was during one such intense conversation with teachers from Beaumont Primary School in Somerset West that I asked some of them whether they would like to become involved in this research study. Chapter 5 will highlight the outcome of my conversations with the teachers and give more insight into some of the problems facing us.

I attempted to engage with the teachers – taking care neither to patronize nor denigrate them – and invited them to participate in finding helpful ways to make sense of their personal and

⁴ ‘Burnout’ is regarded as a multidimensional phenomenon that includes physical, emotional and psychological exhaustion (Koslowski 1998:85; Motseke 1998:76; Van der Linde, Van der Westhuizen & Wissing 1999:192)

professional lives. These ideas revolved notions of social justice, racial, gender and class discourses.

2.2 An overview of teaching in South Africa

The history of education in South Africa has had a huge influence on where we are today. We should never just discard or ignore our past; rather, our history can provide a rich source for us to learn from our mistakes. Ramphele (2012:133) highlights one of the major mistakes: ‘The monumental failure to successfully transform our education system undermines any effort to promote a more equitable society.’ It is therefore appropriate to take a step back and look at what education looked like for most South Africans during the Apartheid era.

2.2.1 A day South African education will never forget

Violently etched into the South African collective consciousness is 16 June 1976. Although now commemorated as an official holiday – Youth Day - this day honors the deaths of many Soweto school children on a day that changed the education course of the country’s history. Before 1954, many Blacks either did not go to school or were educated in missionary schools. Nelson Mandela and many other political activists had attended mission schools. But the introduction of the Bantu Education act in 1953 (overcomingapartheid.msu.edu) by the then, Minister of Native Affairs, Dr Hendrik Verwoerd, changed the autonomy that these schools had. The act proposed the creation of a separate and unequal system for black education, instead of a single public school system for all the children in South Africa. It brought African education under the government’s control and extended apartheid into black schools. The result was that existing schools became overcrowded – with classes of 60 children or more –and the quality of education declined. Schools were poorly equipped and many children dropped out of school. In 1976, the apartheid government made Afrikaans and English (50/50) compulsory as medium of instruction in all schools. In many black schools, pupils, teachers and principals opposed the ruling because teachers were ill-equipped to teach in a language that was mostly a third language for many learners. When school reopened in January 1976, most white schools went about their business, but in the black schools, people were unhappy and tensions began to mount over the following months. Thietsi Mashinini, who was known as an extremely powerful speaker, suggested to a gathering crowd

that learners and teachers should gather for a mass demonstration on 16 June. By 10h30 on 16 June, 5000 learners had gathered in the township of Soweto, outside Johannesburg, from where they planned to march in demonstration against the Bantu education act. They gathered at their schools and over 15 000 learners between ages ten and twenty marched to the offices of the Transvaal Department of Education in Booyens, Johannesburg. An unarmed crowd of schoolchildren marched towards Orlando soccer stadium where a peaceful rally had been planned. On route to the stadium, police stopped the crowd and tried to turn them back, but they were unsuccessful and started shooting teargas as warning shots. But then the police fired directly into the crowd and learners responded by throwing stones. Hector Pieterse was fatally wounded and the photograph of a dying Pieterse became the symbol around the world for the Soweto uprising and the brutality of apartheid. Many more learners were killed and the uprising escalated to other townships. By 18 June 1976, all schools in Soweto and Alexandra had been closed (Davie 2015). Since that time, education and the whole of South Africa has undergone drastic changes.

Tutu argues that human beings are not defined by oppression and suffering; they are made for something different.

Even when they were stamped over (Tutu 2004:117), Tutu's Rainbow people are made for freedom:

It is when people decide to be free, once they have made up their minds to that, there is nothing that will stop them.

(2004:368)

2.2.2 Tell my people that I love them

The Centre for Education Policy Development has established the Solomon Mahlangu Memorial Lecture to honor the memory and spirit of Mahlangu. Solomon Mahlangu was a young liberation movement activist who left South Africa after the June 1976 Soweto uprising. When he later returned to South Africa, however, he was executed for a crime he did not commit. His final words before execution were:

My blood will nourish the tree that will bear the fruits of freedom. Tell my people that I love them, and that they must continue to struggle.

(Ramphela 2012:1)

Since his death, education initiatives have been established such as the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania and the Solomon Mahlangu Trust, with its focus on youth development.

Delivering the sixth Solomon Mahlangu Memorial Lecture, Ramphela uses Mahlangu's dying words to ask how we can tolerate an education system today that, in some respects, is worse than the 'gutter education' Mahlangu rejected in 1976 and which he and others died fighting for:

Could we confidently look Solomon Mahlangu in the eye and tell him that 'we love our people and are good stewards of the freedom he fought and died for? ... One can only conclude that we are a wounded people who have lost confidence in ourselves and our children's capacity to excel and build a better future in the competitive global knowledge economy of which we are part.

(Ramphela 2012:8)

2.2.3 The teaching situation today

Teachers in South Africa today are facing a workplace inundated by a variety of factors that impinge on their effectiveness in the classroom (see statistics in section 1.2.2). After establishing a democratic dispensation, the new government's first task was to transform the education system. This meant that inclusive education⁵ 'became the preferred choice, thereby becoming a dominant issue within education and across a range of national contexts'.

Despite the success of inclusive education in countries such as Australia (Frolin et al 1996) and Great Britain (Wearmouth, Edwards & Richmond 2000), research by Engelbrech et al (2001) indicates that teachers' experience in South Africa were not so positive. This is largely because

⁵ Inclusive education, within the South African context, involves the rectifying of inequalities resulting from apartheid and economic deprivation which had a significant impact on the provision of education for learners traditionally seen as having special needs. It involves the creation of a learning environment that promotes the full personal, academic and professional development of all learners, irrespective of race, gender, disability, religion, culture, sexual preference, learning styles and language (Frolin, Douglas & Hattie 1996; National Department of Education 2001).

general and special education programs in teacher education have not provided teachers with the adequate training or experience to develop the skills necessary to handle diversity. Teachers experienced stress due to the changes in the structure of teaching (Hayward 1994:3-20). They not only had to adapt to wide-ranging political changes in the country, but also to the new realities in education. In addition, rapid changes in the world as a result of globalization and the technological revolution over the past twenty years have placed even more stress on how teachers perceive and experience their own competence and ability to keep up to date in areas of technological expertise (Fimian & Santoro 1983:225-336; Terry 1997).

Because teaching involves the responsibility and caring for other people (especially children), job satisfaction and emotional availability can create potential stress and influence the quality of teachers' lives. Gallen, Karlenzig and Tamney (1995:4) explored the complexity and diversity of teachers' work and linked workload and stress to the demands that are placed on teachers.

Internal attributions such as 'must' and 'need' was found to be used in the vocabulary of teachers when they had to define what being 'a good teacher' meant. The endorsement of such beliefs are widespread. This implies that teachers blame themselves for difficulties thereby making them even more vulnerable to stress (Corney 1998:2820; Bibou-Nakou, Stogiannidou & Kiosseoglou 1999:209-217).

2.2.4 An overview of the teachers in the study – the paradox of privilege

Beaumont Primary School is a co-educational, parallel medium school in Somerset West (Western Cape) which caters for learners from Grade R to Grade 7. The school has approximately forty teachers and about 1200 learners. The teachers teach learners from a multi-cultural middle-class community with concerned, educated and involved parents who have high expectations for their children.

Regardless of how successful these learners look on the outside, regardless of the clothes they wear, the cars their parents drive, or the teams they play in, it would seem that some of them are not navigating life successfully. This goes for some of the teachers too. Although it may be tempting to attribute their struggles to privilege or historical advantages, it would be a mistake, since many teachers and learners across the economic spectrum find themselves stumbling through life. I had assumed that money would help safeguard the emotional health of our

teachers and learners, but as Ramphele (2012:76) points out, pressures and external measures of success paradoxically contributed to an epidemic of narcissism and isolation:

While we need to celebrate the growth of middle class and upper class, especially the entry of young black professionals and business people – we need to be mindful that we are caught up in a culture in which “having” is more important than ‘being.’

Many studies suggest that social pain⁶ has a greater impact on suffering than physical pain. As Steinbeck (as quoted in Ramphele 2012:162) puts it ‘A sad soul can kill you quicker than a germ.’

Initially I invited all the teachers to participate in the research project. In the end only ten volunteered and their stories are written up in this research report. Boyed in Groenewald (2004:11-12) regards two to ten participants in research as sufficient.

The overview of teaching in South Africa has highlighted that we have to take a closer look at the well-being of our teachers.

2.3 Well-being of teachers

Lartey (2003:141) defines the term well-being in the following way:

- Physical well-being: which includes biology and sickness that might be related to stress or trauma
- Psychological well-being: involves the conscious and unconscious processes and perceptions
- Spiritual well-being: which points to our relationship with God, with ourselves and others

Jennings & Greenberg (2009:491-525) suggests that the following point is also important to consider in the well-being of teachers:

⁶ Social pain is defined by Ramphele (2012:163) as ‘Human connectedness [which] is such that when one of us is abused, we will feel the pain. We may deny this, but it will catch up with us sooner or later. We may dull the pain through substance abuse or putting as much distance as possible between us and the abused, but we cannot erase the impact of social pain – part of us will always hurt and cry out for healing.’

- Social-Emotional well-being which involves the resources teachers have to navigate social and emotional well-being in the working context

Next, I will describe the four points in more detail.

2.3.1 Physical well-being of teachers

Research done by the National Department of Education (2001) shows that educators' absenteeism for more than ten days at a time was highest among teachers with serious illnesses such as Tuberculosis, HIV, high blood pressure, cancer, alcoholism, diabetes, anemia, heart and lung diseases.

According to the 2001 report, the health status of educators is poorer than the general population, considering that 10, 6% had been hospitalized in the twelve month period prior to the survey. This is an average of 7% higher than the general population. The diagnoses and causes showed stress as a major contributor to the illnesses.

2.3.2 Psychological well-being of teachers

Ryff (1989:1069-1081) defines psychological well-being as a 'multidimensional construct that comprises various social, psychological and physiological aspects, which may be interrelated and which may influence each other.' These dimensions include: personal growth; autonomy; environmental mastery; self-acceptance; purpose in life; and personal relationships. The above-mentioned constructs of psychological well-being reflect the access people have to cope with psychological stress in life.

Themba Ndhlovu, spokesman for the South African Council of Educators (SACE), says in an article in the *Sowetan* newspaper that research indicates that teachers' (psychological) stress is becoming endemic. He suggests that: 'nine out of ten teachers are on antidepressants because working conditions are depressing' (*Sowetan* 2015:2). Although the context of each teacher has to be considered and not compared, in this research, I found at least two teachers (female) who were on antidepressants, sleeping pills and medication to relax.

The reaction to psychological stress was first described in 1936 and was named the General Adaptive Syndrome (GAS), which shows three distinct stages (Seyle 1974; 1980):

1. The alarm reaction: the reaction to the immediate psycho-physiological shock. During this period hormones are secreted from the endocrine glands which causes increased heart rate and high blood pressure, tense muscles and a decrease in maintenance functions
2. The resistance stage: characterized by an adaption response of the body that is called 'fight' or 'flight' response. If the stress continues, the body will preserve and defend itself, thereby impeding any possibility of rest and repair.
3. The exhaustion stage: when there is resistance to a continued stressor, energy required for adaptation becomes depleted, individual performance plummets and illness develops. In the final stage of exhaustion, collapse or death occurs. Sad to say, I found most of the above with the teachers I talked with (see Chapter 5), but most of them showed signs of the exhaustion stage.

2.3.3 Spiritual well-being of teachers

When people are exhausted they do not ask the spiritual questions such as 'Who am I' and 'Does my life have meaning and purpose?' They tend to turn to survival mode where they exist but do not live with zeal, hope, purpose and meaning.

(De Klerk-Luttig 2008)

Although many of the teachers who were involved in this research project felt vulnerable, disempowered, isolated, negative and that there was little space for spiritual well-being in their lives, spirituality - or faith as some preferred to call it - was the golden thread that lit the way for them in the darkness of despair.

Many people nowadays see a good life as defined by outward appearances rather than the inner well-being of a person. This is very true for our teachers; their role frequently situates them in the limelight but they are criticized and talked about behind their backs. It would seem that we are socially constructed to behave in such a ways:

From the moment we begin school we are trained to look outward rather than inward, to focus on facts and practical problems in the external world...virtually nothing in western

education encourages us to reflect on ourselves, on our inner lives and motives.
(Zohar & Marshall 2001:285)

In teaching, we tend to put policies and systems in place to ‘fix’ problems, because ‘it is far easier to spend your life manipulating an institution than dealing with your own soul’ (Palmer 1994:29).

If we are to open up the spiritual dimension of education, we must understand that spiritual questions do not have answers in the way math do. When people ask these deep questions, they do not want fixes or formulas but compassion and companionship on the demanding journey called life.

(Palmer 1999b:8)

De Klerk-Luttig (2008:513) suggests that when one considers the criteria for spirituality – including experiences of connectedness, meaning, ultimate meaning and wholeness - it is safe to postulate that ‘South African schools are not hospitable environments for teacher’s spirituality.’

2.3.4 Social-Emotional well-being of teachers

Multiple research have shown that a learner’s learning context is largely shaped by the teacher (Eccles & Roeser 1999). Therefore it can be assessed that

Socially and emotionally competent teachers set the tone of the classroom by developing supportive and encouraging relationships with their students, designing lessons that build on student strengths and abilities, establishing and implementing behavioral guidelines through conflict situations, encouraging cooperation among students, and acting as role model for respectful and appropriate communication and exhibition of prosocial behavior

Jennings & Greenberg (2009:492)

However, when teachers lack the resources to navigate social and emotional well-being within their working context, learners show lower levels of motivation and task performance (Marzano, Marzano & Pickring 2003). Jennings and Greenberg (2009:492) argues that socially emotionally competent teachers show certain characteristics: high self-awareness shows their recognition of

emotions, emotional patterns and tendencies as well as their knowledge to know how to generate and use emotions to motivate themselves and their learners. Importantly, they have the ability to realistically understand their capabilities and recognize their emotional strengths and weaknesses. An important characteristic social-emotional teachers have is their ability to manage their behavior in challenging situations through regulating their own emotions in healthy ways that facilitate positive outcomes without compromising their health.

It would appear that current educational systems assume that teachers have the requisite to create an environment that can support their well-being. Little or no attention is being paid to training teachers in how to form supportive and collaborative relationships with sometimes difficult and demanding parents, administrators and colleagues and handling of student conflict and disruptive behavior. Because the well-being of teachers is context dependent, especially in South Africa where we have a big gap between urban and rural schools, one teacher may function well in one context but need training and support to adapt to another. When teacher's well-being is challenged, they experience stress and distress. Next I will discuss the impact of stress and distress on teachers.

2.4 The impact of stress and distress on teachers

Today's teachers face ever-increasing demands – from illiterate children to serious behavior problems as early as preschool (Gilliam 2005). According to De Jesus and Conboy (2001:131), teachers experience higher levels of stress than people in other professions. Research done by Engelbrecht and Eloff (2001); Ngidi and Sibaya (2002); and Olivier and Venter (2003) indicate that teachers are challenged by various stressors including: role conflict; unsatisfactory working conditions; threats of various kinds; learner misbehavior; inadequate compensation; administrative pressure; and time management. Over time, high levels of distress may lead to burnout (see 2.1.1) and a downward spiral of deteriorating teacher performance (Osher et al 2007). Research done by Van Zyl and Petersen (1999:74) and Jonas (2001:26), found that since the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994, the working environment for teachers has faced major changes many of which have triggered the experience of stress among teachers.

Slabbert (2001:298) suggests that the ‘imposed educational changes since 1994 were too ambitious and far-reaching for teachers to cope with.’

According to Ngidi and Sabaya (2002:8) and Van Zyl and Pietersen (1999: 74), the working conditions for two groups of teachers in particular – black teachers and Afrikaans-speaking female teachers - have not been favorable since 1994. Black teachers have been faced with overcrowding in classrooms together with the lack of resources and facilities due largely to disparities in education resulting from apartheid policies. Afrikaans-speaking female teachers - in particular Afrikaans-speaking women in Afrikaans-medium schools - suffer from extremely high levels of stress. Van der Linde et al. (1999:192-197) conducted a study with 560 female teachers in an attempt to determine the occurrence of burnout among female teachers. The Afrikaans-speaking women experienced as traumatic the political and social changes post 1994; larger learner to teacher ratios; larger classes; work overload; and general uncertainties arising from a society in transition. It would seem that because the majority of female teachers are over the age of forty years, other factors - such as illness and menopause discourses - have also had a significant influence on their well-being. I will elaborate this point in further detail in Chapter 5 and 6. The evidence/research supports the need for specialized development of models that promote teacher’s well-being in order for them to maximize their capacity to function as optimal teachers.

There are no quick fixes for the struggles facing our teachers. The research on teacher stress and distress has thus far been primary exploratory. There are, however, a few suggestions to consider when attempting to address this urgent need.

2.5 No quick-fix: creating well-being spaces for teachers

Although De Klerk-Luttig (2008:513-514) confirms that there are no quick-fix solutions for teachers in South Africa, she does suggest an approach – the creation of well-being spaces – which I believe could be very helpful. These well-being spaces - created for teachers and

incorporated into their working lives – could become places where they can find wholeness/well-being physically, psychologically and spiritually. In such spaces:

1. Teachers should be helped to see and experience a connection between the vision, mission and values of the school they teach at and their own vision, mission and values. ‘When this happens, teaching can be experienced as a vocation or calling, and their work as meaningful’ (2008: 513).
2. The school environment should place emphasis on ‘being’ functions and on character and not only on teachers’ ‘doing’ functions. The school environment should be such that it encourages teachers and learners to become the best human beings they can be, without constantly being ‘measured, monitored’ and ‘appraised’ for their ‘productivity’ and what they ‘do’ (2008: 513).
3. The business/market orientated language of teaching should be changed to meaningful concepts such as meaning making; wholeness; vocation and vision, ‘so that these concepts and their underlying values are not dismissed as obscure, irrelevant, or insubstantial’ (2008:513).
4. The status of teaching in South Africa as vocation, should be elevated to a professional status, just as in countries such as Canada, Australia and Finland. Similarly, teachers’ development and courses should be viewed as investment in professional development and not just a crash course. This can help teachers find greater meaning in what they do.
5. Teachers must feel safe enough to talk freely about the deepest questions of their lives. They should have the opportunity to share and interpret stories, not only about the curriculum or the budget, but also stories about the meaning of their lives. ‘This will give them a chance to experience both meaning and membership’ (2008:514).
6. Emphasis should be placed on nurturing awareness and not just on productivity at all costs: ‘Mindfulness should be developed in teachers so that they can bring greater awareness to everything that happens at school, be more present in the moment and more aware of the dynamics of relationships. Teachers are engaged in the service of others and this dedication to welfare of others creates space for spirituality’ (2008:514).

2.6 Learning as ‘making a world’ versus Learning as ‘knowing a world’

I am sometimes overwhelmed by how much we still have to do to create a ‘better’ education for children in South Africa. Bruffee’s (1993:72-73) suggestion - that conversations between teachers and students can ‘create’ knowledge – could provide a timely bulwark against despair (see also 3.3.1). Bruffee draws a useful distinction between the difference between how the individual conceives knowledge and how knowledge is conceived by a social constructionist view (see also 3.3) in teaching:

Traditionally, [teachers] believe that...their job is to ‘reach’ students and fill their minds with what they believe fills their own. They ask themselves questions such as: what’s going on inside my student’s heads? How can I get in there and change what’s going on? What’s the best way to impact to them what I know?

(1993:72)

In contrast, a social constructionist understands teaching differs in that:

Instead of thinking about what to put into their students’ minds and how to put it there, [teachers should] think of teaching as helping students converse with increasing facility in the language of the communities they want to join, and they [should] think about doing that as creating social conditions in which students can become re-accultured into those communities.

Bruffee (1993:73)

Teachers, learners and parents expect that the education system should assess the learners’ individual abilities. This makes developing cognitive abilities, such as comprehension and expansion, the focus. Similarly, learning spaces are also designed to facilitate individual learning and evaluation. We mostly see learners seated separately at their individual desks and facing the same direction - towards the teacher. Holtzman (1997:5-6) challenges the conventional teaching model in the following way:

...A model of human understanding that is based on knowledge, that is, on knowing x about y – is education’s chief structural defect. Like other societal institutions in Western culture, schools are committed to the philosophical position that human life and growth require some way of knowing the world. This belief, thousands of years old, has rarely been challenged; indeed, it is taken to be as ‘natural’...Might it be that centuries-old philosophical biases about what it means to understand, to mean, to learn – to be human – have as much to do with how schools run as do politics, economics, as do pedagogy? Might it be that the ‘overidentification’ of learning and teaching with the production,

dissemination, and construction of knowledge is at the root of school failure, teacher discontent, and school management.

Holtzman's argument hints of moving away from 'knowing what is' towards 'embodied activities of making what is.' This refers to more than verbal and nonverbal activities of interaction. 'It is about those bodily experiences that also shape and are shaped by our relations with others' (McNamee 2007:316). I share Holtzman's view: refiguring teaching and learning into collaborative conversations might well open up new forms of practice.

2.6.1 Re-meaning teaching: from teaching technique to teaching conversation

Social Construction discourse assumes that meaning is not private or locked away inside an individual (Gergen 2001; McNamee & Gergen 1999) but meaning emerges in the joint activities of people in relationship. When we refigure teaching as relational and not private we begin to attend to different features of teaching. Teaching as a private venture implies that some (i.e. teachers) have more knowledge than others (i.e. learners) who have less knowledge and that some teaching techniques are more successful than others. But if we shift our attention towards the process of teaching as well as the teaching 'relationship,' we become less focused on the 'proper' or 'best' way to teach information. Our focus is centered instead on the multiple ways in which teaching can take place. We encourage learners to engage as participants in the immediate moment and welcome the wide array of common and diverse voices, relations, communities and experiences that each person brings to the learning environment.

I reflected on my own experience of the difference between 'teaching as technique' and 'teaching as conversation.' When some of the teachers at Rooha pre-primary, the school that I started, came to me hopeless, tired and complaining that the learners were 'difficult' or were not in the mood to learn that day, I struggled to find the 'correct academic' answers to their struggles. But one day I decided to tell them to forget everything about the academic discourse and just love the children. I remember the teachers' surprise - but also their delight - when they saw that such an approach created a 'freedom' for them to explore the ways of loving the learners in difficult times. The outcome was liberating and energizing: each teacher created her own way of loving and teaching, and the learners responded by loving and learning in their own ways. In this way everyone became co-creators of a loving space in difficult times.

2.6.2 Re-meaning teaching: from teaching individuals to teaching relationships

What are we doing differently when we move from teaching individuals to teaching relationships? The relational metaphor places our attention on conversations – an effort of understanding language as a necessary device to construct reality – not as a device used to represent reality. Gergen (1994) argues that language is something we ‘do’ together – that we ‘make’ realities. Thus, meaning-making is established by the participation in language. There is a growing body of evidence that teacher-student relationships play an important role in the classroom as well as the whole school (Osher et al 2007).

This approach suggests a markedly different position for the teacher than the individualistic approaches from which many teachers currently draw. It is my opinion that when teachers teach relationally, the expertise of the teacher shifts from being a transmitter of knowledge to the ability to create and facilitate the dialogue in a way that keeps the conversation open and going forward. In many ways, this shift towards a more facilitative position echoes the shift in the therapist’s position that characterizes the Narrative approach. Anderson (1997:95) suggests that:

A therapist brings expertise in the area of process: a therapist is the expert in engaging and participating with a client in a dialogical process of first-person story-telling.... A facilitative position promotes a process that keeps all voices in motion and contributing.

McNamee (2007:326) provides some useful suggestions on how learners and teachers can engage together and coordinate their many voices, realities and ways of knowing.

2.6.2.1 Avoid abstract principles

Since traditional education tends to operate on the principle that learners are there to ‘gain knowledge,’ and not as active participants in the meaning making process, teachers tend to privilege abstractions which they give to learners as a point of first interaction in the teaching context. McNamee proposes privileging what the learners bring to the education environment instead thereby encouraging collaborative conversations. For example, she first asks learners to think on their own about a difficulty they experience. She then asks them to think about how they

would teach someone else to act as if he or she had this difficulty. The learners then get together into small groups where they have to teach each other. When the groups reconvene, each learner is given the opportunity to reflect on the difficulties they experienced in teaching each other. Following Heidegger (1968:15), it would seem that one only really learns when one has to teach:

Teaching is more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for is this: to let learn. The real teacher, in fact, lets nothing be learned than – learning. His conduct, therefore, often produces the impression that we properly learn nothing from him, if by ‘learning’ we now suddenly understand merely the procurement of useful information. The teacher is ahead of his apprentices in this alone, that he has still far more to learn than they – he has to learn to let them learn. The teacher must be capable of being more teachable than the apprentices.

This intentional shift away from transmitting ‘abstract principles’ to encouraging ‘collaboration’ means that problems and realities are brought to life in an engagement between learners and teachers and not just left ‘inside’ the learner:

Whatever sense we have of how things stand with someone else’s inner life, we gain it through their expressions, not through some magical intrusion into their consciousness. It’s all a matter of scratching surfaces.

(Geertz 1986:373)

Thus the performance of any quality or state of being is always responsive to others (McNamee 2007:327).

2.6.2.2 Privileging Narrative

Stories create knowledge thus stories told by teachers and learners in an educational setting make them a significant part of the teaching and learning conversation. The lessons that emerge within stories are not separated into some set of abstractions, but are embedded in the activities of those present in the conversation. ‘When we begin with...stories, we create a space where different conversations and different forms of learning can take place’ (Anderson 1997:328). We invite others into our stories, to ask questions, to agree and disagree. In this way, learners can engage in their education by realizing that they have the conversational resources to make academic material familiar. By giving voice to their stories, both lived and imagined, the stories become a significant part of learning:

We often forget that we...carry other people's voices around with us and that these voices become part of who we are, part of our thoughts and actions.

(Anderson 1997:235)

In the teaching context, there are many examples of the narrative metaphor and conversations. For example, the stories that teachers use in the early development phase of young children (that is pre-primary and primary school). My experiences as a Pastoral Counsellor with young children and at Rooha pre-primary, the school I started in Somerset West, enabled me to appreciate the significance of narratives or stories in the making of meaning. The pre-primary school context gave me a practical understanding of the extent to which the negotiations of meaning is both a personal and a social achievement. Through play and storytelling activities, I saw the fuller implications and meanings taking shape in the young children's lives as well as in my own life. White (2000:10) suggests that:

In children's lives, the negotiation of meaning is a highly visible achievement, one that is often hard-won. For young children there is so much about the world that is novel, so many new experiences to be negotiated, so many gaps to be filled in their understandings of life. Nowhere is recourse to narrative structures in achieving all of this more manifestly apparent than it is in children's efforts to understand their experiences of life. Nowhere are the social processes of the negotiation of meaning more conspicuous than in children's culture. And it is in children's acts of living that the life-shaping implications of particular meaning is so evident.

My work with children - as Pastoral Counsellor, teacher and mother – has shaped my practice in significant ways. Their contributions have helped me to join with older children, such as the adolescents at Faure Youth Centre (a correctional facility for young delinquents) when I was doing my Master's degree and thereafter, adults (teachers in this research project), who believed that their struggles were forever set in cement.

2.6.2.3 Fostering community

Schools are communities where people's identities are storied. This may seem insignificant but staff rooms, for example, are informal but powerful social and public settings where identity conclusions about learners, parents and colleagues are shared and sustained. Teacher's opinions are told and retold as 'truths' in the form of documents or 'reports' outside the school context. It

is in such a context that problem stories can begin to dominate and influence people's lives and, in the process, marginalize all the other narratives. The dominant problem story can prevent people from developing a preferred sense of who they are and how they want to live their lives. The preferred story can become unacknowledged and become invisible, even to themselves (White 2000).

Sharing personal narratives can foster the development of relational narratives which in turn forms a community within a group. When we talk about learning in this way, we begin to open up the notion of 'success': instead of 'success' being confined to an individual mastering a topic a single way, 'success' now widens to include the possibility of all participants mastering a topic differently.

2.6.2.4 Blurring the boundaries between classroom and 'Life'

When a community of teachers and learners are 'allowed' to tell their personal narratives, these relational resources provide opportunities to dissolve the boundary between the classroom setting and their lives. In this way, teachers and learners take the classroom conversations beyond the walls of the school and extend them to their families, friends and all those they encounter. They can do so because the material has been made 'familiar' to them, not through abstract concepts and theories, but by practical theories and concepts (McNamee 2007:329). In this way, the course material creates the world rather than represent the world. The process of blurring the boundaries between the classroom and life allows teachers and learners to illustrate how educational material has meaning beyond the classroom. It also initiates a 'different' conversation and a different 'relationship' between teachers and learners:

It shifts teaching and learning from a focus on [a] method for conveying knowledge to a process that is attentive to the ways in which participants create meaning together. It allows us to celebrate our collaborative activities. As we engage with each other, we not only create a sense of 'who' we are but also a sense of 'what' is valued. We create – we perform 'together' – a world wherein a lived reality can emerge.

(McNamee2007:334)

We create new ways of 'doing teaching together', not only in the classroom, but also in the world beyond the school walls.

2.7 Teachers as researchers

Given the crisis management and survival mode in which teachers find themselves in South Africa today, is the suggestion that more time and resources be delegated to conversation and reflection in the classroom simply impractical and devoid of common sense? Is it futile to hold on to such a notion, and the possibility of its implementation remote? For many it is. Thus, the status quo is maintained, thereby sustaining the endless cycle of underdevelopment, low morale and teachers struggling to react to their daily challenges and day-to-day emergencies.

Moreover, teachers seem to be disqualified from conducting their own research on ways to improve their situation. Even though teachers are in school every day and are engaged in personal relationships with learners, they are seen as simply incapable of conducting research into their own situation. Research and theory building are seen as the domain of the academic experts, whereas teachers are expected to stick to their school tasks:

Because of the asymmetrical power relationships teachers are excluded from inquiring into how those who employ, supervise, judge, and administrate them make their policies...School leaders fail to see educational problems as teachers see them, resulting in policies far removed from the daily world of teaching and learning.

(Kincheloe 1991:13)

Once teachers are excluded from the research – and this task given to academic experts – research loses its laboratory function:

...it is co-opted as a mechanism of domination, as a manifestation of the low esteem in which teachers are held. A vicious circle, a tornado of bad work thus develops...outside reforms of education emerge from an ungrounded knowledge base; and as such reforms are imposed, teachers are further disenfranchised and alienated.

(Kincheloe 1991:13)

Schools are unique socio-cultural systems marked by complexities rarely recognized by external agents (Kincheloe 1991:14). Kincheloe argues that small changes in the individual classroom made by critical teacher researchers, may bring about far more authentic educational reform than the grandiose policies formulated by state or national agencies.

But, as Foucault (1980) repeatedly points out, teaching consists of a large and heterogeneous group in which teachers are not necessarily educated to take this step. ‘Teachers with weak academic and pedagogical backgrounds must, out of necessity, defer to the judgements of their administrators, the certified experts’ (Kincheloe 1991:15). Even when teachers take up research, few ever recognize the relationship between their research and their lives as teachers, especially because most research courses involves surveys of quantitative, statistical techniques of data analysis. Evidence has shown that if students are not introduced to the role of the teachers as researcher during their initial training, chances are that they will never be involved as researchers.

Kincheloe (1991:15) argues that if teachers as research is to produce reflective, ethical practices and resist demoralizing of the teaching profession, colleges and universities of education will need to connect teachers’ ‘ways-of-knowing’ to research networks such as theological, political and social discourses.

As teachers come to understand how they themselves and their students construct understandings of the educational process, they can then move themselves into new frontiers of thinking and, in turn, lead their students into unknown territory. When seen in this way, teacher research would revolutionize the traditional concepts of staff development, making it a democratic, teacher-directed activity rather than a manifestation of the hierarchical workplace (Kincheloe 1991:17). When teachers pass on such knowledge and skills to students and community members, they will be providing the tools that will allow them to become leaders rather than simply struggling managers and civil servants.

2.8 Teachers as (Pastoral) Counsellors

Teachers are trained to support learners on their academic life journeys in such a way that it enables each learner to become an intellectually reflective person; ‘a person en route to a lifetime of meaningful work, a good citizen, a caring individual, with ethical practices, all in all, a healthy person’ (Turning Points 1989, cited in Knowles & Brown 2000:49). Education is thus involved in the formation of the whole person so as to promote the common good of society. As we have seen from the research, however, the role of teachers has become even more complex and

challenging in South Africa since 1994. The days in which teachers could use corporal punishment are past. Learners are now encouraged to question and actively seek the ‘truth’ in the world instead. Similarly, teachers no longer teach from an authoritarian position but are positioned as facilitators in the learner’s journey.

From a Christian perspective, teachers have an added challenge to make a positive contribution to a learner’s personal redemption and salvation and are often called to be counsellors and provide pastoral care. Anecdotal evidence in my conversations with teachers involved in this research project will be discussed in later chapters. King (1999:5) argues that ‘every teacher is a counsellor’ because the teacher has intimate knowledge of his or her learner. During my Master’s degree practicum at Faure Youth Centre, I realized that I did not know the learners as well as I thought I did. I needed to be more attentive to who they were and what they needed as opposed to just being focused on their abilities. For example, I discovered that a boy, who had cursed me and refused to talk to me initially, was very fond of cupcakes. I took some cupcakes along to one of our sessions, and we had a good conversation. This became a significant learning experience for me both as a teacher and as a Pastoral Counsellor: I needed to be more attentive to my environment (and people) and to challenge the assumptions that informed my thinking and relationships with learners. I realized that the teacher and counsellor roles need to complement each other.

My own spiritual journey has helped me, both a teacher and Pastoral Counsellor, to seek a more tolerant compassionate role towards learners and teachers. I have realized how important it is to honor people where they are at in their own journeys, rather than impose where I assume they ought to be. Referring to counselling, Kopp (1972:63) suggests that one needs to join one’s client:

...[on] his pilgrimage, more as another, more experienced pilgrim than as a guide...For each of us, the only hope resides in his efforts, in completing his own story, not in the other’s interpretation.

Once I had completed my Master’s degree in Pastoral Counselling, I realized that teaching called for similar skills. I could now incorporate counselling theory and practice into my teaching practice without blurring the boundaries thereby enhancing my relationships – both as student-teacher and as teacher-teacher – in our pursuit of a more holistic education.

2.9 Jesus as teacher

Since Socrates, the search for the best way of teaching has kept philosophers occupied. Words ‘a good teacher’ has been prominent in discourses throughout the ages. But today, however, words arising from scientific language - such as ‘efficacy’ and ‘efficiency’ - have had a deleterious effect and became less rewarding.

In an effort to rediscover and recover images of teaching that do not fit the modern roles and contexts, I took Jesus Christ as one of the foremost examples of teaching in the past. The accounts of Jesus as recorded in the four gospels, forms part of our literature heritage. Whether we interpret everything literally or as historical records, as legends or oral traditions, the model of Jesus as teacher has influenced on our vocabulary in teaching significantly. Jesus’ teaching model drew from the longstanding Jewish traditions of proverbs, riddles, aphorisms, allegories and short narratives. These devices allowed Jesus to teach in a familiar, concrete style, which invited deep ‘open-ended’ interpretations that avoided strict moral edicts (Burbules 2004:9).

Jesus’ practices as teacher, and the way he interacted with ordinary people, remind me of the teaching methods used by the pre-primary teachers in my school or of mothers teaching their young children. Jesus generally drew from common, natural and everyday events and objects to teach principles of life. His subject matter consisted of everyday items, such as mustard seeds, fig trees, vineyards, weddings, and funerals, with which his audience would have been familiar. These items were visible or part of his audience’s experience, thus enabling learning to occur. According to Manson (1995:71): ‘The object of the parables [of Jesus] were to work through the imagination and understanding of the hearers in order to arouse the conscience, and the real goal of parabolic teaching is not attained unless the conscience is aroused.’ Jesus spoke to large crowds of people – much like teachers experience daily in classrooms around South Africa where forty plus children in a classroom is often the norm. It appears that Jesus, as most good teachers, knew that not all hearers would hear the message in the same way, and that others would derive no meaning or benefit from the message at all. Jesus used vivid and real images in his teachings to get the message across to his audience. For example: ‘No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth to an old coat; for then the patch tears away from the coat, and leaves a bigger hole. Neither do you put new wine into old wineskins; if you do, the skin bursts, and then the wine runs out and the skins are spoilt’ (Matt 9:16-17; see also Mark 2:21-22; Luke 5:36-38). For

learning to occur, teachers must teach in the same way: use physical examples to demonstrate the message.

2.9.1 Always treat others as you would like them to treat you

Jesus taught and lived the so-called ‘Golden Rule’: ‘Always treat others as you would like them to treat you’ (Matt 7:12; Luke 6:31). This old proverb is perhaps even more relevant in the South African teaching context today as we struggle with issues such as violence and intolerance. This proverb not only communicates an important message to the observers and hearers about what it means, but also teaches about relationships, revealing the characteristics and attitudes of those who understand it and those who do not.

2.9.2 Love your neighbor as yourself

The story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) provides another example of how to ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’ At that time there was no love lost between Jews and Samaritans. But the Samaritan proved to be a good neighbor by virtue of the compassion and care he practiced towards a Jewish stranger. By avoiding stereotypes about Samaritans or about the Jewish culture’s superior status, Jesus marked ‘the difference between official piety and personal decency’ (Burbules 2004:17). This parable is especially relevant for teachers in the South African context where the different histories and cultures of the various ethnic groups make teaching a very challenging job indeed.

2.9.3 Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a principle that teachers and mothers teach almost every day. When children disagree or fight, you will hear the mother or teacher talking to the children and then ask them to ‘forgive’ each other. When these words are spoken, it is almost as if it opens up new understandings or new possibilities with the other person.

Jesus taught and lived the practice of forgiveness. In his life and through his death, he demonstrated how forgiveness involved ‘giving up something: [that] sense of entitlement to be angry or resentful, or a desire for revenge or restitution’ (Burbules 2004:17). Jesus also taught that forgiveness is not a once-off action, but an ongoing relationship. Because human actions have too many unforeseen consequences, we will always need forgiveness, and others will

always need forgiveness from us. Many questions cluster this issue. For instance, should we forgive unintended wrongs or only intentional ones; and what about repeated harmful actions by others? Jesus does not supply us with a definitive answer, but invites us to live these question of ‘Who is my neighbor?’ Similarly, in his treatment of the Samaritan woman accused of adultery, Jesus suggests to her accusers: ‘That one of you who is without sin shall cast the first stone’ (John 8:7).

2.9.4 Jesus’s teachings – a way of being in this world

Jesus the teacher influenced people through all kinds of teachings, including proverbs and stories. He modelled how to teach using non-literal forms, not merely as embellishments or to entertain his audiences, but to teach morality and a new way of being in this world. Anderson (2007:43) calls this approach a ‘philosophy of life’: a way of being ‘in relationship with, acting with, and responding with the people we meet.’

At the end of the Gospel of John, Jesus says: ‘Till now I have been using figures of speech; a time is coming when I shall no longer use figures, but tell you of the Father in plain words’(John 16:25). For me, Jesus’ words promise an exciting - perhaps even ‘new’ - way of teaching.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to lay the foundation for the topics that will be dealt with in the following chapters. Some historical background was explored to set the research in context and to indicate the complexities facing teachers in South Africa.

Teaching in South Africa is a complex and challenging profession, more especially after the advent of democracy in 1994. In the Soweto uprising of 1976, we witnessed the political and social changes brought about by young people resisting discrimination in educational practices. In 2016, twenty two years into our new democracy, we are witnessing similar upheavals as our society struggles with the complex issues facing a nation in transition. Education cannot distance itself from the struggles challenging the rest of society. In order to solve the complex social and economic problems, such as poverty, job creation and service delivery, we need to produce better educated people.

Nor can the education system distance itself from the struggles teachers experience in their work and personal lives. Teachers' sense of isolation, exhaustion and alienation and the poor or unsupportive relationships they experience with colleagues and the wider society have corrosive consequences in their overall well-being and health:

Studies done over two decades involving more than 37 000 people show that social isolation – the sense that you have nobody with whom you can share your private feelings, have close contact – doubles the chances of sickness or death.

Goleman (1995:226)

Schools rarely create spaces where teachers can share their stories honestly or talk about personal problems. This has a direct impact on their personal and professional lives. Instead of connection, teachers often experience disconnectedness and painful 'dismemberment':

On the surface, this is the pain of people who thought they were joining a community of scholars but find themselves in distant, competitive, and uncaring relationships with colleagues and students. Deeper down, this pain is more spiritual than sociological: it comes from being disconnected from our own truth, from the passions that took us into teaching, from the heart that is the source of all good work.

(Palmer 1998:20-21)

Another important reality confronting teachers in South Africa is that our country has eleven official languages, as well as many dialects. While our different language backgrounds could add to the cultural kaleidoscope in education and open the way for alternative metaphors and narratives to develop, we also need to be cognizant of how language divided us deeply in the past. We need to be aware constantly of the colonizing effects of language and culture, take special care and be accountable for the language we use when relating to our stories:

Living utterance becomes an active participant in social dialogue. If we imagine such a word in the form of light, then the living and unrepeatable play of colors and light on the facets of the image that it constructs can be explained as the spectral dispersion of the ray word, in an atmosphere filled with the alien words, value judgements, and accents through which the ray passes on its way to the objects; the social atmosphere of the world, that atmosphere that surrounds the object, makes the facets of the image sparkle.

(Hoffman in Anderson 2007:63)

Research over many years have generated some knowledge and sound theoretical models for improving the well-being of teachers. Though apart from the Practical Theological field, these range from social-emotional development and classroom management to models for stress reduction, mindfulness, emotional awareness and deeper development of teacher's inner lives (Jennings & Greenberg 2009:513). Mindfulness practices can encourage teachers to become more aware of these discourses at work within schools. Such an awareness can enable teachers to understand their own struggles. Researchers Brown, Ryan & Creswell (2007) and Brown & Ryan (2003) suggest that teachers' stress can be reduced through mindfulness or contemplative practices. Mindful practices can increase the inner awareness of a person and promote reflection, self-awareness and caring for others (Dalai Lama & Ekman 2008). I agree with Poulou (2005) suggestion that these should have a more prominent role in the teacher training curriculum.

The literature study in the next chapter will elaborate in more detail what other scholars have used - the theories, models and methods - in the different epistemological fields of study in relation to my research.

CHAPTER 3

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started

And know the place for the first time

T.S. Elliot: 'Little Gidding'

3 Introduction

This chapter provides the literature background that informed the way I went about collecting the research participants' knowledges and documenting them in this thesis. As the literature review usually 'involves the identification and analysis of information resources and/or literature related to one's research project' (Kaniki 2006:19), I will explore in this chapter those theories I have used to support my research objectives. This research has been done at a time in South Africa's history 'when old habits are hard to break and hope is still fragile' (Ackermann 2003:65). In order to find ways of standing with teachers who are struggling to cope within the complex challenges of a society in transition and especially with how to negotiate difference in our multicultural and multi-religious country (rainbow nation), I have had to draw from a wide range of disciplines, including theories from scholars in the fields of Psychology, Sociology and Theology.

This chapter will also explore what Practical Theologians, and all who are concerned with the well-being of our teachers, can gain from shifting paradigms – from a modernist to a postmodern world view - thereby expanding the somewhat limited understanding and perspectives currently at our disposal.

I propose that Interpretive and Narrative approaches to Practical Theological practices can provide 'possibilities for newness' (Anderson 2007:13): new possibilities for caring for and with teachers in our challenging, fragile and ever changing postmodern world.

The Narrative approach and, in this research project in particular, Narrative Pastoral Counselling provided the practices and theoretical background for the stories of transformation in the co-researcher's lives, contexts and relationships (see Chapter 5).

This chapter concludes with overviews of an African model for Pastoral Counselling and a South African model of healing which seems to fit well with the Narrative approach in this study.

The following section provides a fairly general introduction to Postmodernism and those aspects of Postmodernism that are particularly useful to this study.

3.1 Postmodern umbrella

In broad terms, Postmodernism refers to a family of concepts within the Natural and Social Science disciplines. It involves an ideological critique of the relevance of foundational knowledge, privileged discourse and meta-narratives. It questions the consequences, certainty and power which 'Truths' have on peoples' everyday lives. It challenges mainly the 'truth' and centrality of individual knowledge; the possibility of an objective and knowable world; and language as the carrier of truth (Gergen 2001: 803-813). It also challenges our passive acceptance of taken-for-granted assumptions about the 'truth.' So, for example, a postmodern approach rejects the notion that there can be an ultimate truth and it 'emphasizes instead the co-existence of a multiplicity and variety of situation-dependent ways of life' (Burr 1995:13-14).

The emphasis on multiplicity and various ways of knowing has often resulted in institutions based on a single 'truth' - such as the church and school - oppose Postmodernism as a form of evil, warning that: 'He who marries the spirit of the age soon finds himself a widower' (Preston 1999:52). In this research project, however, most of the research participants (the teachers of Beaumont Primary School) discovered that although they were challenged by different ways of thinking from what they were used to, they found the certain postmodern ideas – such as knowledge being co-constructed - to be both enriching and liberating. They discovered that by challenging the discourses in the societies in which they worked and lived, they could also challenge their own values and discourses, thereby broadening their horizons.

Kotzé (2002:11) offers another angle on Postmodernism, as a form of ‘ethical-political resistance – against the injustices resulting from the scientific and technological power regimes of modernity itself.’ This idea informed the way that I documented the teachers’ research journeys and became a form of ethical-political resistance, thereby acknowledging their ‘stories and voices of those...constitute[ting] the ‘Other’ (Van Wyk 1999:6) within the hierarchy of our society.

I chose therefore, to position myself within a Postmodern paradigm in this research project, largely because the paradigm challenges the many meta-narratives which enshrine universal, absolute and ultimate truths and which legalize the various political and scientific projects of our time (Appignanesi & Garratt 2003:103). Hunter (2001:32) reminds us that Postmodernism challenges the meta-narratives as well as the ‘cultural and social land shifts in which a longstanding confidence in certain habits of mind and social practices long associated with the Enlightenment in Europe have collapsed.’ The implications of such a shift will be explored more fully in this research study.

Brueggemann (1993:5) illustrates the kinds of knowledge that constitutes ‘real knowledge’ from a modernist perspective, and offers us some understanding of how these grand narratives were shaped. In a modernist perspective:

- The general applicability of truth is emphasized rather than local and contextual ‘truths’
- Written ‘text’ is more reliable than oral ‘text’
- Knowledge is seen as timeless and unchanging opposed to ‘timely’ (historical and situational)
- The focus is on finding truth that is eternal and universal, rather than particular.
- Understanding is reduced to essential concepts which are then accepted as ‘truth-for-all-time.’

This modernist view – which totalized, universalized and insisted on an impersonal, de-contextualized understanding of reality – has had a significant impact on Christian spirituality, philosophy and our understanding *about* God rather than *of* God. The fact that the modernist view also supported patriarchy – usually white, Western heterosexual men - eventually left people torn between what the ‘experts’ said and what they ‘knew’ intuitively. By adopting a

postmodern way of questioning in this research, it liberated the teachers from what the ‘experts’ said about God and gave the teachers the opportunity to express their own understanding and experience of God (see also 5.6.4.1.2).

From a modernist perspective those practices that created ‘the Other’- such as racism, sexism, oppression and marginalization - flowed out of how we rationalized our understanding of the world. But by adopting a postmodern view in this research, however, it provided a vehicle whereby to question and reject many of the fundamental assumptions of modernity that were contributing to the teachers’ struggles. Take for example, the impact which patriarchy has on the education system. My research revealed how the older female teachers seem to struggle more, and are frequently overlooked for senior positions in teaching, whereas men are favored (see also 5.6.1.3.3 i, ii). Crouch’s research (2001:5-6) revealed that the reason for men’s preferential treatment is that women ‘are not seen as fit’ or competent enough to be in senior positions. Exploring patriarchy with the teachers – and its effects on their daily lives - opened the way for a much wider exploration of the discourses surrounding gender and, within the gender discourse, themes such as menopause, illness and being heard (see the full analysis of the data in Chapter 5).

Another new possibility opened up by the shift from a modernist to a postmodern paradigm concerns the way knowledge and language are viewed. A Postmodern discourse regards knowledge and language mostly as relational and generative, in sharp contrast with the modernist Western tradition of individualism in which the individual is seen as an autonomous knower who can pass knowledge to others and who can create or discover knowledge which is mainly observer-independent. The knower thus separates himself/herself from which he/she observes, describes and explains. As knowledge and language forms such an integral part of teaching, I explored this theme intensively in this research (see also 5.6.1.3.1).

3.1.1 Knowledge

From a Postmodern perspective, knowledge is socially constructed. This means that knowledge and the knower are independent. Since Postmodernism also advocates that all knowledge⁷ and knowing are embedded in history, culture, context, experience, language and understanding, this perspective promotes a critical reflection of all truths, including Postmodernism.

Similarly, a Postmodern perspective favors local knowledge or knowledge developed within a community of people. Such knowledge is seen as participatory knowledge or relational knowledge which opposes objectivity or observer-independent knowledge so characteristic of a modernist stance. Research participants feel relevant and useful, rather than objects of research.

Traditional modernist research emphasizes the outsider (researcher) studying and observing the subject. Patterns and similarities are searched for, from which theoretical knowledge is created to describe or know a person or communities. Categorizing and predicting are used to support and explain actions. A Postmodern approach questions this approach to knowledge and research. By adopting a Postmodern approach, I was able to utilize insider inquiry. My focus was on learning about the teachers' experiences and the uniqueness of their experience rather than on identifying patterns and similarities. Moreover, since a Postmodern approach advocates that we can only know the world through our own experiences - we cannot have absolute knowledge of it - differences in teachers' interpretations were valued. It is through our (different) interpretations that we create knowledge, which is no longer seen as a fixed entity, but as continually evolving, changing and shifting. The fluid nature of knowledge means there is also no finality to our understandings, meanings and realities. Thus knowledge is communal rather than being a passive process or an individual activity (Anderson 2007:6).

A Postmodern approach regards all knowledge as contextual 'as it is set in some context [and] rooted in some life experience or issue (Astley 2003:3). The research participants, all teachers in the context of Beaumont Primary School teachers, were actively involved in the process of creating knowledge. They influenced the knowledges that are documented in this research

⁷ **Knowledge: When I use the term knowledge, I refer to social knowledge and meaning. I do not refer to scientific facts, but to the *meaning* we attribute to facts.**

project as they constructed the ‘readily available possibilities of what they knew and how they knew it (Roux et al 2003a:46).

O’Brien (2001:292) argues that Practical Theology is by implication contextualized because it draws on the experience of ordinary believers (or teachers in this research) in their particular culture and historical situation. By encouraging the teachers (as believers) to engage in ongoing reflection and to contextualize this within the various communities in which they live, Practical Theology can empower teachers to rethink universal assumptions about teachers and open up new ways for them to approach their struggles.

3.1.2 Language

The philosopher Richard Rorty (1979:5-14) disagrees with Anderson’s (2007:8) claim that ‘Language is an outward description of an internal process... [it] represents or mirrors Truths’ when he insists that language does not mirror the truth. Wittgenstein (1953:7) argues that language is not an outward description of an internal process and does not accurately describe what actually happened. He proposes instead that language allows us to describe and attribute meaning to what happens to us in this world. The language is thus useful and valuable people use it to describe events and thoughts. As the meaning of a word can be found in the process of understanding and searching, the process and the search in itself creates meaning. The process and search thus become the vehicle by which we try to understand and create meaning, and through which we form knowledge and understanding about ourselves, and the world. Language can therefore shape and limit our expressions and thoughts.

I concur with Gergen’s (2001:803-813) statement that ‘whatever exists simply exists irrespective of linguistic practices.’ The focus should thus be on the meaning of such existence and the consequent actions this existence informs when explained, described and interpreted. Or, following Anderson (2007:10): ‘We are always struggling with each other to understand the words we use, their meaning. We are always foreigners trying to learn the native’s local language.’

3.1.3 Transformation

The process of transformation is different from that of ‘change’ which, in the psychotherapy field, often means a linear process. In other words, a person changes another person by changing from one thing to another. But in the view of knowledge and language discussed above, change as a linear process is not possible: each person uniquely interprets and responds to information. Bateson (1975:78) suggests that change is an epistemological error and that instructive interaction is impossible. Observer and information cannot influence systems in a predetermined way.

I prefer to use the word ‘transformation’ or ‘transforming’ instead of ‘change’ because ‘transformation’ reminds us of the fluid nature of language: we are never at a standstill. Our bodies, and the meanings we make in and through our bodies, are always in motion from the day we are born to the day we die. A sense of continuity still exists, in that we do not necessarily change from one person to another, but exist as different identities going forward. We therefore remain who we have been and still are, while at the same time we are becoming (Anderson 2007:11).

Transformation is also relational: it is something people do with each other. It nurtures the hope that human beings are resilient, that every person has potential and can contribute to their lives and relationships. Transformation implies that the researcher is also not only a causal agent of transformation, because in any research study, or the engagement in people’s lives, the researcher has a place or take a position in the research. According to Gadamer, the researcher cannot be ‘objective’, the researcher ‘participates in the very production of meaning via participation in the circle of readings or interpretations’ (Schwardt 1994:120).

This means that the researcher is also transformed through the research process: with every new experience, interpretation and knowledge the researcher is herself newly constructed. By being involved in witnessing and recording the research data, the researcher’s life is hopefully transformed. Reinharz (1992:127), a feminist researcher, suggests that the researcher’s involvement in women’s lives can lead to a closer awareness of some of the questions and answers the researcher may have in her own life. Heshusius’ (1994:1) notion of the researcher’s ‘participatory consciousness’ seems to support Reinharz:

...[w]hen one forgets self and becomes embedded in what one wants to understand, there is an affirmative quality of kinship that no longer allows for privileged status. It renders the act of knowing an ethical act. The other you are studying is no longer someone you can bombard with questions, but someone who can let you near.

In this research project, I collaborated with the teachers of Beaumont Primary School, and in particular, female teachers who often felt isolated and voiceless. I let them guide me about what they wanted to speak about and the ways in which they wanted me to speak and act, and not what I thought they wanted me to say. By letting them guide me in knowing what it was that they needed, I could see transformation and liberation gradually take place in their lives and in my own. I believe that we were 'doing transformation' and working for some kind of justice, especially for the women involved in this research.

Welch (1990:70) supports this position:

...working for justice...is not 'something optional, something of a hobby or short-term project, a mere tying up of loose ends...[and] is not incidental to one's life but is an essential aspect of affirming the delight and wonder of being alive.

3.2 Social Construction

As with the Postmodern discourse, a Social Constructionist approach adopts a skeptical orientation regarding established 'truths' and the power or authority that these 'truths' award. It also challenges the modernist position (see 3.2) and provides us with a broader base of 'liberating' ideas for understanding the world. Gergen (2001:2) describes the Social Construction discourse as 'a page from the postmodern text.' He offers a few key assumptions that reflect the production of knowledge from a Social Constructionist perspective.

1. The need for radical doubt (Gergen 1985:266): We need to challenge what we know to be knowledge of the world - our 'taken-for-granted' assumptions - with a radical doubt:

Social Construction inquiry is principally concerned with explaining the Process by which people come to describe, explain, and otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live.... From the Constructionist position the process of

understanding is not automatically driven by the forces of nature, but is the result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationship.

(Gergen 2003:15)

2. Knowledge is relational: ‘what we take to [be] knowledge of the world and self finds its origin in communal interchange’ (Gergen & Gergen 2003b:2). Social Construction dialogue therefore ‘increasingly invite[s] an appreciation of relationships as central to knowledge of human well-being.’
3. Knowledge is collaborative: our knowledge of the world, our versions and shared versions of knowledge, are the ‘result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationship, largely through language’ (Gergen 1985:268).

Knowledge is therefore seen ‘not as something that a person has (or does not have), but as something that people do together’ (Burr 1995:8). Anderson and Goolishian (1988:378) support this understanding of knowledge: ‘communication and discourse define social organization and that reality is a product of changing dialogue.’ This implies that language plays an important role in Social Construction discourse as was discussed in 3.2.2.

4. Knowledge can create new possibilities: Knowledge that is socially constructed between people in relationships, can influence corresponding human actions and ‘alter descriptions and explanation [and] thus threaten certain actions and invite others’ (Gergen 1985:268).

Within the Social Construction paradigm, we are ‘challenged to be creative, to initiate new ways of producing knowledge that are tied to our particular values and ideas (Gergen & Gergen 2003c:60). In this research study, I see the narratives that are presented by the research participants as a creative way of producing knowledge from experience and participation. The research journey sought out ways to give voice to the teachers of Beaumont Primary School through their narratives and honored their contributions as knowledge worth listening to.

5. Knowledge is contextual: Our ways of interpreting and knowing ‘may be suggested, fastened upon, and abandoned as social relationships unfolding over time’ (Gergen 1985:268).

Our relationships are thus relative to where we are placed in the world, historically and culturally. Social Constructionism has no problem with ‘locally claimed realities; these may be anticipated and honored’ (Gergen & Gergen 2003f:228).

These key assumptions helped inform the way I approached my research. The process of attaining knowledge from the participants in this research project was deeply embedded in their context – their experience as teachers at Beaumont Primary School, Somerset West. It was a collaborative, relational construction of knowledge, which questioned the taken-for-granted discourses (radical doubt) and opened up new possibilities and perspectives in that particular group of teachers. The local claimed realities of the research participants was honored by giving them a chance to ‘speak’ as theologians in the academic discourse. Within Social Construction discourse their voices and knowledges no longer

...represent[s] the world as it is, but is now taken as referring to interpretations, resulting in realities that are socially constructed by people in specific contexts’

(Kotzé 2002:9)

The subsequent chapters of this research journey are recorded as ‘readings; they are not accurate probings but proactive ways of interpreting our ways of life’ (Gergen & Gergen 2003e:194). The reader will not find ‘maps or pictures of the way things are, but lenses of understanding.’ In this way, the narratives of the research participants invite ‘collective dialogue from which new futures can be created’ (Gergen & Gergen 2003e:194).

It is my hope that this research will spark such new dialogues in its contribution to the South African theological and educational society in general. My hope is that the construction of knowledge by this current group of teachers, will also invite the construction of knowledges by all the groups of teachers who have gone before them as well as by all the current teachers in

South Africa. This can provide an understanding that, over time, can invite and include every teacher in South Africa as participants collectively to make new meaning and create a new future through conversations.

3.2.1 Discoursed living

Discourses are networks of ‘taken-for-granted’ knowledges or understandings of the world (White 1995:215). Discourses are developed over time for the purpose of control. Discourses become ‘truths’ that are reproduced in perpetuity to govern people’s lives. They often go unchallenged – they are ‘taken-for-granted’- and become a means through which people are included through certain norms, and excluded or ‘othered’ by ways of knowing, suppression or marginalization. Discourses can continue to function and have an influence in people’s lives long after their historical purpose is done (White 2000:35, 36).

The following section offers a selective interpretation of discoursed living by the philosophers Michael Foucault and Jacques Derrida as well as by some Feminist thinkers, including Welch, Graham and Ackermann.

3.2.1.1 Michael Foucault challenges the ‘truths’ we live by

Foucault’s historical genealogies (1980:83) of the conjunction of power and knowledge, probed an almost forbidden subject at the time: social inquiry into a particular human ailment or affliction (Graham 1996:21). According to Foucault, illness, mental illness, crime and sexual disorder appear to have been developed out of a desire to ‘cure.’ He traced the history of the ‘art of government of persons’ back to the seventeenth century, and especially to the practice of confession in the medieval Church. This led him to argue that in times of social upheaval, the ruling class will develop some interest in a particular human condition in order to contain and control it (Foucault 1979, 1980). As people tended to shape their lives according to the dominant way of being and taken-for-granted practices, they could be controlled socially.

3.2.1.1.1 Local Politics

Tracing the historical evolution of ‘universal truth’ led Foucault to investigate discourses, or what he called ‘the technologies of truth.’ Foucault argues that these ‘current truths’ are subjugating of people; they create ‘docile bodies’ in support of governance and economics and ‘norm’-alise behaviours. When power is appropriated by and accorded to individuals with expert knowledges which are exclusive and which subjugate local knowledges (Foucault 1980:88) this leads to the pathologizing, medicalizing, controlling and isolating of the human body and behavior. Oppressive power is therefore a perceived and manufactured threat, resistance and threatened subversion.

3.2.1.1.2 The Ruse

This power is disguised or masked because it operates in relation to a specific norm that is considered as the ‘truth.’ This power is exercised and designed to bring about a particular and ‘correct’ outcome. The description of these outcomes, or ‘desired ways of being’, are often illusionary. Foucault calls them a ‘ruse’ that disguises what is actually taking place:

They incite people to embrace their own subjugation; to relate to their own lives through techniques of power that are moulding of these lives, including their bodies and their gestures, according to certain ‘truths.’

(White 1992:138)

People usually do not see the effect of this power; rather, they experience it as a ‘solution’ or ‘liberation.’

The well-being of teachers forms the main focus of this research project. ‘Well-being’ includes their physical well-being or illness (see 1.2.2). To illustrate how relevant Foucault’s work regarding control and illness is to this particular research, I quote Arthur Frank’s account of his experience of becoming ill with cancer. Since Frank’s experience sheds a useful light on the experience of some of the teachers I talked with in this research project, as well as my own experience with illness, I will include extracts here and then elaborate on it in subsequent chapters.

Frank (1991:52-52) eloquently articulates the surrender – or colonization - of personal power to the power of the expert:

To get medicine's help, I had to cede the territory of my body to the investigation of doctors who were as yet anonymous. I had to be colonized. The investigation required me to enter the hospital. Fluids were extracted, specialists' opinions accumulated, machines produced images of the insides of my body, but the diagnoses remained uncertain. One day, I returned to my room and found a new sign below my name on the door. It said 'Lymphoma' a form of cancer. No one has told me that this diagnosis, which later proved to be wrong, had been confirmed....my name had been changed, it had been defined. 'Lymphoma' was a medical flag, planted as a claim of territory of my body.

The colonization only became worse. During chemotherapy a nurse referred to me as 'the seminoma in 53' (my room number). The hospital had created its own version of my identity. I became the disease, the passive object of investigation and later of treatment. Nameless, how could I be a person who experienced?...Medicine has no interest in what pain means in life, it can see pain only as a symptom of a possible disease. Medicine cannot enter into the experience, it seeks only cure or management.

Frank's description of his experience offers insights into how dominant discourses 'recruit persons into an active role in their subjugation' (White 1999:24). During this research journey, we investigated the dominant discourses shaping illness, death and the influence of the medical profession. Participants were invited to identify those discourses that were influencing their thinking and actions, and then to find ways of resisting these dominant discourses. When I became ill in 2008, my own experience invited me to explore these dominant discourses in new ways.

3.2.1.1.3 Techniques of Power

Foucault (1988:18) traced the history of those institutions through which power practices were perfected to Bentham's Panopticon. This was the 'ideal' model for these '...technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject.'

According to Foucault (1988:18), Bentham's Panopticon provided a model of power in which:

- Those who experience it most intensely, cannot see the source of the power
- People are isolated and subjugated in their experiences

- People are subjected to the ‘gaze’ and ‘normalizing judgement’
- As people cannot determine when they are the subject of surveillance and when they are not, they can only assume it is always the case
- People are encouraged to regularly evaluate or police themselves, and to give over their bodies and souls – they become ‘docile bodies’
- Those who enforce the subjugation of others are the autonomous ‘instruments’ of power

During this research journey, we unpacked the discourses which empower the ‘expert’ and totalize and judge others, and explored ways in which we could distribute power more equally. In the process we attempted to do what Hess (1998:60) calls ‘communicative justice’:

Communicative justice is not simply teaching people adapt (play the master’s game): it is also building on skills, powers, experiences, knowledges, and talents that people have which are unacknowledged in the power structures.

Foucault’s ideas on discourses remind us about the multi-faceted complexities of social processes and relationships. Derrida takes us further: he offers even more ways in which ‘truths’ contradict themselves in their very origins.

3.2.1.2 Derrida deconstructs text

Derrida argues that speech and writing (text) have no ultimate authors. Consequently, text is never unitary or stable, but contains echoes of meanings which are repressed and negated in the wish to find closure. This process favors those related associations to which the surface text alludes and overlooks what lies in between margins and lines. Derrida’s term for this destabilizing of fixed meanings, is *difference* (Graham 1996:21). Because meaning is not fixed, we cannot really describe what something is, because it is not describable from just one vantage point of meaning.

3.2.1.2.1 The Present and Absent

According to Sampson (1989:12), presence and absence are not opposites, ‘but rather...there is an inevitable defining of the one through the other: there is both presence and absence.’ Thus

what is ‘not said’ is included in the present as well as the larger background of meanings in the past.

In this research project, the teachers’ experience of ‘stress’ and ‘distress’ and how it manifested itself in their lives was a dominant theme that I wanted to understand as best I could (see also 2.4). I wanted to understand the contexts of their stress and distress, which included socioeconomic conditions and the power relations of their school culture. I also wanted to understand what it was that stress and distress speak to, or what it is testimony to, in terms of the absent but implicit – and how the teachers came to identify their experience in this way.

In making reference to Derrida and his development of a deconstruction method of reading texts, I am not proposing that life is just a text, but I am rather suggesting that by close listening to people’s experiences, Pastoral Counsellors might help people discern and identify the ‘absent but implicit’ descriptions of their lives (White 2000:37).

3.2.1.2.2 Deconstructing the Un-deconstructable

Derrida proposes that ideas of virtue and virtuous practices - such as hospitality, justice, community and gift - should be deconstructed. By deconstructing the un-deconstructable, the virtues and their possibilities become constrained by what is im-possible to enact. These ideas are usually politically and culturally constructed between people and communities. Through deconstruction, the management, interpretations and preconditions of what is possible become visible in practice. Moreover, tensions are created by the idea of the impossibility of going beyond possibilities. These tensions sustain and maintain the ideas. A challenge is created by the ‘push’ to make the impossible possible. Although deconstruction is therefore necessary to find ways to re-do or even reconstruct, Derrida urges us to keep in mind that ‘one can think, desire and say only the impossible according to the measure without measure of the impossible’ (Derrida 1997:144).

Derrida’s ideas challenged me to be aware of the tensions that existed in the research participants’ actions: what they chose to say and to live by also deferred to the many things they did not say or did not live by. Did what they chose to say represent a code of norms held by the group of teachers to which they belonged? As a researcher and Pastoral Counsellor, I also had to acknowledge that how I connected with the research participants consisted of a variety of codes

and themes. Thus through our conversations even further tensions were created. But these tensions, however, challenged us all to ‘open up’ and to go beyond the impossibilities of certain understandings and actions and thereby to discover new ways of making the impossible possible. As Welch (1999:135) puts it: tensions issue the ‘invitation to explore an alternative construction of selfhood.’ Those teachers involved in the research gradually evolved to a point where they wanted to break out of ‘the self-gathering circles’ at Beaumont Primary School that were holding them back and keeping them hostage to what they thought only possible in the teaching context of our country. An example of this evolution of possibility was their decision to establish a network of support and reciprocity with a community of teachers in Singapore.

3.2.1.3 Feminist deconstruction of discourses

Feminist activists do not ‘benefit any specific group, race or class of women, nor does it promote privilege for women over men’ (Jakobsen 1994:198). But they do challenge social and political processes that influence and affect people and abused groups of people.

3.2.1.3.1 Liberation and Justice

The ways in which Feminists deconstruct discourses always show their interest in liberation and justice for all people: ‘Justice, which includes the defeat of oppressive forces, involves recognising, engaging, and dispersing power among those who differ from one another’ (Hess 1998:57). However, concurrent with resisting oppression, Feminists are specifically interested in addressing women’s struggles in the context or situation they are in (Jakobsen 1994:198).

Similarly, Pastoral Counselling and care, when seen from a Feminist perspective, validates, values and nurtures women’s voices in their lives experiences. Although women’s experiences differ from the experience of men, they are equally valuable. Graham (1996:193) suggests that when Pastoral Care and Counselling is done from a Feminist perspective, particular attention should be given to the recovery and naming of women’s experiences and needs because they have been:

... hitherto undervalued, misrepresented and pathologized by the patriarchal Church. In the process, healing, reconciliation and empowerment can take place as women articulate...the sacredness of embodied experience, exorcize the oppressions of injury, violation and abuse, and celebrate the landmarks of childbirth, menopause and other social and morphological transitions.

This is particular true in the South African context where patriarchal discourses still shape many institutions, including church and schools. My research with the teachers at Beaumont Primary School supports Baloyi's (2013:5) findings that:

...rules and regulations are put in place to control women during menopause, whereas there is nothing to control men...this is one of the ways in which patriarchal systems control and suppress women whilst men remain dominant. Women have been taught to cooperate with the male privilege and support men in their privileged powerful positions, which dominate women.

3.2.1.3.2 Healing, empowerment and reconciliation

Ackermann (1998:87) asserts that since Feminist Theology is 'embodied Practical Theology,' an important task of Practical Theology is to 'return' women's bodies to them, because 'we are our bodies.' But this task requires enormous resistance to the external and internal pressures that women have to endure and conform to daily in our patriarchal societies.

Baloyi (2013:5) also reminds us of Gerkin's (1991:29) recommendation that Pastoral Counsellors should give some purpose and guidance to God's people. 'Embodied Practical Theology' thus encourages Pastoral Counsellors to give guidance in those 'embodied' areas such as menopause, childbirth and the general struggles women experience in their everyday lives. Pastoral Care in this sense becomes a process of healing, empowerment and reconciliation by which women can regain their voice and power. Neuger (2001:71) encourages women to value their own spirituality, wisdom and experiences so that in 'naming one's God, women can be liberated from patriarchal prescriptions of who God is to women.'

In this research project, I have positioned myself as a Feminist Theologian and as Pastoral Counsellor. By positioning myself in such a discourse, both my own life and the lives of the teachers I talked with, were influenced in dramatic ways. By standing with the teachers, I also found support for myself as a menopausal, middle-aged woman. Ackermann (2003:35-36) supports this notion of praxis or standing with people:

[Praxis] is not to be confused with mere action. Praxis describes the inseparable relationship between reflecting and acting, between what I think and believe and what I do to achieve the goals of my beliefs. Praxis is not the opposite of theory. It is opposed to separating theory and practice. For liberation theologians, praxis always has an historical and social character. Any theology, including mine, is praxis-based theology in the

making because the goals of liberation and justice are expressed in the very act of doing theology.

The practicing of Practical Theology made me feel connected to both Social Construction discourse and the paradigm of Postfoundational Theology. Although the two paradigms developed in different fields, both aim to have the same objective: to create a *third way*, a way out of modernistic or fundamentalist science and theology on the one hand and the fatalism of some of the postmodern approaches on the other.

As I have already discussed Social Construction discourse (see 3.3), I will now focus on the possibilities which Postfoundational Theology open up for Practical Theology.

3.3 Postfoundational Theology

Postfoundational Theology, more especially the work of Müller (2009) and Van Huyssteen (2006), adds a very important voice to the postmodern conversation. Postfoundational thinking makes space for a degree of overlapping between disciplines - such as education/teaching and Practical Theology - which can create new experiences and knowledges altogether. The Postfoundational approach to Practical Theology is reflective and situationally embedded in epistemology and methodology. Van Huyssteen, the ‘father’ of Postfoundationalism, uses a similar line of thought as Social Constructionism when he argues for a Postfoundational rationality: ‘...we cannot talk abstractly and theoretically about the phenomenon of rationality anymore; it is only as individual human beings, living with other human beings in concrete situations and contexts, that we can claim some form of rationality.’ Van Huyssteen (1999:4) captures the essence of Postfoundationalism in the following way:

...it fully acknowledges contextuality, the epistemically crucial role of interpreted experience, and the way that tradition shapes the epistemic and non-epistemic values that inform our reflection about God and what some of us believe to be God’s presence in this world. At the same time, however, a Postfoundational notion of rationality in theological reflection claims to point creatively beyond the confines of the local community, group, or culture towards a plausible form of interdisciplinary conversations.

According to Social Constructionism, we are rationally socially constructed. Van Huyssteen, however, argues that a constructed rationality or identity is based on our ‘own experience,’ which is capable of reaching beyond. He puts it like this:

It is in this sense, then, that a postfoundational notion of rationality reveals the fact that one’s own experience is always going to be rationally compelling, even as we reach out beyond personal awareness and conviction to interpersonal (and interdisciplinary) dialogue.

(Van Huyssteen Forthcoming Gifford Lecture 1, 2004:12).

Van Huyssteen (2000:428-429) promotes a ‘postfoundational notion of rationality’ for Practical Theology that would be capable of embracing the postmodern, multidisciplinary nature of theology, which neither traditional Foundationalism nor Nonfoundationalism seemed to meet. Such a Postfoundational approach would fully respect and acknowledge the role of context and the significance of discourses and traditions in the shaping of religious values. In this way, theology is placed in conversation with other disciplines such as education (in this research project):

Each of our domains of understanding may indeed have its own logic of behaviour, as well as an understanding unique to the particular domain, but in each the rich resources of human rationality remain. When we discover the shared richness of the resources of rationality, without attempting to subsume all discourses and all communities under one universal reason, we have discovered the richness of postfoundational notion of rationality.

Van Huyssteen 2000:429)

3.3.1 Transversal rationality

Van Huyssteen proposes that a ‘transversal rationality’ would be what a Postfoundational rationality would look like in practice. A ‘transversal rationality’ involves the identification of places in time and space where concepts, ideas and disciplines intersect. Van Huyssteen’s transversal model for an interdisciplinary approach to Practical Theology provides a ‘rationality’ for a common ground, thereby opening up the potential to communicate – between systems, people and beliefs, cultures and academic viewpoints. This is especially true for education or the teaching profession where different religions, cultural backgrounds and views that need to find

some common ground in order for a school and its teachers to create a workable system of care and communication:

[The] postfoundational approach helps us realize...that we are not the intellectual prisoners of our contexts or traditions, but that we are epistemically empowered to cross contextual, cultural, and disciplinary borders to explore critically the themes, meanings, and beliefs through which we and others construct our worlds.

(Van Huyssteen 2006:25)

3.3.2 Interdisciplinary dialogue

Disciplines, in general are regarded as ‘inward looking; insistent on maintaining the *status quo* while allowing and controlling limited access to the discipline’ (De Lange 2007:46). They tend to specialize in smaller areas and guard their own methodologies and work ethics. In contrast, an interdisciplinary dialogue:

...brings together the products of focused enquiry to uncover broader problems, meaningful in themselves and generations of new direction of disciplinary activities.

(Drake et al 2006:4)

An Interdisciplinary approach attempts to forge connections across different disciplines. But it requires a commitment to flexibility, self-reflexivity and indeterminacy and to finding what Moran (2002:15) calls ‘[the] undisciplined space in the interaction between disciplines...[and] to transcend disciplinary boundaries.’ In its interaction with different disciplines, Interdisciplinary approach seeks to produce new forms of knowledge through transformation (Moran 2002:15-16).

An Interdisciplinary approach opens up the possibility of answering complex questions that cannot necessarily be addressed by using a particular method in a particular discipline:

...interdisciplinary discourse, then, is an attempt to bring together disciplines or reasoning strategies that may have widely different points of reference, different epistemological foci, and different experiential resources. This ‘fitting together’, however, is a complex, multileveled transversal process that takes place not within the confines of any given discipline...but within the transversal spaces between disciplines.

(Van Huyssteen 2006:9)

This freedom makes it possible for two or more disciplines to ensure the ‘borrowing of concepts, methods and techniques of one science by another and the integration of these elements into the other science’ (Van Wyk 1997:78).

The interdisciplinary nature of a Postfoundational approach holds the following advantages:

- No academic discipline can claim human rationality
- Different disciplines and reasoning strategies can be linked together on equal footing
- Traditional and cultural rationality, in both theology and science, can strive towards a multidisciplinary epistemology
- Epistemological overlaps in theology and science can be promoted by Postfoundational thinking
- A Postfoundational approach to interdisciplinarity is non-hierarchical: no discipline can claim an absolute or foundational position over the other

(Van Huyssteen 2006:41)

The following summary (Table 1) of the basic relationship between Foundationalism and Nonfoundationalism, Postfoundationalism and Interdisciplinarity helped me to place myself as teacher and Practical Theologian within the Postfoundational frame of mind whilst exploring an Interdisciplinary way of doing the research.

EPISTEMOLOGY	PREMISES	RATIONALITY	INTERDISCIPLINARY CONVERSATIONS
FOUNDATIONALIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed truths. • Meta-narratives • Modernistic approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal rationality: universal and fixed knowledge is the ultimate frame of reference. • Dangers: approach is rigid and inflexible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas from other disciplines are considered a threat. • Meta-narratives cannot be altered or adapted.
NONFOUNDATIONALIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No privileged knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiversal rationality: meaning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult because everything is relative and subjective.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postmodern approach. • Meaning is created within a specific relativistic context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> is a product of diversity and experienced realities. • Dangers: approach is too relativistic and subjective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No tentative boundaries in found and differences be compared.
POSTFOUNDATIONALIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removed epistemology from the domain of abstract justification of knowledge and relocated it in the sphere of socially constructed knowledge in a specific and local context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transversal rationality: identifying places in time and space where different concepts, ideas, disciplines, etc. intersect. • Dangers: easy to disregard the input of the participants to the story whilst moving from the local to the global. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local or concrete account of the ways particular disciplines and persons intersect one another, overlapping in some ways and diverging in others. • Including as many voices as possible to ensure authenticity in covering all the aspects of the participants' lived experience.

Table 1: Summary of epistemological approaches

Source: Botha, C.S., 2012, 'High school teachers as agents of hope: A practical theological engagement', PhD dissertation, Department of Practical Theology, University of the Free State.

Holding this tension – as a teacher and Practical Theologian working from a Postfoundational approach to an interdisciplinary way of doing research – is a constant balancing act; it also traverses unknown territory. At times it is easy to wonder whether there is any commonality to be found between the worlds of teaching/education and Practical Theology. But maintaining some ideas of Social Construction, however, opened up the possibility of making new meaning and of creating alternative stories. This offered me, and those Beaumont Primary School teachers who were participating in this research, the opportunity of re-structuring our thinking and understanding as well how we understood the ways in which the worlds of education/teaching and Practical Theology functioned. This approach offered us the building blocks we needed to build our own road – a road which was not restrained by teachings' often modernistic approach or the pressure from being involved in the academic world of research. Postfoundational thinking thus allowed us the freedom to view praxis, truths and religion in alternative ways - in an

Interdisciplinary way - thereby validating the collaboration between teaching and Practical Theology.

Table 1 The following is the summary of epistemological approaches

<u>Epistemology</u>	<u>Premises</u>	<u>Rationality</u>	<u>Interdisciplinary conversations</u>
<u>Foundationalist</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fixed truths. • Meta-narratives. • Modernistic approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal rationality – universal and fixed knowledge is the ultimate frame of reference. • Dangers – approach is rigid and inflexible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideas from other disciplines are considered a threat. • Meta-narratives cannot be altered or adapted.
<u>Nonfoundationalist</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No privileged knowledge. • Postmodern approach. • Meaning is created within a specific relativistic context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiversal rationality – meaning is a product of diversity and experienced realities. • Dangers – approach is too relativistic and subjective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult because everything is relative and subjective. • No tentative boundaries in found and differences be compared.
<u>Postfoundationalist</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removed epistemology from the domain of abstract justification of knowledge and relocated it in the sphere of socially constructed knowledge in a specific and local context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transversal rationality – identifying places in time and space where different concepts, ideas, disciplines, etc. intersect. • Dangers – easy to disregard the input of the participants to the story whilst moving from the local to the global. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local or concrete account of the ways particular disciplines and persons intersect one another, overlapping in some ways and diverging in others. • Including as many voices as possible to ensure authenticity in covering all the aspects of the participants' lived experience.

Source: Botha, C.S., 2012, 'High school teachers as agents of hope: A practical theological engagement', PhD dissertation, Department of Practical Theology, University of the Free State

3.4 Interpretive Process

A Postfoundational approach is not only focused on individual experiences, but extends to communities through shared interpreted experiences. According to Müller (2011:1-5), our shared experiences happen on an interpersonal and social level. Van Huyssteen (1997:19-20) states that just as scientific interpretations are theory-laden, our religious experiences are interpretation-laden: this provides us with meaning.

Schrag (2006:25) concurs and says that ‘interpretation is called upon both in scientific discovery and humanistic inquiry. It cuts across the culture spheres of science, morality, art and religion. The emphasis is on the contribution of tradition’ (Müller 2004:297). The Interpretive process in research thus includes people - as active participants - into the construction of their worlds rather than viewing them as depersonalized objects of a study.

3.4.1 Understanding as Interpretive

According to Hoy (1986:399) ‘understanding is always interpretive, there is no uniquely privilege standpoint for understanding’. Understanding is also a generative process which in itself, creates understanding and meaning. A final interpretation or a ‘true’ understanding can thus never be reached: every account is a version of the truth and each account is influenced by what the interpreter brings forward. In a social exchange, each interpreter brings aspects of his or her own history, assumptions, intentions, beliefs and practices into the way he or she lives.

3.4.2 Caution in Interpretation

From an Interpretive perspective, no person can fully understand another person or the purpose/intentions behind their words.

Thus great caution should be exercised in the process of interpretation because pre-understandings can prejudice other people’s participation and meaning making:

The process of understanding is rational and dialogical; it is a two-way joint activity – a dialogue with self and others – as each person is open to the other and tries to grasp the other’s meaning. The process of meaning is therefore ‘the process of immersing ourselves in the other’s horizons.’

(Anderson 1997:39)

Gadamer (1975) supports the complexity of this dialogical understanding, and suggests that, through ‘immersing ourselves in the other’s horizons,’ the quest for understanding the other person’s meaning becomes a quest to make sense of the familiar and unfamiliar. In this process ‘the horizons are fused.’

The Interpretive process involves the following (Anderson & Goolishian 1988:381):

- An appreciation of what the interpreter brings to the process of interpreting and meaning making
- The acknowledgment that interpretation is always a relational process, which begins with the individual and extends to focus on between people
- The recognition that, in the process of understanding, something else can be fashioned
- The role of language in this process: Language influences understanding and through being in language we develop ‘through dialogue, new themes and narratives and actually, the creation of new histories.’

3.5 The world of Narrative

The Oxford mini Dictionary defines Narrative as ‘a spoken or written account of something’ (Hawker 2002:406). Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary is not specific about whether it is spoken or written: Narrative is ‘an account of any occurrence’ (McDonald 1972:876). This broader definition of narrative thus makes space for other possibilities and types of account to be included, such as visual, auditory or multimedia. Such a broader inclusive definition of narrative acknowledges and allows for other communication systems and languages.

The definition of a narrative as ‘an account of something/any occurrence’ suggests that Narrative is unavoidable: narrative everywhere; it forms a fundamental source for human understanding, communication and social interaction. Barthes (1966:14) comments that ‘the history of narrative begins with the history of (hu)mankind; there does not exist, and has never existed, a people without narratives.’

3.5.1 Our experience of the world

The social sciences now acknowledge that it is not possible for a person to have direct knowledge of the world. We cannot describe our world ‘objectively;’ no one has the privilege to name what reality is (White 1992:78)

Narrative is a form of discourse by which we organize, account for, understand, give meaning, provide structure and maintain coherence regarding the circumstances, events and experiences in our lives (Anderson 1997). We cannot know another person's experience of the world. The best that we can do is interpret people's experiences:

Whatever sense we have of how things stand with someone else's inner life, we gain it through their expressions, not through some magical intrusion into their consciousness. It's all a matter of scratching surfaces.

(Geertz 1986:373)

The interpretation of another's experiences also involves our own lived experiences and imagination. The most we can do is to 'resonate' with those experiences expressed by others. 'Empathy' is therefore an important component in the understanding and interpreting of the experiences of others. This may not sound enough, but as humans, we are rich in lived experience:

We all have very much more of the stuff than we know what to do with, and if we fail to put it into some graspable form, the fault must lie in a lack of means, not of substance.

(Geertz 1986:373)

White (1992:79) focuses our attention on an investigation of the ways we make sense of our world of experience, as well as other's worlds of experience, by raising the following questions:

- Given that what we know of the world we know through our experience of it, what is the process by which we develop an understanding of our experience and give meaning to it?
- How do we make sense of our experience to ourselves, and how do we make sense of our experience to others?
- If we are perpetually involved in an attempt to articulate our lived experience to ourselves and to others, what processes are involved in our interpretation of it?
- What is it that facilitates the expression of our experiences?
- How does the expression of our lived experience affect our lives and relationships?

The processes through which we attribute meaning and interpret our experiences must involve organizing, framing and patterning our experiences in a way that is known to us. We must be able to ‘identify aspects of lived experience within the context of known patterns of experience’ (White 1992:80).

Language gives us the vocabulary to constitute our understanding of human nature and behaviour. Narratives are shared by individuals in creative ways and conversations through the use of language.

3.5.2 Stories as Narrative

According to Geertz (1983) and Bruner (1986) ‘the story’ of the ‘narrative’ provides a frame for organization and patterning our lived experiences.

A ‘story’ is thus ‘a unit of meaning that provides a frame for lived experience. It is through these stories that life’s experience is interpreted. We enter into stories, we are entered into stories by others, and we live our lives through these stories’ (White 1992:80).

‘Time’ is another mechanism we use to structure our experience and by which we obtain a sense of change or transformation in our lives. Stories provide us the ability to ‘gain a sense of the unfolding of the events of our lives through recent history, and it appears that this sense is vital to the perception of a “future” that is in any way different from a “present”’ (White 1992:80).

Time allows stories to have a ‘beginning’ and an ‘end’:

We create the units of experience and meaning from the continuity of life. Every telling is an arbitrary imposition of meaning on the flow of memory, in that we highlight some causes and discount others; that is, every telling is interpretive.

(Bruner 1986:7)

Stories are thus important vehicles for organizing our experience because:

1. We situate our experience in stories. This determines the meaning we give to our experiences
2. We select certain aspects that we wish to express through stories
3. The story determines the shape of our expressions

4. Stories can determine and affect our relationships and our lives

3.5.3 Narrative Structure

Bruner (1986) proposes that stories are composed mainly of two components, namely: a 'landscape of action' and 'a landscape of consciousness.'

Landscape of action refers to:

- (a) events that are linked together in
- (b) a particular sequence
- (c) through past, present and future and
- (d) according to a specific plot.

Whereas 'landscape of action' unfolds through events and plots as they unfold, the 'landscape of consciousness' is created through meaning making and reflection on the events. Landscape of consciousness is characterized by:

- (a) the determination and desires of the persons involved
- (b) the motives and purposes of everyone involved
- (c) identification of their personal relationships and
- (d) beliefs substances of the persons involved.

Landscape of action thus provides us with a perspective of the themes of the events over time whereas the landscape of consciousness represents the interpretations of the person in the story as well as those who enter into the story (the consciousness of all those people). It can be assumed that landscape of action and landscape of consciousness provide us with the details or 'life-style' of people's lives.

3.5.3.1 Determinate nature of stories

The stories people tell are rarely 'made up' or 'out of the blue.' Stories are culturally and historically constructed and negotiated in communities of people and within the context of social structures or institutions:

Stories serve as communal resources that people use in on going relationships. Stories are the sources of our knowledge which form, inform and reform us in the process of being made.

(Gergen 1994:189)

Narratives give us the ability to imagine alternatives and create possibilities and the way we act them out. They are the resource of transformation.

(Anderson 2007:16)

Narratives never represent a single person or a single voice:

A storyteller is always in a relational process of...being and becoming, through language and storytelling.... [T]his makes the nature of self and our subjectivities intersubjective phenomena....[T]his changing web of narratives is a social product of social exchange and practice, dialogue and conversation....[W]e are never more than the coauthors of the identities we construct narratively...We are always as many potential selves as are embedded in the conversations.

(Anderson 2003:221)

Our stories are thus framed by our dominant cultural knowledges. An example can be found in Western dominant knowledges of personhood where individual gender specifications for ways of being are highly promoted.

3.5.3.2 Indeterminacy within Determinacy

When people describe the meanings they give to experiences in their lives in the form of stories, and these meanings have a particular and real effect in their lives, we have a strong argument for determinacy.

However, if contingencies arise in the 'life as lived', stories can only contribute a certain determinacy to life. Stories are full of 'gaps' and inconsistencies and can easily run up against contradictions. It is these inconsistencies, gaps and inconsistencies that provoke people to engage in the activity of unique meanings, or in 'meaning-making' (Bruner 1986:7).

In this regard, we can say that ‘indeterminacy within determinacy’ is the process of storying and re-storying of experience thereby producing ‘a copying that originates:’

The wrenching question, sour and disabused, that Lionel Trilling somewhere quotes an eighteen-century aesthete as asking – “How Comes It is that we start as Originals and end up Copies” – finds...an answer that is surprisingly reassuring: it is copying that originates.

(Geertz 1986:380)

3.5.4 Deconstructing Narrative

One of the first things Narrative deconstruction is interested in doing is to separate the person from the problem. ‘Externalizing the problem’ in this way is based on the premise that the problem is the problem, which opposes the notion that the person is the problem. Externalizing conversations are a way of speaking in which the problem is separated from the person.

3.5.4.1 Externalizing Conversations

Morgan (2000:17) defines externalization as ‘the foundation from which many, though by no means all, narrative conversations are built.’ But adopting an externalizing approach to conversation requires the speaker to shift to another way of using language.

For example, a person coming to a counsellor may speak about his/her problems in the following way:

- “I am unmotivated and just don’t have the energy to do anything”; or
- “I am a depressive kind of person”; or
- “I am just a worrier, I cannot change.”

Language used in this way tends to locate the problem inwardly – i.e. it is an internalizing conversation – and usually has a negative effect on people’s lives.

But a counsellor trained in the Narrative approach, however, listens to these descriptions and then engage people in conversations that situate the problem away from the person – i.e. an

externalizing conversation. Thus an externalizing approach the above internalized statements would be as follows:

- “So, the problem is affecting your energy levels, can you perhaps explain?”
- “I can see that depression has made it hard for you and, when the problem is strong, it makes you think you have no motivation.”
- “The worry tries to stop you from trying new things. How can you change the worry?”

Morgan (2000:18) suggests that we imagine the problem as a ‘thing’ that we can talk to and stand up against. Asking people, particularly children, to draw the problem can also be a helpful way of externalizing a problem in that it becomes something that the eyes can see.

Morgan (2000:21) provides a summary of what can be externalized:

1. Feelings: such as worry, anxiety, guilt, fear and depression are some of the feelings that can be externalized in conversations.
2. Problems between people or interpersonal relationships: for example, blame, criticism, fighting, bickering, hopelessness, mistrust and jealousy.
3. Cultural and social practices: such as parent-blaming, mother-blaming, racism, socio-economic rationalism and other cultural and social practices that assist the problem and increase its influence.
4. Other metaphors: for example ‘the dream’, or ‘the wall’, or ‘the black hole.’
5. More than one problem at a time: this can help the person to prioritize and then work systematically through each problem. For example, depression can have ‘brothers or sisters’ that assist it.

3.5.4.2 Taking the broader context into consideration when externalizing

When externalizing the problem, great care must be taken when choosing the words that represent the problem, otherwise the language chosen could inadvertently reinforce dominant ideas that support the problem.

Similarly, contextual factors are equally important to consider when engaging in externalizing conversations. The social context in which the problem is occurring is therefore also important in externalizing conversations (Morgan 2000:22).

3.5.4.3 Discovering Unique Outcomes and Alternative Stories

Events that stand outside the problem story, or are different from the dominant problem-saturated story, can be seen as unique outcomes. Unique outcomes can be discovered during conversations as well as during the times in between sessions. But how the counsellor listens is crucial: these unique outcomes can often go unnoticed, unless we listen carefully for them. Unique outcomes 'can be doorways to alternative stories' (Morgan 2000:55). By using a Narrative approach to problems, we see that problems do not exist in isolation. Problems can also never be 100% successful: 'there will be other events across time that can be traced and linked with the unique outcome that has been discovered' (Morgan 2000:55). When people reflect on the meanings of events or unique outcomes in their lives, it is likely to cement the unique outcome into the foundation of other events.

In this process people's desires, intentions, preferences, beliefs, characteristics, abilities, plans, commitments and purposes are explored and form what Bruner (1986) calls the 'landscape of identity':

As they talk about certain events they will indicate what they think those events reflect about the character, motives, desires and so on, of various persons in their social networks. They will also reflect upon what these events say about the qualities of particular relationships. So, the landscape of identity or meaning has to do with the interpretations that are made through reflection on those events that are unfolding through landscapes of action.

(White1995:31)

If naming the problem is important in externalizing the problem, it is equally important to explore the effects of the alternative story or counter-plot in people's lives. Finding a name for the alternative story can assist people to further separate from the effects of the problem-saturated story and allow ideas for new stories.

It is important to hold on to or to stay connected ('thicken') to the alternative or new story as it begins to emerge . This can be a challenge for many people. One way of 'thickening' the alternative story, is to find witnesses to stand with the performance of the new story. Morgan (2000:74) suggests that we can stand with people in the following ways:

- Through re-membering conversations
- As members of teams, networks, communities, groups and as co-researchers
- As participants in celebrations and rituals
- In definitional ceremonies and as outsider witnesses or as a reflecting team
- Therapeutic documentation such as certificates, videotapes, audio recordings, notes from a session and photographs.
- Letters

(White 1992:75)

All of the above can contribute to a thicker description of the alternative story.

Narrative metaphor serves as a 'tool' for living or 'doing' Pastoral Practical Theology. It can become a guiding principle for our way of doing and being in relation to ourselves and others as well as communities with whom we come into relationship. White (2000:9) proposes that the meaning people give to their lives 'at once [is] a personal, relational and cultural achievement'. But the meanings or narratives we use to describe our lives can become problematic: our narratives can be negotiated and re-authored and, as a result, alter our relationship with our histories (White 2000:36).

The re-authoring of meaning usually results from looking at the 'absent-but-implicit descriptions' or discourses of our world. A Social Construction approach allows us to attend to individual stories as well as to those stories that we inhabit but which can also inhabit us (Freedman & Combs 1996:31).

3.6 Theoretical Orientation

3.6.1 Theology

Theology is the study of God and God's people. The narrative about how God revealed himself to humanity through the personification of his son is recorded in the Bible. Theology shows many different approaches about God, each containing its own methodologies and contexts (Louw 2008:187-188). Theology as a faith experience is also linked to the narrator's discourse as well as to every believer's own context (Louw 2008:189). A few years ago, the South African theological landscape was characterized by a dialogue between Theology and Postmodern epistemology. What follows is a short discussion.

3.6.1.1 The dialogue between Theology and Postmodern epistemology

Postmodern as a movement has risen in reaction to the modernism of Western civilization. It is mostly described as 'that has not yet discovered how to define itself in terms of what *is*, but only in terms of what it has *'just-now-cease-to-be'* (Toulmin 1982:213). In other words, it's the name given to the space between what was and what is yet to be but because of the multiple applications of the term it is almost impossible to find a coherent definition or account of the postmodern concept. At least four major themes can be discerned in postmodern epistemology namely:

- The rejection of classical metaphysical thought which involves the rejection of the philosophical metanarrative which formed the foundation of Western thought. The implication for Theology has taken the form of a shift from deductive theology to inductive theology. This can be seen in Liberation Theology and the rise of other socio-political and contextual theologies (Adams 1990:248-279).
- The rejection of human autonomy sees the person as part of the larger sociological matrix which includes history, culture, religion, economics, philosophy and politics. The implication for Theology is that it is constructed within a complex socio-cultural matrix (Casalis 1984).
- The third theme is praxis and the concern for the practical ethical aspects of human life. The Feminist, African-American and theologies from marginalized groups place much

emphasis upon praxis. Theology is not only seen as a *thought*, but it is to be *lived*. (Lyotard 1993:82)

- The fourth theme is a strong anti-Enlightenment stance which encourages attempts to recover the insights of traditional cultures. The result is a pluralism of theologies with no perspective assuming a dominant position in the church (Adams 1990:199-209).

Carl Rasche (2004:11) writes the following about the Postmodern movement and its relationship with Theology: ‘During the past several decades, while postmodernism has altered the face of academic culture, particularly in the arts and humanities, it has only recently begun to pund at the door od evangelical thought and faith’. Mohler (1995:84) sees this as a challenge to review modern ideologies and the ‘restatement of Christian truths in terms of being faithful to the biblical revelation and the Christian tradition’. Janse van Rensburg (2000:55), a South African theologian interpreted the challenge as a threat and an opportunity. He calls Postmodernism an ‘onslaught’ and an ‘attack on the basic principles of Christian faith’. He explains further that people’s experience of God, the narratives about God, the static concepts about God are traded from dynamic concepts. In his book *Paradigm shift: An introduction to postmodern thought and its implications for theology*, Janse van Rensburg discusses the implications of postmodern thought for Practical Theology. He believes that the Postmodern epistemologies and Christian ethical norms are incompatible and need more discussion (2000:92-97).

In South Africa, Postmodern theology has fragmented to the point where it is often easier to dialogue with people from other faiths that with those in our own tradition. Theology and politics have become inter webbed to the extent that it is often impossible to tell where Theology begins and politics leave off. History has shown that the church tends to move between polarities rahte than a place of balance. Maybe a time has come that Theology has to

take a fresh look at the central core of the Christian message. This requires a direct return to the source of revelation – the Scriptures – especially to the person of Jesus Christ as we see him in the gospels

Balasuriya (1984:15-16)

3.6.2 Practical Theology

Next, I am going to explain my understanding of the development of Practical Theology, some trends it went through over the years as well as how I define it presently. I will then argue how my research topic falls within Practical Theology.

According to Swinton (2006:67), Practical Theology's work spans across the theological spectrum - from liberalism to conservatism. But '[i]rrespective of the theological and methodological diversity, the common theme that holds Practical Theology together as a discipline is its perspective on, and beginning-point, in human experience and its desire to reflect theologically on that experience.' Practical Theology thus deals with the 'practical' matters of life or as Heitink (1999:7) expresses it: 'practical theology deals with God's activity through the ministry of human beings.'

3.6.2.1 History of Practical Theology

From a historical perspective, Practical Theology is regarded as a fairly new branch of the theological tree. Practical/ Pastoral Theology was only recognized as an academic discipline in 1774 in Vienna. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768 - 1834), the German theologian, is acknowledged as one of the founding fathers of Practical Theology. His work stands out from his predecessors - as well as his contemporary scholars – because he broadened the domain of Practical Theology to a 'religion' that belonged to the community and not only to the church. Schleiermacher focused on individualization. He distinguished between the 'whole' and the 'parts' by arguing that Practical Theology should be concerned with both the church as an 'organic whole' and the people as 'locals.' Under the influence of Schleiermacher's work, Practical Theology became more of an interpretive art and less analytical. The influence of the Enlightenment philosophy of his era can be seen in the use of a new vocabulary and words such as 'impulse', 'progression' and 'development.' Schleiermacher helped redefine Practical Theology into a discipline that aims to interpret the real needs of religious men and women in a changing society. The task of Practical Theology became more directional; it gave ordinary people signposts on their life's journeys. It became a practical science, and this has been the leading thought of Practical Theology ever since.

3.6.2.2 Practical Theology among other sciences

Why it is necessary to review how Practical Theology was formed or reformed? Why do we need to position Practical Theology among other sciences? What are the distinctive tasks and features about faith in the world? These questions troubled theologians like Schleiermacher (1996:ix) and are still with us. But grappling with these questions can help us as postmodern Practical Theologians to position ourselves in our daily encounter with people. I quote emeritus Professor T Tice (2011: ix) who studied Schleiermacher's work for over fifty years:

Finally, as a philosopher and theologian who thinks in educational terms, I am deeply interested in how fields of study form, grow and relate to each other, also in the enabling responsibilities of educational institutions. I believe that such institutions are in crisis today with respect to their mission....On the whole, Schleiermacher's offerings to current discourses about educational values and tasks, both in general terms and in the details, point right at the vital centre of contemporary reality. He is not our contemporary, in that we have new issues to consider within quite different contexts - urban, societal, global, and much more - but he often feels to us like a contemporary, in that many issues he first formed, or was acutely confronting in his day, have not gone away.

Over many years, the range of approaches in Practical Theological research has come to include empirical (Van der Van 1993, 1998); political (Pattison, 1994, Couture & Hunter 1995); ethical (Miles 1999); psychological (Fowler 1981, 1987, 1996); sociological (Gill 1975, 1977); pastoral (Patton 1993, Brueggemann 1993); gender studies (Ackerman & Bons-Storm 1998); philosophical (Foucault 1997, 1980, 1988) and narrative work (White & Epston 1990). Such a wide and rich range of approaches and methodological positions - of which those mentioned above are just a small portion - makes it virtually impossible to capture a clear definition of Practical Theology. Practical Theology seems to find itself located within the uneasy, but critical, tension between the Scripture revealed through the Messiah and history, doctrine, tradition and the continual unpredictable living out of the gospel in the lives of people in this world.

3.6.2.3 Newfound horizons in Practical Theology

By the 1940s and 1950s Practical Theology had developed and blossomed so much that Gerkin (1986:11) wanted to explore these ‘newfound horizons’ for pastoral care and ministry because ‘they seemed to offer exiting new possibilities for making ministry more relevant to human needs.’ But by the 1960s it seemed that Practical Theology no longer enjoyed its position on the cutting edge of ministry. Many factors - such as the heavy influence of psychology in America - contributed to Practical Theology's loss of identity. In *Widening the horizons*, Gerkin (1986) argues that the ‘storied identities’ of the past shaped the direction of the future. Thus, in his search for a fresh vision of what the discipline of pastoral care involved, he had to keep in mind the historical gains of the past:

So the narratives that have shaped our historical identity are continually experienced in a greater or lesser degree of tension with changing needs and emerging ways of thinking about those needs. So, too, pastors and pastoral care theorists must constantly have one ear open to the shifts that take place in the ways persons experience their needs and problems of living and the other open to the currents of change in ways of understanding and interpreting human needs.

(Gerkin 1986:12)

Although considered an “old academic source”, I find Leclercq’s (1961:72) descriptions of monastic culture - where love of learning, prayer and meditation were synonymous with the desire for God – remind us of the importance of taking an historical perspective still applicable today. Leclercq suggests that before theology became a fragmented and specialized discipline, loving God and your neighbor were seen as one practice.

3.6.2.4 Weaving Theology into the fabric of human living

My understanding of Practical Theology is best described through metaphor: in Practical Theology we weave theology into the fabric of human living. What then is Practical Theology? Is it about theory or practice, or both? Rahner (1972:104) suggests that ‘theory indwells the practice.’ It is only through practising Practical Theology that we discover the theories and discourses that shape it and we can begin to understand its workings more deeply. I support

Rahner's statement that theory cannot be put into practice: as Practical Theology is not a thing, it cannot be pinned down exactly. Moreover, since Practical Theology is practical, it is a *verb* and not a *noun*. Thus it is more about '*Practicing Theology*' than 'Practical Theology.'

What does it mean then to *Practice Theology*? Unfortunately, Leclercq's contention – that theology has become a fragmented and specialized discipline – has resulted in the division of our modern (and postmodern) theology into two main areas: systematic theology and pastoral theology. My understanding is that systematic theology involves the theoretical work like thinking, theorizing, philosophizing and interpreting important questions about God, our faith and religion. This kind of theology is usually done by academia or 'knowledgeable experts'. In contrast, Pastoral Theology has become the way in which we apply our faith and beliefs in the world we live in. But it seems almost an afterthought, almost so that theological reflection can regain this connection to life out there. This may sound critical, but it seems that Pastoral Theology has almost become inferior to systematic theology, which always takes theory as the point of departure when practice is studied. It is my opinion that Practical Theologians can attempt to heal this division by overcoming the artificial distinction between thinking (theorizing) and acting (practice). A good starting point would be for Practical Theologians to start listening and noticing the crisis in our education system in South Africa. How can that be accomplished? Heidegger (1993:xi) suggests that our Western philosophical tradition has spent so much time in thinking and inquiring about life and its meaning, that it had forgotten how to 'attend' to life. Heidegger calls this forgetfulness a 'forgetfulness of Being.' I support Heidegger's view: we seem to have forgotten that 'Being' is a *verb* rather than the 'thingness' of a *noun*. Heidegger prefers to speak of our 'being-in-the-world.' Rather than seeing or probing something or someone apart from us for knowledge, that something can only be 'known' by 'being with' rather than 'above.' For Heidegger (1993: xi), the quality of 'to be' is in the *verb* 'to act. Heidegger's words resonate with why I, as researcher and Practical Theologian, believes my research belongs in this field:

...knowledge of the world can never be detached from being-in-the-world, and if we want to know (if we want to understand), we need to engage our whole way of being - our memories, our feelings, our imagination, our thinking, our actions.

3.6.2.5 Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?

I imagine Jesus' surprise and disappointment when his disciples - in the middle of their theological debate about who is most important – asked: "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" I can just imagine Jesus' expression when he called a young boy to his side and said:

Unless you change and become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

(Luke 9:47-48)

What could Jesus have meant by these words? I believe Jesus wanted to show his disciples practically that the quality of its children's lives reflects what is really going on in a society. If we value our children - and that includes their links to teachers, principals and parents - we are building 'greatness' into the future. But research done in 2010 by the National Planning Commission Diagnostic Review in which South African teachers' performance was compared to teachers in our neighbouring country, Botswana, shows a different picture. Although there is not much difference in either the training period or qualification standards of teachers in the two countries, South African teachers are struggling.

I therefore need to ask the following question to us as Practical Theologians: "Why are we part of the conspiracy of silence in the face of the betrayal of generations of children entrusted to these teachers?" (Ramphela: 2012:135).

In this regard, I would like to echo Heshusius and Ballard (1996:6):

For many of us, there are moments in our professional development, as in the whole life, when we know that we no longer believe what we had long accepted as true and correct. Something no longer feels right: It is a feeling that arises in our deeper psyche, in our somatic-emotional life. Often, this feeling is dismissed in the academic-intellectual level and work continues as usual in the familiar ways in which our profession has socialized us. For some, however, the confrontation can become so bothersome, and the need to trust one's inner knowing so strong, that the felt discomfort leads to an intense intellectual analysis.

I believe that because Practical Theology cannot be defined by great theories and systems - even though great thoughts can be admired like a huge cathedral - this research topic falls exactly into its field. Practical Theology allows for the fussy, restless, impatient, hopeful and continual inquiry people undertake in the world with others and with God. Practical Theology allows for a journey ‘still-in-the-making’; it is a process of becoming (Freire 1972:46). That is perhaps why systems and theories feel so uneasy when prophets and poets show up.

In this research, Practical Theology became the vehicle by which I as researcher could investigate ‘What *appears* to be going on’ and ‘What is *actually* going on’ with our teachers.

3.6.2.6 The Pastoral Approach

3.6.2.6.1 Pastoral Theology

Pastoral Theology is the foundation for Pastoral Counselling because, as some prefer to call it, it is ‘contextual theology’ or ‘public theology’. Its main interests are in the areas of resistance, empowerment and liberation (Miller-McLemore 2004:62; Ramsay 2004:157). Pastoral Theology works with people: their lives and daily struggles in their communities. Pastoral Theology can thus be defined as follows:

Pastoral theology, as other theologies such as systemic theology, biblical theology, and others, is one of the branches in the field of theology. Pastoral Theology deals with theories and practices in the life of individual people and the church as a whole for the betterment of theology and its tasks. Pastoral theology is not static but it is dynamic whereby it can be renamed, changed, analysed, criticized, modified, and recreated. Pastoral theology looks for what is best and beneficial for individuals as well as for groups. Pastoral theology looks for the life of the people in the ways that are more practical and real, the life that can be lived for the common good of the society and the whole universe. The goal of pastoral theology is to heal, sustain, guide, comfort, and liberate for the purpose of living the life that is whole in the universe.

(Ramsay 2004:15)

3.6.2.6.2 Pastoral Counselling

The aim of Pastoral counselling is not to establish a ‘correct’ approach, but to find ways to help people from all faith communities to find meaning and hope through dialogue, metaphors, images, stories, actions, thoughts et cetera:

It is an attempt, from a faith perspective, to explore and map a pastoral process by ‘storying’ alternative faith narratives of our relationship with God, instead of speaking on behalf of God or trying to explain God, His acts and [trying to] establish universal truths about God and humanity.

(Louw 2008:3)

Louw suggests that in the counselling process: ‘together we will search for ways to unpack and re-author the “not-understandable”, the “not explainable” and the “unspeakable”.’

Pastoral Counselling differs from psychological counselling in general in the following ways:

1. Pastoral Counselling does not aim to develop concepts such as self-knowledge, emotional acceptance, growth and personal resources. The goal of counselling in general is to make life better for a person by solving problems, coping with crisis, and easing pain, even in the midst of conflicts, sickness and other challenges of life (Mutie & Ndambuki 1999:114). Pastoral Counselling, on the other hand, uses a different approach to counselling. It is a more ‘specialized type of pastoral care offered in response to individuals, couples, or families who are experiencing and able to articulate the pain in their lives and willing to seek pastoral help in order to deal with it’ (Patton 1990:849).

2. Pastoral Counselling is a process where several people - and the Holy Spirit - are involved in the ministering and counselling, whereas psychological counselling usually only involve the counsellor and counsee. The psychological counselling approaches that are mostly client-centred, are family (system) therapy; cognitive psychology; Gestalt; Jungian; Eriksonian; and psychoanalytical therapy/counselling.

3. Because the context of Pastoral Counselling is relationships, it can be done in different contexts: the parish or congregation; in homes; schools; prisons; hospitals; orphanages; and private or public. Relationships according to the Christian ministry of Christ, is the mission of a

Pastoral Counselling. The Pastoral Counsellor is accountable in his/her role, function and identity as a pastor, but also in the Christian faith and tradition as well as the surroundings in the community in which he/she works (Patton 1990:850). In contrast, psychological counselling is done in a fixed context such as an office and faith or faith practices are usually excluded from the counselling process.

4. Pastoral Counselling uses theoretical resources from different disciplines such as psychology, social science and psychotherapy. This means that the Pastoral Counsellor knows how to do 'intake and referral' (Patton 1990:852) in a professional manner. But the most important work of the Pastoral Counsellor is to build a pastoral relationship with the client. The phrase, mostly used in Narrative Therapy - 'personal is also the professional' - directly challenges psychological counselling and academic discourses that separates the personal from the professional (Weingarten 1997: xii).

5. The Pastoral Counselling process creates a way for people to hear and tell the stories of their lives (i.e. narratives). The Pastoral Counsellor tries to hear and tell or retell the story in different /alternative ways, and interprets the new story in the Christian light to bring meaning that is acceptable and healthy to the client (Patton 1990:853). Traditional psychological counselling, on the other hand, provides the client with fixed 'recipes' in which the client has no say or input.

3.6.2.6.3 Holistic Pastoral Counselling

Clinebell (2004) urges Pastoral Counsellors to integrate methods globally and widely in order to widen the visions and horizons of Pastoral Counselling. He calls for a spiritual and ethical revival in our societies, and a return to the beliefs and values that have been forgotten or subjugated in our pluralistic society. This encourages Pastoral Counsellors not to concentrate only on Western culture and use one-sided brain methods - such as left brain methods of healing and growth – but to be more creative in their methods by using integrative models and biblical resources to strengthen their Pastoral Counselling practices to people and communities. Such a search for 'wholeness' is aimed at creating a Holistic Pastoral Counselling model (Clinebell 2004:193).

Clinebell encourages the use of what he calls 'the right brain methods of healing, which involves story-telling (narratives), images, symbols, intuitive, metaphoric and others' (Clinebell

2004:193). He argues that the healing process involves the integration between the right and left brain methods. I found that the ideas and practices embedded in the Narrative approach provided a more integrated model for Pastoral Counselling where ‘Wholeness is a growth journey, not the arrival at a fixed goal’ (Clinebell 1979:29).

3.7 An African view on Theology

Unfortunately, most explanations and definitions of Practical Theology in an African context are based on a western kind understanding. Setiloane (1986; 49), an African theologian, gives us a definition for African Christian Theology:

By African theology we mean a theology which is based on the biblical faith and speaks to the African’s soul...It is expressed in the categories of thought which arise out of the philosophy and worldview of Africans.

African theology is rooted in the life and experiences of the African way: that is, the traditions, customs, culture and norms that are molded into their way of living through the Gospel of Christ.

For Mwenisongole (2010:50), African theology:

...bases its theory in the concept of *utu* in Kiswahili or *ubuntu* in Zulu. It is the concept which in English lacks a good translation, which is defined as ‘humanity’. But in Kiswahili or Zulu language, *utu* is more than just humanity, it is dignity.

Ramphela (2012:76) proposes that the core philosophical orientation of *ubuntu* values ‘being’ in social relationships and relatedness rather than individualism. Magesa (2004:177-180) supports the idea that the African view of a ‘person’ is linked to their communities of relationships and to hospitality. Mwaura (2004:65-69) highlights the way that in African theology, the relationship with the whole cosmos is more important than anything else. The goal is a holistic life where the wholeness of people in a mental, physical, spiritual, social and environmental way happens when a person is at peace (whole) with creation and society. He insists that:

Pastoral care must liberate itself from its dominant middle-class, white, male orientation and become more inclusive in its understanding, concern and methods. It must become transcultural in its perspective, open to learning new ways of caring from and for the poor and powerless, ethnic minorities, women and those in non-western cultures. On a shrinking planet, our circle of consciousness, and caring must become global.

(Mwaura 2004:65)

The Narrative approach, when integrated with Practical Theology, brings valuable applications for African theology if properly translated and applied.

3.7.1 Narrative Theology in the African context

Narrative is the way through which African Theology understands the Bible. By using their own background and context of understanding, African theologians have called this the ‘contextualization or inculturation’ of the African theology (Magesa 2004).

The people of Africa, and the African continent as a whole, have experienced many difficulties through slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, civil and ethnic wars as well as world wars. The continent has been exploited for its rich mineral and human resources, such as gold, diamonds, minerals and people. Decolonization has brought its own problems. Corrupt leaders with no direction, as well as crippling diseases – such as malaria and all the opportunistic diseases in the wake of the HIV/Aids pandemic - have made it difficult for the people of Africa to liberate themselves from political, socio-economic and religious problems.

3.7.1.1 Narrative Theology finds a home in Africa through inculturation

It is the responsibility of Africans, especially African Christians and the Church, to liberate themselves from the historical bondages mentioned above. Liberation theology has helped in this regard through the method of inculturation or the theology of inculturation:

The theologian’s task consists in re-thinking and re-expressing the original Christian message in an African cultural milieu. It is the task of confronting the Christian faith and African culture. In this process there is interpretation of both...There is integration of faith and culture and from it is born a new theological expression that is African and Christian.

(Mugambi 2003:73)

The inculturation concept is very important in African theology in that it does not make a separation between the sacred and the secular; there must be an interaction between the two. Mwenisongole (2010:52) suggests that this ‘... is the way the African mind works as a cyclical mode of life, which is the holistic life.’ Inculturation, coupled with contextualization, is the African way of understanding the Bible. Through resources such as symbols, images and traditions, the Bible is understood in the African context.

Narrative theology in the African context involves practices and experiences which are mostly passed on orally, or as stories, proverbs, mythologies, songs, plays, riddles and cultural symbols. African Narrative theology offers ways into inculturation where the Bible is translated and understood culturally:

One type of inculturation theology is an African narrative theology of inculturation. The starting point is African culture, but specifically African oral literature and the wide range of narrative and oral forms: proverbs, sayings, riddles, stories, myths, plays and songs explained in their historical and cultural context. Anne Nasimiyu-Wasike states: “The oral literature of the African people is their unwritten Bible. This religious wisdom is found in African idioms, wise sayings, legends, myths, stories, proverbs and oral history.”

(Healey & Sybertz 2005:28)

3.8 A South African view

3.8.1 The church as ‘new culture creators’

Although most South Africans tend to agree that for the past two decades, the South African society has found itself in the process of fundamental transformation, there is little agreement today on the outcome of this process or on a structure for the future. The end of the apartheid era did unfortunately not lead to a problem free society. It is almost as if the house was being rid of one evil, only to have seven more take its place (Matthew 12:43-45). The difficulties challenging our educational system today provide a striking example of just how fraught transformation can be. For many, there is no doubt that moving away from apartheid was a good thing; but moving forward without a vision will be disastrous. It is therefore important that we raise the question of the outcome of the process of transformation in our education system as well as our society.

Although the Bible is clear about our responsibility as theologians when it comes to the people and the structure of society, we cannot find a biblical blueprint for structuring society. We are presented instead with some perspectives on human living and certain ethical norms that we need to reflect upon. But this reflection process is both exciting and challenging:

What do we mean when we say that South Africa is radically different since the political changes that have taken, are taking place? We have a new dispensation, which is changing the political landscape of our society. But for me it is that for the first time in my life I am able to participate in helping decide what kind of changes I want to see in my country and to play an active role not just in determining my own destiny but in the historical process of redefining who the people of South Africa are. This is what is exciting. But at the same time this is problematic.

(Goba 1995:73)

For Goba (1995:79), the problem we face is that of redefining ourselves differently from anything that we have known before. We will have to talk about human values and the concept of a ‘moral community;’ and what we mean by a ‘radically inclusive community’ which ‘welcomes the stranger.’ The community which Goba proposes will not be judged on colour, race or gender, but – as in Martin Luther King’s speech - people will be judged by the ‘content of their character.’⁸ According to Goba, such a community will be hospitable to the stranger, even when the stranger ‘comes in the form of our own children’ – and, in the educational context, in the form of our own teachers.

In this regard, Branson (2011:400ff) calls on all South Africans to become ‘culture creators’ in the creation of a new identity. Cochrane, De Gruchy and Peterson (1991) support this idea by saying that the ecumenical church in South Africa had challenged and transformed the previous political order by being ‘new culture creators.’ This is significant for how we deal with diverse views and multicultural challenges in South Africa. By shaping meaningful cultures and social contexts, local communities are ‘[b]ecoming participants in creating the culture they live in’ (Branson 2011:405).

⁸ Martin Luther King delivered his ‘I have a dream’ speech in Washington D.C., on 28 August 1963.

But the process is ongoing: historical and current cultural fragmentation, destruction, pain and suffering present the threat of back sliding:

Even when South Africa change[s] with the possibility of a genuine post-apartheid reconstruction of society...insights in crisis...will remain valid...even if we are to avoid slipping back into reactionary ways of behaving and acting under the temptations to retreat and relaxation which will come with the return and re-emergence of so much new, secular leadership and with the new forces for reconstruction.

(Cochrane, De Gruchy & Peterson 1991: x)

The church is an effective agent through which recreating, restoring and healing can occur. Such a practice (of faith), of creating a 'new culture', however, requires constant evaluation and reflection (Dames: 2009:18).

3.8.2 The church as community of God's Kingdom on earth

3.8.2.1 An African perspective on community

The concept of community is fundamental to the African perspective: community, relationships and interconnections underlie the African mode of seeing and being in the world. But defining 'community' as a concept remains challenging and its meaning is easily misunderstood:

...it is assumed since the sense of community is strong in Africa, it is taken for granted that everyone knows what is meant by it, and that the philosophical and theological possibilities are supposed to be self-evident.

(Obonnaya 1994:1)

Because of its importance to this discussion, we will first explore how John Mbiti and Desmond Tutu, two scholars who have done extensive work on the subject, use the word community. We will then discuss the biblical view of community.

3.8.2.1.1 John Mbiti (1989)

Mbiti (1998:91-98) traces the African definition of community back to the beginning of creation. Despite many differences and cultures, many Africans believe that God is the creator of all things, including human beings. He proposes that every ethnic group in Africa has its own mythical story around the creation. While many groups believe that God is the potter who moulded man out of clay, some groups believe God even used different colours clay to create different colours of people.

Mbiti argues further that in most African theological stories, people were created happy, in peace with others and creation, ignorant, immortal – almost childlike – and had the ability to rise from the dead:

...the African image of the happy life is one in which God is among the people, in His presence, supplying them with food, shelter, peace, immortality, the gift of resurrection and moral code.

(Mbiti 1989:90)

But when man became disobedient, conflict, death and destruction came into man's life.

Another theme in Mbiti's work on community is the place of the individual in the community. He argues that the individual does not exist alone corporately (1989:105). For him, the individual owes his life to the existence of other people, including past and present generations. Because the individual depends on the greater group, the individual is part of the whole. In moving through the different stages in life, the individual is incorporated into society. Even in death, the final stage of living, the individual is ritually incorporated into the community in a deeply religious way:

It is only in terms of other people that the individual becomes conscious of his own being, his own being, his own duties, his privileges and the responsibilities toward himself and toward other people. When he suffers he does not suffer alone but with his kinsmen, his neighbours and his relatives whether dead or living. Even when an individual gets married, he is not alone; neither does his wife belong to him alone; she also belongs to the corporate body of kinsmen the caring community. Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group and whatever happens to the group happens

to the individual. The individual can only say: I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am.

(Mbiti 1989:91-92)

For Mbiti, the African view of humans can thus only be understood within the community.

Martin Luther King Jr echoes this position in the following way:

All life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny... we are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality.

(King 1991:254)

Ogbonnaya (1994:8), supporting Mbiti, adds that apart from the physical connection in communities, the spiritual ties should always be acknowledged: 'the African metaphysical orientation demands that community be more than a physical face-to-face.'

Mbiti (1989:106) emphasises this spiritual connection: 'In this respect, the coming together is made possible by the fact that these individuals have been connected by the SPIRIT or what can be referred to as common human nature.'

3.8.2.1.2 Background of Desmond Tutu (2000)

The role of the South African theologian Desmond Tutu as a 'culture creator' and transformer during the apartheid era and post 1994 has been almost unmatched. Tutu was born in 1931 in Klerksdorp. When he was twelve, he moved with his parents to Sophiatown where his father was a teacher and his mother a cleaner and cook at a school for the blind. After completing school, Tutu decided to follow in his father's career. He took a teacher's diploma at Pretoria Bantu College and also studied arts at the University of South Africa. In 1958, following the introduction of Bantu Education in 1953, Tutu decided to become a minister in the church of Province in South Africa. He received his licence in Theology in 1960 and was ordained into the

priesthood in the same year. Tutu received his Bachelor's as well as Master's degrees in Theology from King's College, London.

In his lifetime, Tutu was no stranger to illness or diseases: as a child living in Sophiatown he was diagnosed and treated for polio and tuberculosis. His life threatening health incidents prepared him to become a 'wounded healer.'

a) The wounded healer

The metaphor of 'the wounded healer' is closely associated with the writings of Henri Nouwen. He explains how he came to use this metaphor:

I found in the Talmud an old legend that may illustrate to us the Messiah as 'wounded healer':
 Rabbi YOSHUA ben LEVI came upon ELIJAH the prophet while he was standing at the entrance of Rabbi SIMERON ben YOHAI's cave...He asked ELIJAH, "When will the Messiah come?" ELIJAH replied,
 "Go, and ask him yourself"
 "Where is he?"
 "Sitting at the gates of the city"
 "How shall I know him?"
 "He is sitting among the poor covered with wounds. The others unbind all their wounds at the same time and then bind them up again. But he unbinds one at a time and binds it up again, saying to himself, "Perhaps I shall be needed: if so I must always be ready so as not to delay for a moment."

(taken from the tractate Sanhedrin in Nouwen 1990:82)

According to this legend, the Messiah sat among the poor, binding his wounds and waiting for the time when he would be needed to bind up other's wounds. He acknowledges that, although he is called to look at his own wounds, at the same time he must be prepared to heal others' wounds, thereby making him the 'wounded' healer. Nouwen uses this metaphor to the person who is able to care for his own wounds and, at the same time, is also able to proclaim liberation for the wounds of other people. What are these wounds? Nouwen (1990:83) suggests that 'words such as "alienation", "separation", "isolation" and "loneliness" have been used as the names of our wounded condition.'

The word 'loneliness' is fitting to describe our human brokenness in modern society in two specific areas of our lives:

b) Personal loneliness

Modern (Western) society with its competition and rivalry promotes some of the most painful human wounds, loneliness and isolation. We are born into this world with an awareness of this pain which over time, creates a 'heightened anxiety' and an 'intense search' for community and unity with others (Nouwen 1990:83). People try to escape loneliness by joining groups, such as therapy groups, courses, and sports or hobby clubs, where they can share experiences and create a feeling of 'community/peace.'

It would seem that loneliness is part of the human condition. No one is exempt from experiencing it, not even Christians:

The Christian way of life does not take away our loneliness; it protects and cherishes it as a precious gift. Sometimes it seems as if we do everything possible to avoid the painful confrontation with our basic human loneliness, and allow ourselves to be trapped by false gods promising immediate satisfaction and quick relief....Thus we keep hoping that one day we will find the man who really understands our experiences, the woman who will bring peace to our restless life, the job where we can fulfil our potentials, the book which will explain everything, and the place where we can feel at home.

(Nouwen 1990:84-85)

Unless we, as Pastoral counsellors, unmask the false expectations and illusions offered by the 'false gods promising immediate satisfaction and quick relief', we are unable to offer any service to people who do not understand their own suffering.

Perhaps there is no lonelier experience than illness. Frank (1995: xii) suggests that seriously ill people are 'wounded not just in body but in voice.' They have lost the 'destination and map' that have guided their lives up to this point (Frank 1995:1). But illness or injuries can also become the source of stories. It is through illness stories that empathy bonds are created between the teller and the listener. These bonds become a 'circle of shared experience' and in this way, the ill can become a healer. The ill person's story is a personal task, but by telling the story, it becomes

social (Frank 1995: xiii) and the ill person can start to construct new maps of his/her relationships to the world.

Levinas (1988:158) regards suffering as becoming open to others. For him, pain ‘isolates itself in consciousness, or absorbs the rest of consciousness’ and, at a certain moment when consciousness is overwhelmed with ‘unjustifiable’ suffering, the sense of suffering splits and becomes ‘suffering in the other.’ This suffering ‘solicits me and calls me’, and elicits ‘a just suffering in me for the unjustifiable suffering of the Other’:

Is it not the evil of suffering – extreme passivity, impotence, abandonment and solitude – also the unassumable and thus the possibility of a half opening, and, more precisely, the possibility that wherever a moan, a cry, a groan or a sigh happen there is the original call for aid, for curative help, for help from the other ego whose alterity, whose exteriority promises salvation?

(Levinas 1988:158)

Such a ‘just suffering’ can take on meaning. It can become ‘attention to the Other’ which Levinas refers to as ‘the very bond of human subjectivity; even to the point of being raised to a supreme ethical principle’ (1988:159). Most people recognize the suffering of others through their own suffering. The journey of suffering then becomes a learning process through which their own suffering is touched by the suffering of others. In such ‘inter-humanness’, it becomes possible to speak of different sufferings in the same story, without comparing them, because suffering is part of a larger whole. ‘Each person is called to that larger whole, as a witness to other suffering’ (Frank 1995:179). Levinas suggests that in that act of witnessing, perhaps some nameless suffering is opened.

Although ‘the suffering person is always the other, reduced and isolated’, Levinas (1988:158) suggests that we see in Jacob’s story (Genesis 32:24-30) elements of illness and suffering. Jacob wrestled with the angel; was wounded in his body (hip); and persevered until he was blessed. Jacob leaves the place with a new name – Israel – a name which was ‘purchased’ with the wound. In Jacob’s story, we find that humans are not alone, even if it means that being with God is through suffering. Jacob discovers this when he calls the place where he wrestled with the

angel, Peniel, which means ‘the face of God.’ Jacob may have thought that God was not there when he went to sleep the previous night, but he discovers that ‘to be is to wrestle with God.’

c) Professional loneliness

Personal loneliness often flows over into professional loneliness. The phrase ‘the personal is the professional’ confirms the notion that personal problems are in fact professional problems and the two cannot be separated (Weingarten 1997: xii). People in professions like ministry and teaching often share a deep loneliness. We see how loneliness is the minister and teacher’s wound, not only because they share in the human condition, but also because they are bound to care and give more attention to humans than other professions (Nouwen 1990:89). The minister/pastor is committed to form a community of faith in a congregation just as the teacher is also committed to form a community of faith in his/her classroom. But in this process painful wounds are frequently subjected to denial and neglect thereby stifling healing (Nouwen 1990:87). But once the pain is acknowledged and understood, denial is no longer necessary and ministers and teachers can become ‘wounded healers.’

3.8.2.1.3 Tutu as a national and international figure

Between 1978 and 1986, Tutu became a controversial figure locally and internationally with his outspoken comments against the injustices of the apartheid system. In 1984 Tutu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. After 1985, Tutu’s call for an economic boycott as a non-violent peaceful strategy for social change in South Africa was taken up by many multi-national companies, and this became a significant factor in forcing the apartheid regime to the negotiating table. After Nelson Mandela became president in South Africa, Tutu was appointed chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).⁹

Tutu retired from the office of Archbishop of Cape Town in 1996. In the years since his retirement, Tutu has tirelessly promoted his dream of South Africa as a ‘rainbow people of God.’ His thinking emerges from his participation in the struggle against apartheid and his

⁹ **The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (TRC), a court-like body, was established by the new South African government in 1995 to help heal the country and bring a reconciliation of its people by uncovering the truth about human rights violations that had occurred during the period of apartheid. Its emphasis was on gathering evidence and uncovering information – from both victims and perpetrators – and not on persecuting individuals for past crimes (global.britannica.com, cited on 1/2/2014).**

understanding of the African concept of community which, over the years, grew into a more theological and universal understanding of the interrelatedness of people's lives.

3.8.2.1.4 Tutu's Rainbow community

For Tutu, being a church means bringing reconciliation and healing to broken people and to a broken creation. He argues that the Kingdom of God is an 'inclusive human community' – a rainbow people of God - which transcends the divisions of race, gender, class, religion and nationality:

In God's family, there are no *outsiders*, and *all* people are INSIDERS. Black and white, rich and poor, gay and straight, Jew and Arab, Palestinian and Israeli, Roman Catholic and Protestant, Serb and Albanian, Hutu and Tutsi, Muslim and Christian, Buddhist and Hindu, Pakistanis and Indians – all belong.

(Tutu 2004:20)

Tutu argues that human beings experience humanness through interdependence: that is, their relationships with others in the community. To this end, he fervently argues for the people of South Africa to embody the following vision:

According to the Bible, a human being can be a human being only because he belongs to a community. A person is a person through other persons, as we say in our African idiom. And so separation of persons because of biological accident is reprehensible and blasphemous. A person is entitled to a stable community life, and the first of these communities is family. A stable family life would be of paramount importance in my South Africa.

(Tutu 1989:99)

Tutu's idea for a rainbow community comprises the dream of God to have all human beings - created in his image - live together as one big family. The members of the family have a common goal: to care with compassion for one another (Tutu 2004:23). But community does not exclude difference: 'we are not expected at all times to be unanimous or to have a consensus on every conceivable subject. What is needed is to respect on another's point of view' (Tutu 2004:22). For Tutu, the rainbow community of God, forms the framework for the future of the people of God:

You are the rainbow people of God. You remember the rainbow in the Bible is a sign of peace. The rainbow is a sign of prosperity. We want peace, prosperity and justice and we can have it when we, all people of God, work together.

(Tutu 1994:7)

According to Tutu, when any part of the network of people in the rainbow community of God is wounded, the life force that sustains the community is weakened. This is why the policy of apartheid was detrimental to everybody: black and white.

3.8.2.1.5 Ubuntu

When we want to give praise to someone we say ‘*Yu, u nobuntu,*’ He or she has Ubuntu: this means they are generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. They share what they have. It also means my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs. People belong to one another. We say a person is a person through other people. It is not ‘I think therefore I am.’ It is rather ‘I am human because I belong.’ I practice, I share. A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are better. For he or she has proper assurance that he or she belongs to a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or threatened as if they were less than human.

(Tutu 1999:34-35)

In his search to find a tool to eliminate apartheid, Tutu found some answers in both the Christian faith and the African spirit of *Ubuntu*.

Koka (2001:8) suggests that the origin of *Ubuntu* can be traced back to the beginning of time and is inherent to the human race. *Ubuntu* did not discriminate between race and colour, ethnicity, status or affluence, but is in the flow of life and within the whole of man’s existence. The concept of *Ubuntu* is found in Zulu as *Ubuntu*; in Tsonga it is called *Vumunhu*; in Sesotho it is called *Botho*; in Venda *Vhuthu*; and in Shona it is called *Unhu* (Koka 2001:1). *Ubuntu* is the element that makes humanity a ‘living soul’ and differentiates humans from the rest of creation. *Ubuntu* contains the essence of God’s attributes, which are manifested as God’s image, divinity and power in human beings (Koka 2001:26).

Tutu (1981:3-4) observes that community gains its vitality through its immersion in *Ubuntu*. Mbiti expresses this view vividly:

Just as God made the first human being, as God's man, so now human beings themselves make the individual who becomes the corporate or social man. It is only in terms of other people that the individual becomes conscious of his own being. His responsibilities are towards himself and towards other people. When he suffers, he does not suffer alone, but with the corporate group. When he rejoices, he rejoices not only alone but also with his kinsmen, his neighbours and relatives whether dead or alive. When he gets married he is not alone neither does his wife belong to him alone...whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say: I am because we are: and since we are: therefor I am.

(Mbiti1969:106)

3.8.3 Biblical views

In Genesis 1:26, God says: 'Let us make man in our own Image, according to our likeness.'

This is the foundation of community from a Biblical perspective. This statement also reveals God's nature as plural (or community), as being more than one person. Throughout the Old and New Testament, the image of God is presented in the form of three persons. The Hebrew word, *Elohim* - the plural for *Eloah* - tells us about the *communal* character of our creator. It is important to know that God is in relationship to himself as a trinity: God is not lonely or in need of company. God is a community who exists in relation to himself. God's aim in creating human beings was that they might share in his own communal life. Since the fall, however, all life has been lived under the shadow of death: the ultimate form of isolation and alienation.

In this regard, it is the church's duty to proclaim the promise of the new earth in which righteousness will reign, and where suffering, injustices and sin will become things of the past. For König (1980:194), Jesus Christ is not only a comfort in suffering, but he is the express manifestation of God's promise against suffering and the promise of a future community with the trinity and our neighbors.

3.8.4 A critical reflection from some South African theologians on the rainbow metaphor

The opening statement of democratically elected President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela on 10 May 1994 drew the attention of the whole world onto South Africa. As many people were expecting a violent transition Biko (2013:232) and Johnson (2009:3) quotes Mandela's words regarding the kind of society he had envisioned:

We enter into a covenant that we shall build the society in which South Africans, black and white, will be able to walk, talk, without fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world. Our single most important challenge is therefore to help establish a social order in which the freedom of the individual will truly mean the freedom of the individual. We must construct that people-centered society of freedom in such a manner that it guarantees the political liberties and the human rights of all our citizens.

The uninterrupted transition and the forging of nationhood by political and religious leaders through the concepts of *Ubuntu* and the Rainbow nation created the perception that South Africa was exceptional. However, in the more than twenty years of democracy some South Africans have developed a more critical attitude – the government has failed to equalize material and social relationships in society. It would seem that although much has improved in the country over the past two decades, everyday life of the Rainbow nation remains a critical issue and a struggle (Hickel 2014). Social constructionism has lead me to consider the ways in which people’s social and interpersonal realities have been constructed and how social realities give meaning to people’s lives (Freedman & Combs 1996:1).

The rainbow as a symbol of the people of South Africa suggests a bridge over our division, racism and sexism – a country of people seeking peace and prosper together. One would have expected a rich and strong reflection on unity in diversity and diversity in unity as a vitally critical need after 1994. Msengana (2006:9) argues that South Africans do not trust each other due to the past discourse of apartheid and colonial rule. There is a form of nostalgia in sameness and in the process we shut out the stranger. Drawing on the well know scripture in 2 Corinthians 5:8 about reconciliation Archbishop Njongenkulu Ndugane (2006) urges us to ‘create a model of racial reconciliation and cultural diversity – God urges us to create an ethic of togetherness in our daily diversity’.

Dr Allan Boesak (dibeela, Lenka-Bula & Vellum 2014:196) argues that we should celebrate diversity as a common ground for each other’s diversity. He quotes the following verses from Ephesians 4:3-6 and 3:6:

There is one body and one Scripture – just as you were called of hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is overall and through all and in all.

Percy Zvomuya (2009:24) suggests that national cohesion is a challenge because of different cultures, races, religions and ethnicities but Arseneault (2010:115) argues that South Africa has seen a resurgence of the Rainbow nation discourse when we hosted the FIFA Soccer World Cup in 2010. During the tournament it seemed that we no longer had the poor or the rich, black or white and mixed races – we all became a united rainbow nation of people. ‘The gathering of people from different nations in South Africa for the World Cup gave the nation the comfortable idealism of a Rainbow-Nation moment’ (Arseneault 2010:115). Despite all of this, South Africa still carries the reputation of being one of the most unequal countries in the world – unemployment, service delivery protests, crime, the wide gap between rich and poor and political instability jeopardise our fragile democracy. The National Church Leader’s Consultation (NCLC) gathered at OR Tambo International Airport on 22-23 October 2014. The gathered members made the following statement:

[c]autioned against romanticizing democracy against the very real backdrop of the vast majority of black South Africans still experiencing the pain, suffering and exclusion of being trapped in poverty and inequality. The much vaunted Rainbow Nation now has shades of grey – reflecting the social evils we are producing

Makgoba (2014:1)

3.8.5 What is the Letsema Circle of Healing Approach?

The Letsema Circle of Healing teaches that the healing process starts with the acknowledgement of our wounds. This model has been used successfully in the Eastern Cape and elsewhere with people who were willing to enter into dialogue within and among themselves and to confront problems that prevent them from flourishing:

The approach starts with the understanding that ‘before you can walk together as a people you need to sit down and talk.’ Such talks start with how we sit together.

(Ramphela 2012:182)

The dialogue platform is a circle and involves that everyone make eye contact. In the African tradition, the circle allows for growth without disruption, and newcomers are included by making the circle bigger. Ramphela (2012:83) explains how:

We deliberately evoke the traditional custom of calling an *Ilima* or *letsema* – a collective action forum – to address problems that are too big for individuals to deal with on their own.... [By] evoking African cultural idioms we are heeding Carl Jung’s injunction to acknowledge that our heritage from previous generations is not only genetic, but includes the important element of cultural heritage that helps us to be a rooted people.

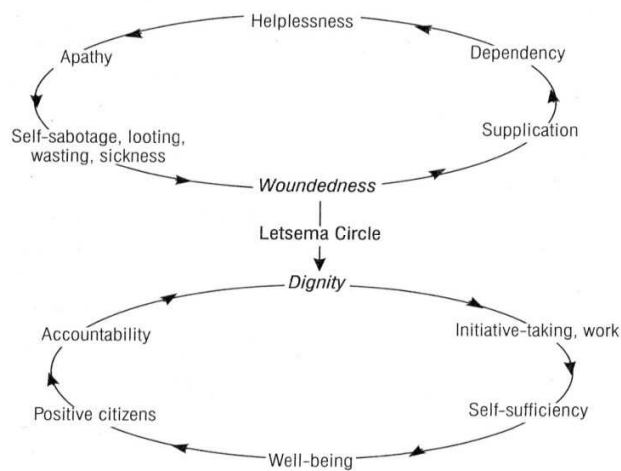
Depending on outsiders to address problems of communities in a top-down manner prevents people from identifying their assets. During conversations with black and white South

Africans, Ramphela concluded that circles are needed across class barriers to address the demons of *inferiority* complexes in Black people and *superiority* complexes in white people:

Divisions based on any social construct sever the connection with fellow citizens, leaving both sides of the divide incomplete....[We need to] confront the inferiority complexes that still prevent black people from believing in themselves and their ability to excel. [Also], Many white people feel alienated from the country of their birth because of guilt, anger and resentment about a past they feel they could not have influences otherwise...They too need healing circles, to transform themselves from subjects and victims of the past, to become active citizens to build the country of our dreams

(Ramphela 2012:8-10)

Figure 2 (below) illustrates the two circles involved in the Letsema Circle. The one circle shows a cycle of woundedness, which is initiated through supplication and which results in self-sabotage, looting, wasting and sickness. The other circle - the one this process aims to create - is called a ‘positive circle.’ This is a circle of dignity, which initiates self-sufficiency and leads to positive citizenship and accountability.



3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to review the literature that supports the study of a Narrative Pastoral approach to improve the quality of teachers' (especially female) lives in South Africa. Different studies have been used to discover the different theories from different fields. These were discussed and analysed to obtain the objectives of the study.

The context of this study is post-apartheid South Africa: the twenty two years which followed the political transition from apartheid to democracy in 1994. Far from the 'rainbow kingdom of God' which Tutu envisaged, South Africa in 2016 is still struggling to emerge as a nation in which there is justice and freedom for all. Perhaps nowhere else is the struggle as evident as within our education system. In this research I have explored African as well as South African theology to identify resources and values regarding community which could suggest a more caring model to address the struggles teachers face as a community. This exploration involved an interdisciplinary investigation into the fields of theology, education and the social sciences. The Narrative approach seemed to provide the best fit for offering Pastoral Counselling to Beaumont Primary School teachers. It is my hope that this study will enrich not only those teachers who participated, but that it will also contribute to the interdisciplinary academic worlds, particularly in the field of Practical Theology.

It is a historical fact that missionaries from Europe came to Africa to promote their European religion, culture, economics and education. Africans became spectators of European ideas and practices in education. It is against this backdrop of cultural, religious and educational domination that I investigated African views and models, or in the spirit of black and white theological consciousness in South Africa, that I undertook the research to find a model to support teachers who struggle. The concepts of *Ubuntu* and the Rainbow nation were also explored from South African perspectives.

In the next chapter, I will focus on the methodology, scientific instruments and the procedures I used to gather the data and analyse it to fulfil the objectives of the research.

CHAPTER 4

I think that both research and teaching
are means for engaging ourselves, the world,
and each other in an attempt to create
deeper mutual understanding throughout society

James P Anglin (1996:93)

4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

I had to use various methods and instruments in order to achieve the aims and objectives of this study. The design and methodology of this research helped me - as a researcher and as a Pastoral Counsellor - to form an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences in the study. This chapter begins with a description of the conceptual framework guiding the research design. This should enable the reader to get a better understanding of how the structure of this thesis links with the ideas derived from the literature study. Then we will turn our attention to the research procedure, sampling methods, data collection and the ethical considerations around the role of the researcher in the research.

Holliday (2001:52) defines a conceptual framework as 'covering the main features of the research design and their presumed relationships.' A conceptual framework thus invites the researcher to position herself in relation to the research, and then justify the reasons for this choice. This is a very significant step in the research process. Since, according to Holliday (2001:52) 'there is no value-free or bias-free research design', describing the conceptual framework requires me to explain my decision to position myself as a qualitative researcher and provides a space in the study for me to make my vested interests explicit. Holliday (2001:38) clarifies why this is necessary:

It implies that every individual experience must be seen as embedded in and bearing the imprint of a conceptual world...a world that is continually changing, shifting its horizons in past, present and future.

4.1 The main features of the research and their relationships - Qualitative Research

Qualitative research helps the researcher to find not only *what* happens but also *how* it happens: *why* it happens in the way that it does. Qualitative research wishes to give a clear and detailed account of the actions of people so that we can gain an understanding of the world in order to bring about social change (Henning 2004:3).

In my attempt to research and understand the *what*, *how* and *why* the teachers at Beaumont Primary School were struggling, I chose qualitative research – which aims to understand ‘depth’ rather than ‘quantity’ - as the most appropriate design. The study was conducted in the theme of inquiry. The ‘variables’ could not be controlled because the setting (Beaumont Primary School) was ‘a variable...a component of the phenomenon that is studied’ (Durheim 2006:45). The theme of inquiry thus set the limits within which I wished to capture the freedom and natural development of the research actions.

The evidence from the data I collected in this research project (see Chapter 5), as well as the literature I studied (see Chapters 2 and 3), all indicated that qualitative research was the most appropriate approach because it ‘... can be used not only for exploratory purposes, but also to formulate rich descriptions and explanations of human phenomenon’ (Durrheim 2006:45). Qualitative Inquiry became the vehicle through which the research questions could be explored

4.1.1 Qualitative Inquiry

Qualitative Inquiry is a research approach that looks at the *qualities*, the *characteristics* and the *properties* to be studied or examined in order to explain and understand the phenomenon better. According to Henning (2004:5), Qualitative Inquiry:

...allows for a different view of the theme that is studied and in which the respondents (referred to as ‘participants’ by most qualitative researchers) have a more open-ended way of giving views and demonstrating their actions.

In this research project, Qualitative Inquiry allowed me not only to use a questionnaire but also engage in the following research actions:

- I *observed* the teachers for several hours in the different settings where they experienced struggles - for instance, in meetings; and in their interaction with children and parents, colleagues (see Chapter 5).
- We looked closely at the *things* they used to create opportunities for making their lives easier, as well as the *conversations* in the staff room.
- I observed the ways in which they *interacted* with other people such as their families, and noted the patterns of their activities
- I listened to their *talk* during meetings and interactions and conversations.
- I conducted different types of *interviews* with individual teachers and with small groups of teachers.

All the data were collected and documented carefully and analysed qualitatively (see Chapter 5).

a Going into the field

A Qualitative Inquiry approach involves going into the field: ‘...into the real world of programs, organisations, neighbourhoods, streets corners – and getting close enough to the people and circumstances there to capture what is happening’ (Patton 2002:48). It requires that the researcher immerse herself in the complexity of their lives and ‘[a] studied commitment to actively enter the worlds of interacting individuals’ (Denzin 1987a:8-9). Such immersion enabled me to observe, describe and understand both the teachers’ external behaviours and their internal states: their worldviews, opinions, values, and attitudes.

b The personal is the professional

Immersing myself as a researcher into the world of the research participants - so as to use all of my senses and capabilities - meant getting ‘personally’ engaged. Such engagement is in sharp contrast to the ‘professional’ image which some researchers propose where the researcher’s ‘detachment’ is presumed to reduce bias. But for me, the ‘personal is the professional’ and choosing to position myself in this way challenges the academic view that tries to separate the

personal from the professional (Weingarten 1997: xii) . I resonated deeply with Ackermann's (2003: xvi) words – that ‘...[p]ersonal and public themes are woven into the fabric of our lives, and together they tell the story’ – as I deeply inserted myself as researcher in this research and discovered that the personal and the professional became inter woven. My decision to adopt the ‘personal is the professional’ stance had a significant impact on the research: some of the teachers/participants were more open and willing to share a richer ‘personal’ landscape of their lives, where otherwise, I would perhaps only have heard a ‘professional’ story.

As a Qualitative methodologist, I questioned the idea that distance and detachment reduced bias. Instead, both in my professional stance as a researcher and in my personal encounters with the research participants, I chose instead to practise empathy, sympathy and openness: otherwise, as an observer, could not fully understand their struggles:

Understanding comes from trying to put oneself in the other person's shoes, from trying to discern how others think, act, and feel...it is useful to remember that many major contributions to understanding of the world have come from scientists' personal experiences.

(Patton 2002:49)

By telling my personal story in this research report, I have illustrated how my theoretical framework and my praxis as a Christ-follower have been influenced by my personal experiences as teacher and Pastoral Counsellor in post-apartheid South Africa. My experience as teacher and business woman in a patriarchal society, as well my experience of illness and possible death, have contributed to the way I view the world and participate in it. The intersection of all these areas is where the personal and the professional interweave.

To extend the weaving metaphor further: the principles of Qualitative Inquiry, when woven together, constitute a comprehensive and coherent strategic overall framework (fabric) of Qualitative Inquiry fabric. These strategies (threads) provided me with direction for decision making and the research action.

4.1.1.1 Naturalistic Inquiry

Guba (1978) describes ‘naturalistic inquiry’ as a ‘discovery-orientated’ approach where the investigator/researcher rarely manipulates the study setting and what the outcome of the research will be.

Qualitative Research Inquiry is naturalistic in the following ways:

- The research takes place in ‘real world settings’: in this research, Beaumont Primary School.
- The researcher also ‘does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest (e.g. a group, event, program, community, relationship, or interaction)’ (Patton 2002:39), in this research, the teachers’ struggles.
- The research phenomenon unfolds naturally in a non-predetermined way and does not occur in a laboratory. In this research, it was during informal conversations with the teachers of Beaumont Primary School, that I first became aware of their ‘struggles,’ which, at that point, they could not even define or describe in detail. Over time, however, as they were able to voice and describe what they experienced, the meanings of these struggles became clearer.
- The researcher observes participants in the real natural world and participants are interviewed in open-ended questions and conditions where they work or live. In this research, I had conversations with teachers in settings such as classrooms, sports fields, staffrooms and homes. Sometimes we could not even finish the conversation or we were constantly interrupted.
- Open-ended conversation-like interviews are preferred methods to gather data in contrast to questionnaires with predictable responses. For example, in this research there was a significant difference between asking: “Do you struggle or not?” and “Tell me about your experience with struggling as a teacher?”

Naturalistic Inquiry’s emphasis is therefore on a dynamic, process orientation that documents actual actions that have an impact on the process over a period of time. The data includes whatever emerges as important in order to understand the participants’ experiences:

What these considerations add up to is that the design of a naturalistic inquiry (whether research, evaluation or policy analysis) *cannot* be given in advance; it must emerge, develop, unfold....The call for an emergent design by naturalists is not simply an effort on their part to get around the ‘hard thinking’ that is supposed to precede an inquiry; the desire to permit events to unfold is not merely a way of rationalizing what is at bottom ‘sloppy inquiry.’ The design specifications of the conventional paradigm form a procrustean bed of such a nature as to make it impossible for the naturalist to lie in it – not only uncomfortable, *but at all*.

(Lincoln & Guba1985:225)

4.1.1.2 Design flexibility

Design flexibility - a high tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity - stems from Qualitative Inquiry’s open-ended nature. Design flexibility also requires a trust in the value of what the inductive analysis of the data will yield. This creates a potential problem for evaluators and researchers who want to establish what the ‘result’ from the inquiry will be. In the end, all they can do is to compare similar Qualitative Inquiries.

The anthropologist Brackette F Williams’ research demonstrates a high degree of design flexibility which I tried to apply in this research. Her work includes research on ritual and symbolism in the construction of national identity in Guyana (1991) as well as the phenomenon of killing in America in 1997. In Patton (2002:45) she describes the necessity of an open-ended approach in her research: the topic is broad and she needed to follow wherever the research took her:

I’m tracking something – killing – that’s moving very rapidly in the culture. Every time I talk to someone, there’s another set of data, another thing to look at. Anything that happens...can be relevant, and that’s the exhausting part of it. You listen to the radio. You watch television. You pass a billboard with an advertisement on it. There’s no such thing as something irrelevant when you’re studying something... [or] the society...I don’t follow every possible lead people give me. But generally, it is a matter in some sense of opportunity sampling, of serendipity, whatever you want to call it. I key into things that turn out to be very important six months later...I don’t have some target number of interviews in mind...It depends on the person and the situation...I’m following where the data take me, where my questions take me.

Williams' experience proved very relevant for my own research project. The phenomenon of 'struggling' that the teachers were experiencing was very broad and could not easily be sufficiently described and explained in a short period of time. As Williams says, 'anything can be relevant... There's no such thing as something irrelevant when you're studying something' (Patton 2002:45). Over the past few years South Africans have been bombarded by media headlines and reports about the problems facing our education system. Although the research context and questions prompted me to take note of everything that happened in the media - everything that has been said about the crisis with education - like Williams, I did not 'follow every possible lead' that I read or heard. Some media reports or conversations with teachers were not even useful. As I did not 'have some target number of interviews in mind', the number of interviews depended on the teachers and on their particular situation. I followed the data and the questions where it took me. But 'design flexibility' did not mean there was no design at all. I used particular sampling techniques to select who I would include as participants in this research project.

4.1.1.3 Sampling techniques

Sampling in research refers to the selection of individuals or settings to be studied. Quantitative sampling involves random sampling whereas Qualitative research uses purposeful or criteria-based sampling: that is, the samples have the characteristics relevant to the research questions. For example, in this study I was interested in discovering ways to improve the quality life experienced by those teachers who were struggling. Had I interviewed a random sample of ten people, it may have rendered only one teacher who struggled. It would also have taken me a lot of time to interview the appropriate number of teachers who struggle.

In contrast to qualitative sampling, qualitative research creates the opportunity for the researcher to start with a specific group with a particular experience: in this case, those teachers at Beaumont Primary School who were struggling.

a Purposeful sampling

Perhaps nowhere is the difference between the quantitative and qualitative research methods more obvious than in the different sampling techniques. Qualitative Inquiry uses Purposeful sampling. This typically focuses on relatively small samples, even single case studies (N=1).

Such cases are *purposefully* selected to perform inquiry and create understanding of a phenomenon *in depth* (Patton 2002:45). In contrast, quantitative research methods depend on larger samples. These are selected randomly and derive their purpose from generalization. Thus the two sampling techniques differ in their logic as well as their approach.

Purposeful sampling emphasises *in-depth* understanding: it offers information-rich cases from which learning can take place in order to fulfil the *purpose* of the research. The purpose of this research study was how the quality of struggling teachers' lives could be improved through Narrative Pastoral practices. It is my belief that we learned much more by focussing in depth on understanding the struggles of the small group of research participants than by gathering standardized information from a large group of teachers. Since the purpose of purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases that will illuminate the questions in the research study (Patton 2002:46), I think we achieved this objective.

b Snowball sampling

Snowball sampling was developed by Coleman (1958:28-36) and Goodman (1961) as a means of studying the structure of social networks. Snowball sampling - also called 'chain sampling' or 'hidden populations' - infer to a hard-to-reach sampling population from which a sample can be drawn. Snowball sampling involves the identification of cases of interest from the participants in the research- from those participants who know people who would be good interview participants. This approach is used for locating *information-rich* cases.

During an informal conversation with the deputy headmistress of Beaumont Primary School, she mentioned that she thought I might want to also talk with other teachers who struggled. I made appointments with the teachers and had *information-rich* conversations with them. They in turn also suggested other teachers who might get involved and so the snowball sampling for this research project developed. (Conversations with these teachers will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5).

4.1.1.4 A dynamic perspective

Patton (2002:54) describes Qualitative inquiry with a striking metaphor when he says that a ‘qualitative study is like a documentary film’ and a quantitative study is more like a photograph. He says: ‘Both offer images. One, however – the photograph – captures and freezes a moment in time, like recording a respondent’s answer to a survey question at a moment in time. The other – the film – offers a fluid sense of development, movement, and change’

The Naturalistic nature assumes the ever-changing world position as natural, expected and an ‘inevitable part of human experience’ (Patton 2002:54). Although this approach is different from the classical experimental approach to research, which wants to control, limit and direct change, it is still empirical (data based) in its perspective.

The qualitative perspective:

...in no way suggests that the researcher lacks the ability to be scientific while collecting the data. On the contrary, it merely specifies that it is crucial for validity – and, consequently, for reliability – to try to picture the empirical social world as it actually exists to those under investigation, rather than as the researcher imagines it to be.

(Filstead 1970:4)

These Qualitative Inquiry strategies provided me an empirical basis for describing the teachers’ perspectives of their struggles. They also made it possible for me to practise empathy, to listen deeply and to immerse myself in the teachers’ worlds. Moustakas (1995:82-83) describes this empathic stance as ‘Being-In’ another’s world:

I do not select, interpret, advise, or direct...Being-In the world of the other is a way of going wide open, entering in as if for the first time, hearing just what is, leaving out my own thoughts, feelings, theories, biases...I enter with the intention of understanding and accepting perceptions and not presenting my own view or reactions...I only want to encourage and support the other person’s expression, what and how it is, how it came to be, and where it is going.

This empathic stance meant that as a researcher, I could use the participants’ stories to paint a picture both of the research participants themselves as well as of the stories behind them. I have

found this a most valuable technique. Data, that at first appeared unrelated and often insignificant, took on a different meaning when included in the painting of the story of the participant's lives. (See the analysis in Chapter 5 for more detail)

4.1.2 Narrative Inquiry

Like Qualitative Inquiry, Narrative Inquiry is used by researchers to inquire into the deeper understanding of particular aspects of life experiences. Schwartz (2007:204) gives the following definition for Narrative Inquiry:

Narrative Inquiry is the interdisciplinary study of the activities involved in generating and analysing stories of life experiences (e.g. life histories, narrative interviews, journals, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, biographies) and reporting that kind of research.

While charting the history of Narrative Inquiry within various disciplines I encountered scholars such as Polkinghane (1988), Bruner (1986), Geertz (1983) and Sarbin (1986) and their contribution in developing the use of narrative in research. I discovered that Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) development of Narrative Inquiry resonated most closely with my own approach in that it is more intimate and personal.

Narrative Inquiry is 'a way of understanding experience' (Clandinin & Connelly 2000:55), thereby articulating exactly what I was trying to do in this research project. They refer to the purpose of Narrative Inquiry as providing a 'set of understandings' by analysing stories. The collaboration between me (researcher) and the teachers (research participants), over a period of time, in a specific place and in social interaction, have been a learning experience for everyone involved in the study. The teachers' responses to the narratives I have developed from the interviews and conversations became a key to understanding, researching and changing perspectives.

4.1.2.1 Narrative Inquiry as a three-dimensional space

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), researching and searching takes place in a three-dimensional space in which the inquirer moves backward and forward in time, also inward and outward. The Narrative Inquirer thus moves into the feelings about events and outward to locate these in social contexts in which they happen. I inhabited this three-dimensional space in the

study: I involved my own feelings, experiences and responses as teacher, but also tried to distance myself and look at the teachers who participated in the research. This stance means that the research of a Narrative Inquirer is always *work in progress* and not ‘above’ or ‘objective.’ As Narrative Inquirer, I entered the research project with my own story, remembering the story of myself as teacher and researcher. In the process my story is also reflected with the stories of the research participants – in ‘the midst of’ – as we all became part of the research story.

4.1.2.2 Researcher as reporter

In and through listening, writing and re-writing the experiences of other people as a researcher, I also write about myself in the process: a self that has been influenced and altered by the research experience. By using language “as a performative means to coordinate activities” (Steier 1991:5), the way in which I write this research report inevitably also reflects my thoughts, meanings, information, knowledge and interpretation as researcher. The Ashanti people have a saying that describes this well:

This is the story which I have related, if it be sweet or if it be not sweet, take some elsewhere and let some come back to me

(Mandela 2002:7)

I realize that my written text also includes all ‘text’ or ‘data’ that remains unselected or unheard; moreover, that what I have written is constantly open to questioning and revision. I have attempted to be open to explore possibilities that might open up in the research and be open to what might come out. As researcher, I am therefore mutually responsible for the creation of meaning through language and responding differently to the research participants’ responses.

I understand that my story as a researcher wove itself closely with the stories of the research participants - the teacher community at Beaumont Primary School. Following both Graham’s (1998:8) call for Practical theologians to pose ‘practical wisdom that will combat the binary divisions of public of inclusion and exclusion, self and Other...’ and Weingarten’s (1997: xii) warning about separating the personal from the professional, I discovered that this practical wisdom encouraged me to embrace intimacy and connection.

4.1.2.3 Narrative Inquiry research design considerations

There are some generally agreed upon considerations when designing Narrative Inquiries. I found Clandinin's (et.al 2006) outline of the most appropriate design considerations very useful, bearing in mind the four themes (See 1.3.1.1) that guided me as Narrative Inquirer in this research.

a Justification

As Narrative Inquirer, it was important for me to justify the research in the following three ways:

i Personal Justification

I justified the inquiry in the context of my own personal life experience, tensions and struggles as a female teacher and Pastoral Counsellor. Usually, personal narratives are only 'thinly' described in publications, but Narrative Inquiry theses and dissertations include more detailed personal justification for the inquiry, as is the case with this research study.

ii Practical Justification

The practical implications of Narrative Inquiry consider the possibility of 'change' or 'transformation'. In this research, researching the teachers' struggles - who they are in relation to colleagues, learners, parents, their own families and to their medical conditions - was justified practically by considering the conditions and situations under which they engaged in reflecting on their own practices.

iii Social Justification

In their research undertakings Narrative Inquirers are concerned by the social implications of their research. They ask: *So what?* and *Who cares?* Social justification can thus be viewed in two ways: theoretical and social. Theoretical justification involves 'new' methodologies and disciplinary epistemologies, where social justification involves social action. For example, by making visible the struggles our teachers face and the impact it having on the education system in South Africa -*So what?* - we are faced with the question: *Who cares?* And the ethical demand: we have to care.

b Naming the phenomenon

i Thinking narratively about the phenomenon throughout the inquiry

My commitment to thinking narratively about the phenomenon throughout the inquiry was key to this research journey. This entailed thinking within three components of Narrative Inquiry namely: temporality, socially and location. For example thinking narratively about the struggles teachers' experience, I attended to social, cultural and institutional narratives in which the particular teacher's life unfolded. Thinking in this way, I attended to the particularities of the places in which each teacher worked, the particular interactions and relationships in which each teacher was involved and how each teacher responded. This process highlighted the shifting, changing, personal and social nature of the phenomenon (their struggles) under study. Thinking narratively also challenged the dominant story of the phenomenon as fixed and unchanging.

ii Framing the research question

Narrative Inquiry frames the research question using tentative, exploratory language – “I wonder” - rather than framing questions in a way that anticipates a precise or definitive answer. The research questions used in this research study (see 1.1.8) embody ‘a sense of a search, a research, a searching again, a sense of continual reformation’ (Clandinin & Connelly 2000:124) about the teachers' struggles and how Pastoral Counselling could help them to acquire a better quality of life.

c Living the Narrative Inquiry

Living the Narrative Inquiry involves the entering into the lives of participants on the part of the inquirer. This introduces the concept of time. Narrative Inquiry therefore does not consist of a precise ‘beginning’ or ‘end’, but rather begins in the midst of on- going experience.

In this research process, the inquirer (me) and the research participants (the teachers), continued to live our stories, even as they were told over time. Inquiries into the stories of the experiences that made up Narrative Inquirers' and participants' lives - both individually and socially – were conducted in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling (Clandinin & Connelly 2000:124). Narrative Inquiry is thus a recursive process: a continual process of being in the field, gathering field texts, drafting research texts and composing research texts all the time.

i From field to field texts

The 'field' can be anything - from on-going conversations between inquirer and participants in which each tell their stories to the places they work and live. As a Narrative Inquirer, being in the field meant settling into a temporary unfolding of the research participants' lives. Sarris (1993:1) warns that stories are not necessarily told in 'chronological sequence' nor do people tell their stories in a linear fashion in which they 'move from point A to point B' (hook 1997: xx). Such narrative qualities of the lived and told stories that do emerge arise precisely from the temporal nature of the participants' told and lived stories.

I used multiple ways to gather, compose and create data or field texts from the participants' experiences. The field texts included transcripts of conversations, field notes, family stories and other texts that were composed by myself and the research participants to represent aspects of their living experiences:

Whether narrative inquirers are listening to participants' told stories or living alongside participants as their lives unfold in particular contexts, interpretation of stories lived and told is an essential, on-going aspect. Being attentive to the relational aspects of working with participants within the conceptual frame of the commonplaces requires that narrative inquirers and participants acknowledge that they are always interpreting their pasts from their present vantage points.

(Coles 1989:19)

I actively attended and listened to the research participants' stories, knowing that they 'gave shape to what... [they] hear, mak[ing] over... [the participants'] stories into something of... [their] own' (Coles 1989:19).

ii From field texts to interim research texts

Narrative Inquirers try to resist the temptation to leave the research field and disassemble the data by analysing and interpreting at a distance from the participants. Although '[d]issection is an essential part of scientific method' (Bateson 1989:10), the composition of field notes into research text is marked by uncertainty and tension: the Narrative Inquirer's interpretations are always underway precisely because the inquiry is lived out with the participants in the field.

Many of the conversations I had with the research participants - for example, on the sports field - had an open-ending, frequently because we were interrupted. As there was no neat ending to these conversations, I had to compose interim research texts: 'partial texts that are not closed to allowing participants and researchers to further co-compose storied interpretations open to negotiation of a multiplicity of possible meanings' (Bateson 1989:20). One advantage of composing these interim research texts was that it forced me to continue thinking narratively: I had to position field texts within the places they took place. This then gave me the opportunity to bring back interim research texts to negotiate with the research participants and then to investigate unfolding threads of experiences. This process became central to the research. Three examples of the threads that unfolded in this study are illness, menopause and spirituality. Interim research texts created the opportunity for me to go back for more intensive conversations with the teachers in which I gathered more complex accounts of their experiences.

iii From interim field texts to research texts

Mishler, in Clandinin and Murphy (2007:632-650) notes that Narrative Inquirers collect an enormous quantity of field texts, of which only a small portion of the data are written up in research texts. Mishler proposes that Narrative Inquirers explain and make visible the texts of the research process by which they choose to reveal particular stories. Gergen (2003:272), however, cautions that 'an analytical method of deconstructing stories into coded piles' could 'undermine the aims of the research' and thinking narratively about experiences.

My on-going conversations with the research participants allowed me to create research texts that deeply represented both my own and the participants' experiences and relationship into the future. The use of metaphors unmasked the complex and multi-layered nature of our experiences. For example, when describing their relationship, the daughter of one of the research participants

compared her mother to a flowing river. In another instance, one of the teachers explained how her life was influenced by the dominant culture of patriarchal narratives in her work and private life. These stories were told without harming the participants' lives or relationships.

d Positioning

i In relation to other research

Clandinin (2007:39-40) encourages Narrative Inquirers to learn and understand from different epistemological assumptions such as those underlying post positivism and post structuralism. Clandinin (2007:39) argues that experience 'is understood as the continuous interaction of human thought with our personal, social, and material environment' which in turn shapes the kinds of questions asked and the methods employed across methodologies. The inquiry is lived through, and shared with, a broader audience by understanding the experiences. Knowledge developed from an inquiry, as well as different views of reality and knowledges between researcher and participants, thus shapes the borders of the inquiry.

The relational aspect of Narrative Inquiry prompted me to honour the teachers' lives and the stories they told of who they are and who they are becoming. This relational view informed my commitment to negotiate a research text that would respectfully represent the participants' lived and told stories. Issues of confidentiality took on an added importance as the complexities of the lives involved in the research text were made visible. This commitment to the relational aspect of Narrative Inquiry meant that the process also involved a particular kind of collaboration.

4.1.3 Collaborative Inquiry

In Collaborative Inquiry, the essential question is: How can researchers create the kinds of conversations and relationships with others that allow all the participants to access their knowledge, create knowledge, and develop understanding where none or little seemed to exist before?

Rather than a single methodology or model, Collaborative Inquiry represents a way of conceptualizing and approaching the research endeavour'

(Gehart et al 2007:367)

Collaborative Inquiry thus gave me the opportunity to focus on the relationship between the participants and myself as researcher and the assumed knowledge that was constructed between us.

4.1.3.1 Co-constructing knowledge or data

Collaborative Inquiry practices contrast with other research practices in that data is not seen as something the researcher ‘gets’ from the research participants because such a view fails to ‘capture the ways in which the researcher’s contribution is integral to the participant’s experience’ (Paré and Larner 2004:213). In this research, the Collaborative Inquiry process consisted of repeated reflection and action between me as researcher and the teachers who participated in the research process as we strove together to answer the question of their struggling. As such, our research was not merely an act of finding out but at all times was a process of creating – co-labouring - together. Strong (2004:214) suggests that although research questions can invite joint meaning-making between researcher and participants - a very subjective process - he welcomes such ‘subjectivity’ because the process is not about ‘getting things right’ from the ‘outside.’

4.1.3.2 Generative process

It is when research participants are no longer viewed as ‘containers for information’ but as ‘interactive participants’ that the research becomes a generative process (Gehart et al 2007:373). The researcher thus does not get responses from participants that are already formed, but participates in the creation – the generation - of these responses. Anderson (1997:217) notes that the ‘not yet said’ are meanings that are articulated during conversations and emerge in dialogue between people. The ‘not yet said’ is thus not something that is stored ready-made inside a person, but is generated through conversation.

As questions are performative, I was encouraged to ask myself how my participation as a researcher in conversations of inquiry shaped what I was told. I realized that the questions I asked could evoke, construct and invite positions and experiences from which generative dialogues could emerge. For example, I asked some of the research participants to describe their experiences of working with male and female teachers who struggle (both were part of the selection criteria). Although my intent as a researcher was to gather information, the conversations nevertheless generated memories and triggered emotions which, in turn,

strengthened ideas. The research topic itself inspired new perspectives, insights and conversations for many participants. Because they had not thought about other struggling teachers (or colleagues), prior to our conversation they had never considered practising compassion.

4.1.3.3 Conversational partnership

Because the research was performed with participants, it became a joint action where the boundaries between researcher (me) and research participants (teachers) were blurred: we became conversational partners. Bray et al (2000) advises researchers to consider three main factors when identifying and inviting participants to be active architects of their lived experiences:

1. Researchers have to be sensitive to the organizational politics/or the academic discourses where the research is performed, which may affect the participants' choices, involvement and interpretations. For example, in an attempt to help the teachers at Beaumont Primary School with their values implementation program, I had to recruit the deputy headmistress, the head of the values implementation committee and other relevant teachers. They subsequently used my research process to test their ideas for developing the values program. In this way they also became research participants in the main research question – the teachers' struggle - and were instrumental in orchestrating and organizing the politics in the school organization context. All these teachers attempted to create a space for me to investigate the teachers' struggle, thus sanctioning my research as legitimate and becoming conversational partners in the study.
2. Researchers must consider the broader disciplinary and organizational discourses regarding what constitutes research and how the research will be perceived, including by the participants, the professional community and the social community. For example, in an attempt to solicit descriptions from more than one perspective, I included family members in this study to the broader discussions:

Including multiple voices is not to establish greater accuracy but rather to create space for the many realities and voices in a given situation. This approach honors the *polyphony* of voices, which are typically preserved and presented in the final report rather than analysed or otherwise 'smoothed over' by the researcher.

(Gehart et al 2007:374)

3. Researchers must consider seemingly mundane matters from the participants' perspective. Some of these issues can include time requirements and creating an informal and inviting setting for participants to reduce the stereotypical sterile 'research' context. Time, for example is a commodity that teachers do not have much of. During the research process, it was sometimes frustrating for me when teachers cancelled a meeting or we were interrupted during a conversation.

4.1.4 Mutual Inquiry: joint construction of questions

A Collaborative approach always involves participants defining what questions need to be asked and identifying processes that might be useful in answering those questions.

(Gehart et al 2007:375)

Because the participants and researcher inquire together, the participants share in developing and exploring the research question. This is called Mutual Inquiry (Anderson 1997). The teachers I talked with in this research could not always express what they were experiencing - some called it stress, others work overload - but most called their experiences 'struggles.' The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines 'struggle' as *'trying very hard to do, achieve, or deal with something that is difficult.'*

In this research project, the idea of 'struggling teachers' as a research question, came from the teachers themselves, rather than from me (as so-called professional).

4.1.4.1 'Non expert' stance of the researcher

In Collaborative research, the researcher's position or intention is to learn from the participants. The learner position asks questions such as: 'What should be studied?' and 'How can we make sense of what is important?' Anderson and Goolishian (1992) first developed this form of curiosity - the 'not-knowing' stance for therapy - but transferred it into the research arena. Adopting a position of curiosity and not-knowing:

...requires that the researcher acknowledge the limitations of any position or opinion, professional and personal, knowing that any single view of reality is one of many and has been

constructed within relationships and institutions with(in) which one, historically and currently, interacts.

(Gehart et al 2007:375)

My curiosity as a researcher was fueled by my desire to understand how the teachers experienced the phenomenon of struggling as well as how they experienced the research process. By giving the teachers a voice in the research through their transcribed conversations I was able to provide a counterbalance to my descriptions of the research in the written thesis (See Chapter 5).

4.1.4.2 Researcher as ‘insider’

The researchers’ ‘insider’ perspective can be a source for understanding the phenomenon that is studied. This differs from traditional research in that the researcher does not strive toward objectivity or hide her views:

...this collaborative and inclusive approach to research has enhanced professional-professional and client-professional relationships. Most significant and with far-reaching implications, this collaborative approach brings the practitioners to the foreground of research and challenges the convention of research performed by ‘outsiders’ in the academy. Evaluation and research performed by ‘insiders’ [practitioners] becomes a learning opportunity for practitioners and useful in their future practice.

(Anderson 1997:102)

As researcher, my insider perspective as teacher, was a resource of understanding the phenomenon of the struggling teachers. By making ‘public’ and sharing the kind of information about myself that is usually not included in research reports - such as my age, gender, ethnicity, professional background, views, opinions and experience of illness – I have made both sides of the research relationship visible to the reader. In a section in her thesis: ‘What Am I Creating?’ Bava (2001) also wove personal stories of herself into the ‘research narratives’. Her approach resonates with my experience as researcher in this research journey:

As I developed my dissertation web, I was asked the question ‘So what are you doing? What is your thesis?’ Each of these questions is embedded with certain epistemological

assumptions. But, rather than deconstruct them, I have chosen to create a story of what I think I am doing...located within the academic community...and postmodernism.

In my effort, to honour the tradition of the language game and to further the generative discourses (Gergen 1999) of doctoral dissertation, I write and talk in ways 'that simultaneously challenge existing traditions of understanding, and offer new possibilities for action' (Gergen 1999:49). I do so by using hypertext, that is, chunks of text which are linked to each other in a narrative structuring that is at times circular and at times linear. I assume that you, the reader, bring to this text your context and meaning frames as you participate in the performance.

(Bava 2001)

Collaborative Inquiry thus takes the stance of respect, curiosity and social meaning making. The intentions and assumptions that informed this research process constituted the collaborative nature of the inquiries, and created as many possibilities as there were participants.

4.2 Data collection methods

Qualitative data tell a story. The data takes the reader into the time and place of the research observation so that the reader can know what it was like to have been there (Patton 2002: 47). Qualitative data can consist of observations, field notes, quotations and excerpts from documents such as journals. The personal nature of qualitative fieldwork and data collection means that the researcher has direct and personal contact with the people under study and in their environments through physical proximity. Over a period of time the researcher develops closeness with the participants in a social sense by shared experiences, empathy and confidentiality. I resonated with the sense that:

...doing this project the way I'm doing it allows me to touch things that otherwise I would never touch.

(Williams in Patton 2002:48)

The qualitative research approach required me to go into the field (the school setting of Beaumont Primary school), to get close enough to the teachers who struggle and to their circumstances in order to capture what was happening. Immersing myself in the complexities of their lived experiences involved what Denzin (1978a) calls 'the studied commitment to actively

enter the worlds of interacting individuals', and committing myself to the understanding that 'comes from trying to put oneself in the other person's shoes, from trying to discern how others think, act and feel' (Patton 2002:49).

Since qualitative research involves fieldwork that puts the researcher in close contact with the research participants, I had to use data collection methods that could capture the teachers' experiences. Of the many methods that I could have used, I chose the interview.

4.2.1 Interviewing

When using...qualitative interviewing...researchers talk to those who have knowledge of or experience with the problem of interest. Through such interviews, researchers explore in detail the experiences, motives, and opinions of others and learn to see the world from perspectives other than their own.

(Rubin & Rubin 1995:3)

The interview is often described as a form of conversation: a 'conversation with a purpose' (Webb & Webb 1932:130). But although the interview might look like a conversation, it might not feel like one because the researcher and the participant have to work very hard. This is because the 'knowledge' that emerges from an interview is not something already exists, but is created and negotiated by the interviewer (researcher) and the interviewees (research participants) during the interview journey. The journey or travel metaphor describes the kind of hard work the interview involves:

The interviewee-traveller, in line with the original Latin meaning of conversation as 'wandering together with', walks along with the local inhabitants, asking questions and encouraging them to tell their own stories of their lived world....The journey may not only lead to new knowledge; the traveller may change as well. The journey might instigate a process of reflection that leads the traveller to new ways of self-understanding.

(Kvale & Brinkman 2009:48)

Holstein and Gubrium (2011:150), who support the view that knowledge is constructed during the interview through collaboration between researcher and interviewee, call such a research

encounter an ‘active interview.’ The researcher is not only a passive vessel through which knowledge is transmitted but:

... [n]o matter how hard interviewers try to restrain their presence in the in the interview exchange and no matter how forthright interviewees are in offering their views, [interviews] are interactional accomplishments rather than neutral communicative grounds.

(Holstein & Gubrium 2011:150)

The main aim of using the interview as a data collection method in this research project was to foreground what the research participants think and feel. What they had to say about their struggles in the interviews, gave me their *subjective* reality in the form of a discussion. (Chapter 5 will give a verbatim account of what they said). The research text then reflected in words these integrated understandings and subjectivity. As the researcher I ‘describe[d], truthfully, delimited segments of real-life person’s lives’, in this case, the teachers of Beaumont Primary School (Miller & Glassner 1997:103 referring to Denzin 1993).

Silverman (1993:78) raises the point that not only should the content of the interview be used but the way in which the interview develops should also be reflected in the eventual data. The implications are that as researcher interviewer, I had to engage with the interview data at a much deeper level. I had to look not only for *what* the research participants said about their feelings and experiences, but also to look for signs that told me about *how* they communicated their thoughts. Moreover, I had to try to find ways to see whether the *process* of the interview did not perhaps have even more than ‘content’. This meant that I had to take into consideration the *language* and *actions* in which the teachers engaged and then to include this into the content data as well (Henning 2000:52). An example of this process can be found in one of the interviews I had with a middle-aged teacher. The way she saw herself and the meaning she made of her life as menopausal teacher, wife and mother was discursively constructed as the interview progressed (See Chapter 5).

4.2.1.1 Narrative interviewing or the White/Epston interview

During my Master's studies I was introduced to the Narrative approach and learned to appreciate the significance of narrative structures in the derivation of meaning. In my consultations with children and their families over the years, I was able to gain practical understanding of the extent to which meaning making is both a personal and a social process. Through narrative conversations the story is privileged as the interpretive resource. By exploring narrative interviewing as a form of conversation, I realized that it was possible for people to separate their identities from the problem-saturated accounts of who they are. This then provided a basis for them to join with others in a richer description or alternative view of their lives, relationships and identities.

In my experience of narrative interviewing over the years I was fascinated by how these conversations opened doors for people to take actions that might bring what was happening to them more in line with how they wanted things to be in their relationships with others. It was therefore not difficult to decide which method I was going to use with the research participants of this research.

Although the narrative interview may look and feel 'informal', there is a 'structure' to the development of the interview. Michael White from Australia, and David Epston from New Zealand pioneered what is called the White/Epston interview:

This approach takes the traditional depth psychology concept of levels of knowledge, going ever deeper toward the problem, turns it ninety degrees and stands it on its end. Suddenly the levels of depth are simply alternative stories. No one story is deeper or more authentic. Instead there is a dominant story and neglected, alternative stories.

(White & Epston 1990)

The White/Epston technique follows three steps. It also involves an unusual use of language and questions. I acknowledge that initially I found it difficult to adapt to the different way they used language – at times it seemed so unfamiliar and odd – but once I understood that the questions

were to generate experience rather than elicit information, and language was able to open up new understandings and possibilities then it made more sense.

The three steps of the White/Epston interview are:

- 1) **Externalizing the problem:** The interviewer needs to establish a context where the person sees themselves as separate from the problem. Because people usually give an account of the ‘problem-saturated’ story, the problem becomes intertwined in their lives and therefore their lives become the problem. By asking questions in a way that ‘externalizes’ the problem, the person can realize that ‘the problem is the problem.’ A good example of externalizing the problem came in a conversation I had with one of the teachers in this research project about her depression. She would call herself depressed: “I am depressed”; ‘depressed’ almost sounded like a name she gave herself. I personified the problem of depression by commenting that I thought her name was “Esmane” and not depression. Esmane laughed at the absurdity of this suggestion. This opened up the way for me to ask her whether it was possible to call depression by another name. Esmane said that since depression looked like a dark cloud, we could call it “a dark cloud.” When we had separated the entity (depression) from her identity, I was able to ask Esmane: “How does the dark cloud feature in your life?” and “How does this so-called dark cloud interfere with your studies?”
- 2) **Mapping the influence of the problem in the person’s life and relationships:** In my experience, although many adults initially experience the narrative use of language odd or different, this was not the case with children. I usually just asked them to play along with my funny use of language and, when they experienced relief from placing the problem outside themselves, they were eager to tell the story of how the problem wrecked their lives. Sometimes it took adults longer to see the benefits of externalising the problem through language. But once, people have accepted the externalizing of the problem and had the courage to describe its influence in their lives, they were often eager to tell the story of resistance, which would lead into the next step.

- 3) **Mapping the influence of the person on the life of the problem:** In this step I would invite people to see themselves as the authors or co-authors of their own stories. An example of a question I would ask is: “How did you know that you might be able to beat [the problem’s name] that day?” or “How did you know to have confidence in your daughter to go to school without crying?” Such questions bring out the ‘unique outcomes’ which contradict the dominant problem story. Mapping the influence of the person on the life of the problem can also entail involving other people (even dead people) in the newly developing story. This involvement can anchor the story, for example “What would your father have said if he heard about the new developments in your life?” Documenting the new story in the form of journaling or letter writing is another very powerful therapeutic tool for mapping the person’s influence on the life of the problem. Epston takes this step even further when he asks the person if he could use the person as a consultant in his next case. This technique - called ‘consulting your consultants’ - helps people to feel that they are contributing in more ways than in just their own lives.

4.2.1.2 Motivation for using narrative interview techniques

I used the techniques of Michael White and David Epston’s narrative interview in my conversations with the teachers in this research project for the following reasons:

a Teachers are natural story tellers

Teachers fall naturally into story-telling and frequently use stories as a means of teaching. But I have found in many conversations with teachers outside of the teaching context that if teachers’ stories can also spiral down into negative and depressing anecdotes. This is especially the case when they try to describe their work and private lives: they tend to become hopeless, helpless and negative. Thus, despite them choosing to tell and read optimistic stories to the children they teach, the teachers generally told ‘problem-saturated’ stories about themselves. In contrast, the narrative interview techniques I used in conversations in this research project, helped them to bring alternative and hopeful stories to the surface (See Chapter 5).

b Teachers tend to be over-responsible and loyal

Although they want to blame others, or the bigger forces at work, teachers end up blaming themselves. In a conversation with a teacher who was dying of cancer, I saw how she was eager to find fault within herself, instead of blaming the school or even her husband for his extramarital affair. The externalizing technique runs against this tendency and, after a while, she was able to find the 'enemy' outside of herself. But in the end, she succumbed to societal pressures and loyalty to what her husband wanted, and she died.

c Teachers do not think of themselves as having courage

Teachers rely so much on their own patience, understanding and compassion in their work with children that they think of themselves as having no courage. Cultural myths can promote a sense of weakness and incompetence, for instance: "Those who can, do; and those who can't teach" and "Teachers are great in small people's eyes but small in great people's lives." The narrative interview method I used in this research project helped to bring out teacher courage more than a traditional consultation would have done. The experience of hearing their own words and responding to questions gave them the chance to respond in their own way and in their own words.

d Teachers are emotional and schools are emotional systems

Schools are emotional systems: they cannot be changed through a set of intellectual observations or recommendations. Change can only be effected through changing teachers' stories. In my consultation with the deputy headmistress of Beaumont Primary School, I heard that the other teachers experienced her as 'bossy' and that they were not very supportive of her. For both practical and time reasons, I was unable to meet with all the entire staff of over forty teachers to find out everyone's views on the matter. Instead, I addressed the matter in the presentation and in individual conversations with teachers. I introduced a new story: that the deputy head, by bringing me in as a consultant, had opened up a whole new conversation that would promote a better value system in the whole school. This new story had an impact on the entire staff and through it the emotional system of the school was changed.

e **Teacher as consultant**

In my position as a teacher consultant, the narrative method freed me from the pressure to be smart or have good ideas. As a teacher consultant to the teachers who were struggling at Beaumont Primary School, I had to assume that they had already thought about their own difficulties but, for various reasons – such as discourses, culture, position, opportunity and the fact that their stories lay buried under a dominant problem story - their ideas needed to be given an opportunity to rise to a general consciousness. As a teacher consultant, I listened carefully for the alternative stories. I was confident that a new story could emerge from within, making it more likely to have an impact on the whole school's culture.

4.2.2 Attentive Agape listening

The dictionary (Oxford mini dictionary) defines the word 'listen' as: 1) to give attention with the ear, for the purpose of hearing; 2) to pay close attention; 3) to wait attentively for a sound. The emphasis is on attention as an active process where listening is a selective action.

Silverman (2006:88) asserts that the researcher who only uses her eyes and not her ears as well, is neglecting a vital source of data gathering. Boyd (2002:143) suggests that, as Christians, we have an obligation to talk and listen in a uniquely ethical way. He calls this quality of listening agape-listening – 'agape' is the Greek for 'love' - and argues that Christ set the example of agape-listening. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul illustrates what agape-listening looks like in practice:

When a speaker describes a listener as patient, kind, humble, not insisting on being right, nor irritable or hostile, but hopeful and encouraging, then listening sounds like the description of agape-love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7: Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

(Boyd 2002:145)

The Bible places much emphasis on how we talk and listen to each other. Listening which is motivated by agape-love 'calls us to give ourselves to the other person in listening as Christ gave himself for those he loved' (Boyd 2002:143). Listening in this way requires a form of intimacy:

I think of intimacy as something that people can create with each other at any time, if they are open to sharing what they truly care about and open to trying to understand what the other finds meaningful. This can happen to really *listen* to that person.

(Weingarten 1994:178)

In this way, the listening part of the conversation - the *why* we listen - affects *how* we listen:

By listening to the storied life of another, we embrace the other as a whole person. We share with him/her the struggle to make sense of some challenge or crisis, to find newness in the oldness, to find order in the chaos, to find light where only darkness might have been before.

(Boyd 2002:143)

4.2.2.1 The way you listened

It has happened on many occasions in my professional and personal life that people have told me that I have helped them by listening to them. This was also the case in this research project. I remember one teacher telling me that she appreciated the fact that I did not give her advice when she had to decide whether or not she would undergo cancer chemotherapy. She told me that, by listening to her story, I gave her space to make this decision herself and she experienced this as empowering. I believe that this is what Frank (1998:197) means when he advises professional caregivers not to view phrases - like 'just listening' or 'just talking' - as a waste of time in comparison with activity. Boyd (2002:143) suggests that the power of listening is 'may be why the Bible places so much emphasis on careful attention to how we talk and listen to each other.'

4.2.2.2 Listening is relational

It does not mean, just because the listener spends more time being silent, that the listener does not communicate in the conversation:

A speaker and a listener work together and build what can only be accomplished by cooperation. A speaker requires a listener like flowers require sunshine. You cannot have

a listener without a speaker and vice versa. They each provide something necessary to the other as they engage in *building together*.

Boyd (2002:146)

Agape-listening is relational or a 'self-in-relation' because we were created as social beings. There is no 'me without you' (Boyd 2002:146). As South Africans, moreover, we pride ourselves as being a nation who live by the values of *Ubuntu*, an interconnectedness which acknowledges our human dignity in relation to fellow human beings (See also 3.9.2.1.5). Many other cultures also share a similar philosophical orientation. For example, the Japanese call this *ameru* – 'the meeting place' - or the intersection of all human relations (Ramphela 2012:62). Because we value each person's reality as important, the listening self is a self-in-relation who defers to another. In this process we are also opened up to ourselves.

4.2.2.3 Listening in relation to ourselves

Over the years of teaching and practising Pastoral Counselling, I found that I was the one who benefitted most to listening from to people. By listening to people - sharing their grief, illness, joys or fears - I benefitted by allowing myself to venture into their worlds and realities and, in the process, exposing myself to my own reality. For example, through listening to the stories of the teachers who struggle, I had to confront my own struggles. I learned how women coped with menopause, discrimination and gender issues. The many people I listened to touched my own story in many ways.

4.2.2.4 Listening in relation to God

Agape-listening takes seriously the biblical concept of 'love.' It describes a unique Christian approach to caring conversations with 'someone who needs care, making that kind of listening incarnational ministry that touches both speaker and listener' (Boyd 2002:147).

People have mentioned to me during conversations that they felt that I was sent from God. Although such comments initially made me feel good, I realized that God was at work in the person's as well as my own life through our interaction with each other. This seemed to reflect what Boyd (2002:147) means by agape-listening:

Agape-listening takes us in the direction of what can only be called a spirituality of listening, a deeper appreciation of how this kind of listening becomes a spiritual discipline enriching the listener as much as the speaker.

The same principles that guide data collection in interviewing and listening also apply to observation as a method of data collection. What I saw and heard as a researcher was guided by the purpose of the research. My observations were inevitably focussed on being aware of the struggles of the teachers with whom I was working in the research.

4.2.3 Participatory Observation

In this research project observation involved more than just ‘looking’ for data to record. It meant participating in the teachers actions of the teachers in their work setting – Beaumont Primary School - and getting to know their ways of doing things. Such social observation by the researcher is known as participatory observation. As Denzin and Lincoln (2002:2) explain, this kind of observation, which includes a wide range of interactions, originated from the discipline of anthropology: ‘It is [to] the early cultural anthropologists...that we owe the primary observation technology known as *participatory observation*.’

According to Henning (2000:90), observation in contemporary qualitative research is in some ways connected to ethnographic inquiry. This makes sense, because qualitative observation is mostly participatory and is conducted over a longer period of time. This opposes the single standardized observation method, where the observer/researcher moves on to the next project after capturing information and ‘finishing’ the observation.

In this research, I ethnographically participated in the research participants’ lives. For example, I walked around in the school with them while talking to them. I worked with them at athletics meetings and I participated in meetings about their values implementation program. Pathas (In Henning 2000:91)) calls this ‘talk-in-interaction’. This kind of participation gave me the opportunity to observe, collect and analyse the data and then enabled me to determine underlying structures in the way the teachers talked and acted. I did not observe the teachers from a distance;

I became part of the action:

...this type of observation allows for an understanding of the *sequence* of interaction, the *proximity* of research participation during different activities, the *sequence* of movement and the expressions during interactions and the *sequence* and *patterns* of the use of spaces. Such spaces may include certain seating arrangements during conversations and the functional use of space

(Holliday 2001:88)

Participatory observation can also help the researcher to see how ‘tacit rules’ can develop in conversations between people (Holliday 2001:88). I witnessed an example of the formation of ‘tacit rules’ between the teachers during a meeting I was asked to attend. The following is an account of what happened as well as my observations:

The meeting I was asked to attend was about the values program the school wanted to implement. I observed that there was a strict order of speaking’ in the meeting; and how the chairwoman (head of Grade 7 department) controlled the meeting by ‘means of spoken and unspoken language’ (Holliday 2001:88). The other teachers immediately fell into a pattern of ‘accepted’ behaviour. During the meeting, I asked a few questions and I could see how some of the teachers wanted to engage and challenge what was put to them. But then I also saw how the meaning-making activities that came forth from asking these questions were silenced by a few dominant teachers who would rather find meaning in consensus with the chairwoman’s ideas than in challenging these or in discussions about these.

I realized that the structure of behaviour was so fixed that any divergence was seen as ‘deviant’ behaviour. Psathas explains that the ‘task of ethnomethodology and conversation analysis...is to uncover, describe and analyse the ways in which social order is ongoingly produced, achieved and made recognizable in and through the practical actions of members of society’ (Henning 2000:92)

This is a demonstration of how participatory observation through ethnographic involvement can reveal how tactically ruled behaviour plays an important part in everyday life. One can even argue that it sustains certain actions, interactions and discourses. The implications for the

researcher is not so much that the discourse exists, but rather that it has to be observed and analysed (see Chapter 5). With regard to the above, there must be considerations and questions asked regarding ‘tacit rules’ and the affect this has on the struggles of our teachers.

For me as researcher, Participatory Observation strengthened emerging themes in the research. The information gleaned from observation filled in some gaps that I might not have found had I used only interviews.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the Qualitative Inquiry methods that I have found most useful in this research. With the data collection tools of Interviewing, Agape-listening, and Participatory Observation in my researcher’s toolkit, I was able to gather purposeful data, recorded, and analyse it thoroughly, as the reader will see in the next chapter. Although these Qualitative Inquiry methods may seem like a hybrid of different design methods, my selection seems supported by Henning’s (2000:48) assertion that they are called hybrids ‘...and rightly so, because the methodologies that feed into qualitative inquiry are not rigid or prescriptive.’

In concluding this chapter, Henning’s (2000:48) words once again ring true: ‘This chapter is therefore neither comprehensive nor limited to general qualitative designs.’

Next, Chapter 5 will focus on the data analysis of the research project.

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CHAPTER 5

Our task is to create enough safe spaces and
trusting relationships within the academic workplace
-hedged about by appropriate structural protections –
that more of us will be able to tell the truth about
our own struggles and joys as teachers
in ways that befriend the soul and give it room to grow.

Palmer 1994:6

5 Introduction

This chapter contains the heart of the research project. It gives an account of how the data was analysed and therefore what the meaning making process of the research project looks like. In the first part of the chapter I will explain the conceptual framework I chose to analyse the data I gathered with the teachers and will illustrate this by using examples taken from the whole research process. I will also include some of my research notes on a few of the themes from which a model was created. This will be presented in Chapter 6. But first I will elaborate on the methods and my rationale for why I decided to analyse the research data in this way.

5.1 Conceptualizing my data analysis

It became obvious throughout my interaction with the research data that something dynamic and interesting was going on in the data that Postmodern concepts and approaches had made visible and analysable. I discovered through my literature study that in Qualitative research there are many ways to conceptualize data analysis and to convert the raw data to final patterns of meaning. My first option was conventional qualitative data analysis.

5.1.1 Conventional Qualitative data analysis

I could have chosen the conventional, straight forward ‘qualitative coding and categorising’ route suggested by Merriam (1998:192-196). In this approach the data is divided into small units of meaning, which are then systematically named per unit and named according to what the unit means to me as researcher. After that, I could have grouped together categories and codes that were semantically related and then described the data and the objects or events to which the data referred. But, in the end I decided to follow Kvale (2002); Gubrium and Holstein (2002) and Lincoln (2002). They argue that such methods do not always constitute good findings or analysis:

A great deal of intellectual effort goes into data analysis and the listing of number of categories does not indicate comprehensive analysis...such initial procedures of coding and categories are just that – initial procedures – and they lead to no more than a “thin description” or a set of systemised empirical items

(Henning 2004:102)

Holliday (2001:79) quotes Denzin’s definition of such data as ‘...a thin description simply report[ing] facts, independent of intentions or circumstances.’

Another option I had was to use technology to do the analysis for me.

5.1.2 Computer-aided text analysis

Among the many computer-aided text analysis data base systems that have been developed for qualitative research, I could have used programs such as Ethnograph, winMax, Atlas.ti, Nud.ist, NVivo, KWALITAN and HYPERRESEARCH. All use similar data structures to assist the researcher in organising and managing the textual data (Henning 2004:130). But I had to keep my initial methodological frame of inquiry for this research project in mind throughout. I realized that by only using computer-aided text analysis, I would lose the narrative character of the inquiry- that is, the human comprehension and discerning of the words and phrases constructed by the research participants. Another reason is because ‘computers are not capable [of being human] and [t]heir real strength and contribution lies in ordering, structuring, retrieving and visualising tasks’ (Henning 2004:137). Weitzman (2000:805) puts this more bluntly:

Put simply, computer software can help to analyse data, but it cannot do the analysis for the researcher.

I believe that if I had used computer analysing methods in this research project, it would have showed only superficial findings: it could only capture what was presumed to be the real world through the research participants' words in a linear, straight forward way.

After considering all the analysing options, I decided to be guided by the principles described by qualitative researchers and authors I have mentioned above.

5.2 Qualitative Research principles

The qualitative research principles include the following:

- My analysis took place throughout the data collection process. For example, I noted my own thoughts and impressions, and the relationships and connections between conversations and interviews and observations. I looked at the similarities, differences, themes, concepts and ideas which presented themselves throughout the process.
- I read through the data of the interviews, conversations and observations almost every day. I thought about concepts and ideas and divided the data into smaller and more meaningful units.
- Through induction, I organised the data into a kind of a system. This gave me direction and provided insight on how to look at discourses and the influence they had on the participants.
- I also built on and refined categories to define conceptual similarities and differences and to discover patterns. For example, when I heard from various teachers their struggle and their fear of age, I explored the meaning of aging more deeply, and how it related to fear of losing a job, menopause and illness.
- I found that I had to be flexible during the analysis: sometimes needed to modify categories. For instance, the theme of 'faith' was often mentioned by the teachers in different ways. I found that a category such as 'spirituality' could be an umbrella term for all kinds of faith experiences.
- A model unfolded from the data. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

Data analysis in Qualitative Research usually starts with the researcher trying to make meaning of the information gathered. This is where I began too. What follows is a description of my

understanding, actions and collaboration with the research participants in an effort to analyse the data in this research project.

5.3 Data analysis: making meaning

Although it is always difficult to get started with Qualitative analysis in a project, primarily because of the amount of data gathered, I followed the advice of Gerhart, Terragona and Bava (2007:367). They suggest that data analysis is a process of meaning making that occurs recursively throughout the research process and not just after the research is completed. Henning (2004:127) builds on this concept. In her view, the data analysis in Qualitative Research is an ‘on going, emerging and iterative or non-linear process.’ I found this notion very helpful in the data analysis because in my opinion it lay at the heart of the research project. Many other researchers have also described this kind of analysis process, such as Tech (1990), Dey (1993), Miles and Huberman (1994) and Silverman (1997; 2000).

Merrian’s (2009:170) view on data analysis also resonated with me. I found data analysing very challenging. Patterns and themes did not just pop out from the stories of the teachers: they had to be dug out of the piles of complex data. The *how* and *what* questions for instance, geared the research towards complex exploration, processes and discoveries in the participants’ lives. Schram (2006:15) describes the Qualitative analysis of data as a ‘contested work in progress’ through which the researcher ‘embrace[s] complexity, uncovering and challenging taken-for-granted assumptions.’ This requires the researcher to be ‘comfortable with uncertainty’ (Schram 2006:6-7). In fact, in Qualitative data analysis the whole meaning making process requires some creativity from both the researcher and research participants.

5.3.1 Making meaning requires creativity

The entire process of making sense of Qualitative data requires creativity from both the researcher as well as the research participants (Patton 2002:514). Questions such as ‘*how*’, ‘*why*’ and ‘*what is going on here*’ gear the researcher and research participants towards complex exploration, processing and discovering of meaning. It makes the analysing of data a creative process (Schram 2006:15). In collecting the stories of the teachers’ lives (struggles) in this research, mere descriptions of observations would not do justice to each teacher’s contribution.

Interpretations of their beliefs and behaviours were needed too. Such creativity from the researcher and research participants has been described as:

...[an] explicit theoretical effort to comprehend the ways in which participants have come to describe their life-worlds, engage it with others, and enact their work practices, for example, through processes of deconstruction and ideology critique.

(Mc Taggart 1997:14)

The versions and interpretations of the teachers' stories elicited by this research were thus derived from thick, rich descriptions and multiple perspectives. This provided the opportunity for creative, multi-layered, many-faceted and detailed themes and patterns from which knowledge could be drawn for creative analysis (Janesick 1994:215). The creative researcher is thus someone who is able to 'embrace complexity, uncovering and challenging taken-for-granted assumptions' and is 'comfortable with uncertainty' (Schram 2006:6-7). By choosing a combination of conventional Coding Methods and Narrative Analysis I too became fairly 'comfortable with uncertainty.'

5.3.2 Becoming 'comfortable with uncertainty'

It became clear to me that in order for me to 'interrogate' the data and explore the teachers' deep and 'thick' meaning making data in their lives, I had to use a combination of Coding Methods, such as Open coding, Axial coding and Selective coding (Strauss & Corbin 1998:143ff) and Narrative Analysis.(see also 1.6). I acknowledge that this is not a specific 'method' of analysing:

There are no formulae or recipes for the "best" way to analyse the stories we elicit and collect [combining] approaches [can] also enable us to think beyond our data to the ways in which accounts and stories are socially and culturally managed and constructed. That is, the analysis of narratives can provide a critical way of examining not only key actions and events but also cultural conventions and social norms.

(Coffey & Atkinson 1996:80)

The combining of Coding Methods and Narrative Analysis helped me to identify familiar and relevant common themes associated with the struggling teachers. Next, I will explain the well known Coding Methods according to the Grounded Theory I used and include some examples.

5.4 Coding methods

Coding is the initial step in Qualitative data analysis and is part of a Grounded Theory approach discovered by Glaser and Strauss in 1967. Coding is the process of organising and sorting through the data. Codes serve as tools to label, compile and organize the data collected. They also allow the researcher to summarize what is happening in the data by linking the data collected and interpreted. This forms the basis for developing the analysis in the research (Gibbs 2007).

5.4.1 Open coding

Open coding helped me to explore the research question (see 1.8) ‘through close examination of the data’ (Henning 2004:131). I broke up the data and compared questions containing ‘*what, where, who when and how*’, How the Narrative approach with teachers in Pastoral Counselling could be explored to improve the quality of life for teachers and in the broader South African context. I then formed concepts by grouping similar incidents and then putting them together to form categories (Strauss & Corbin 1990:57). To build concepts from the data, I opened up the text (data) to expose the meaning, ideas and thoughts through labeling the concepts, defining and developing categories based on their properties and dimensions (Khandar 2015:1). I started doing this from the beginning of the research, line by line and paragraph by paragraph. Kandkar (2015) offers the following steps in open coding which helped me in the research.

5.4.1.1 Building concepts

The first step in the open coding process involved going through the data and breaking it down into pieces to examine closely. I compared their relations, similarities and dissimilarities. Different parts of the data were marked with labels/codes to identify them for further analysis

5.4.1.2 Notes for concepts/codes

Sometimes the single words/notes I used were not enough to describe an entire concept. I then made notes where I recorded my impressions and information. I kept the following guidelines for effective note taking in mind (Strauss & Corbin 1990:582):

- I kept the notes apart from the data

- I stopped coding when an idea for a note occurred so as not to lose the thought
- When I had a lot of notes on different codes that appeared similar, I compared the codes for any differences I might have missed. If the code appeared to be the same, I formulated the codes into one code, for example:

Teacher: I cannot cope with my job, I feel tired and overworked

[Notes: The first word that strikes me is the word “cope”. This word is taken out of the context of physically being “tired” and “overworked”]

5.4.1.3 Defining the categories

The creation of codes and concepts brought me to a point where I could find the similarities and group them together into sub-categories and main themes based on their common properties

What follows is an example in the form of an interview/conversation I had with one of the teachers. The words in brackets represent the sub-categories and themes:

Teacher: I cannot cope with my job, I feel tired and overworked (*challenges*). I think that something is wrong in our education system and it feels that teachers don't get enough support (*struggling, challenges, support*).

Liesel: How come you think teachers don't get more help or understanding?

Teacher: I guess it's because the Department and parents don't know how we struggle. Everybody just accepts that teaching is a job and should be done and that

Teacher: I guess it's because the Department and parents don't know how we struggle. (*struggling, career development*). Everybody just accepts that teaching is a job and should be done and that added pressures (*professional demands*), such as CAPS and admin are normal. It's just survival of the fittest, I guess? (*punitive mindset*)

Liesel : Did you ever feel like anybody understood? Colleagues, friends, family?

Teacher: No not really. The Department has therapist and psychologists (*professional*)

support) whom we can talk to. I once went to a therapist and was very hopeful(*hopes and dreams*) in the beginning and then things changed. I felt that that he wasn't really listening or understanding(*loneliness, isolation, rejection*) how I struggled to cope(*struggling, work demands*) with my changing body(*menopause, illness*), the work issues, the children in my class(*discipline*).

Liesel: You talked about the therapist not paying attention to what you were really telling him. How would the two of you talk at that time?

Teacher: I felt that things were never directly discussed(*interpersonal relationships*) or that we would come to any real solution for the problems(*stress, struggle*). It felt like a waste of my time and that we were (*time and money*) just talking in circles. One day I was so sick(*illness*), but I went anyway(*being a good teacher, obligations*). He could see that I wasn't feeling good, but he asked me anyway what was going to happen to my class if I were not there(*punitive*). Really, I felt like he was expecting of me to be sick at school and that the children would suffer because of me taking leave(*punitive, professional demands*).

Liesel: So, really blaming you?

Teacher: Yes, and another time I was blamed for standing up for one of the younger female teachers to a male teacher(*gender*). I also got a warning(*punishment*) from the principal about the incident and that really made me scared to lose my job(*fear*). I think it was because the therapist and the principal were both men(*gender*)and blamed me wrongfully, that I just gave up and kept silent afterwards(*fear*).

Liesel: What made you stay so long in teaching?

Teacher: I head up Bible study in the school and lead our praise and worship, so I used that as a platform to speak and proclaim values of the Lord(*Spirituality*). So

many of our learners only have that little time to experience the Lord, so that gave me the motivation to stay so long in teaching(*hopes and dreams*).

Liezel: How do you think other teachers can become more aware about and voice their struggles?

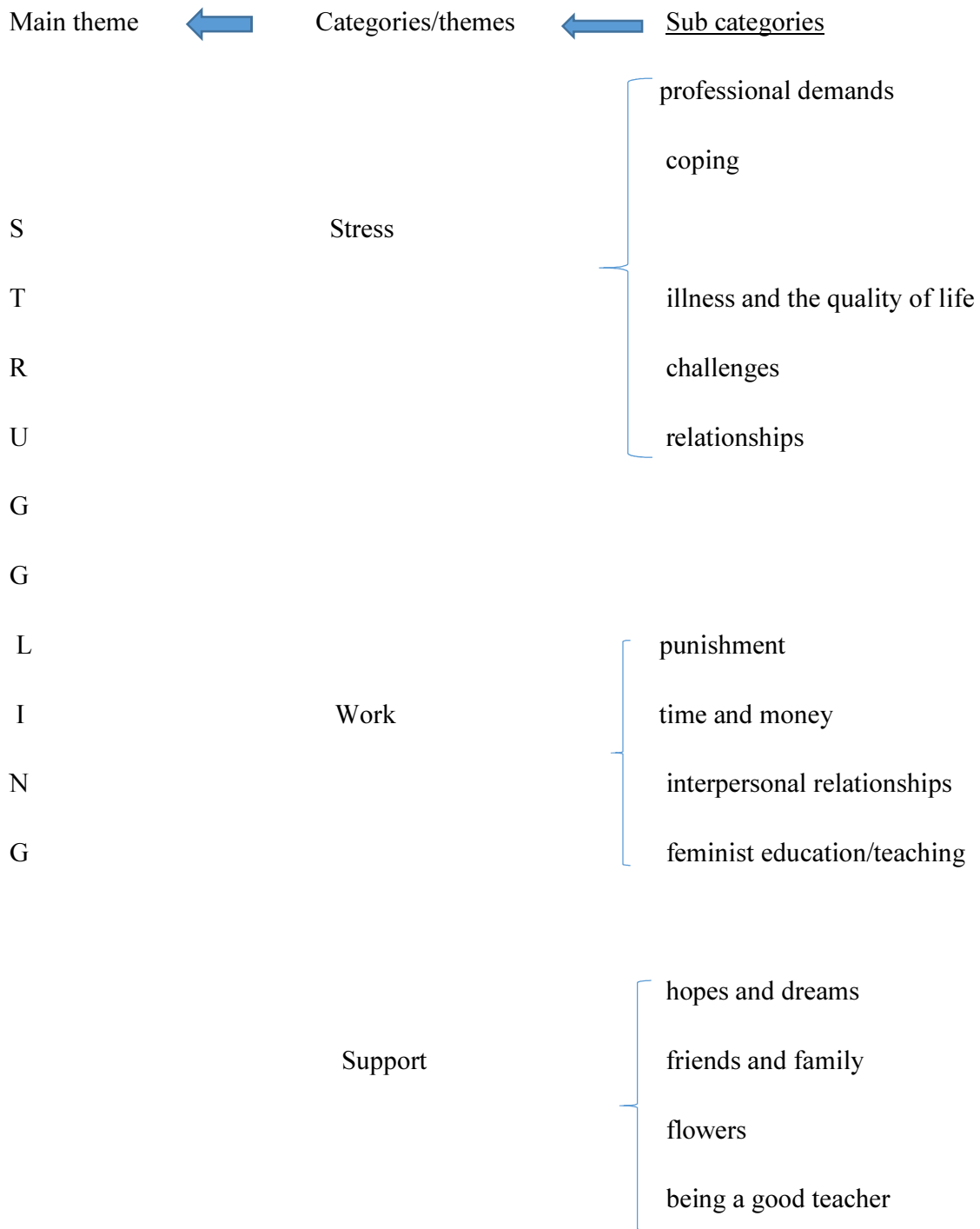
Teacher: That is a difficult one because we are all on a treadmill(*professional demands, time and money*) and most of the time don't have the time or energy to get off and tell one another(*interpersonal relations*) about our struggles(*struggles*). Our school is getting bigger and bigger and that adds to expanding responsibilities(*professional demands*). May I add, I am so often also guilty of not even stopping to take time to tell someone how valued they are(*guilt, relationships*).

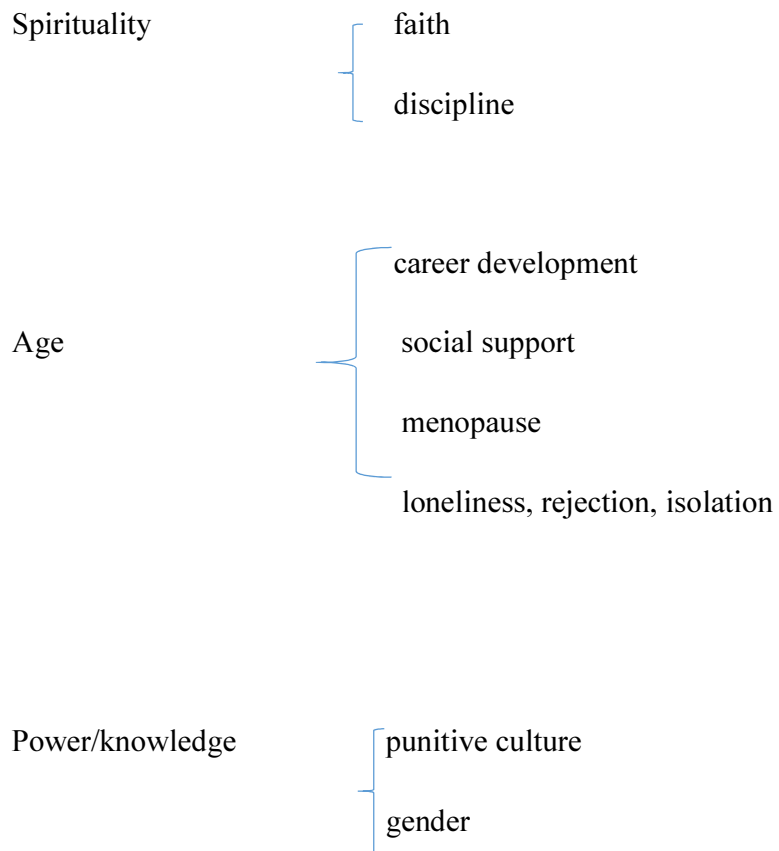
I formed categories and themes from her words, including: 'cannot cope, tired, struggle, not enough support, pressure, survival, he wasn't really listening or understanding, my changing body. [no] real solutions for the problems, waste of time, I was so sick, I was blamed, scared to lose my job, [they] were both men and blamed me, we are all on a treadmill, no time or energy, expanding responsibilities, guilty.'

5.4.1.4 Interpreting the coding

The final step in open coding involves the interpreting of the coding. I took the concepts that emerged from the saw data and built a descriptive, multidimensional framework for later in-depth analysis.

5.4.1.4.1 Main themes, categories and sub-categories





The next step in the analytical process involved Axial coding.

5.4.2 Axial coding

Axial coding helped me in the analytical process to bring back the ‘complexity of the context...into the picture’ (Strauss 1998:124). The categories which were interwoven, linked and related to subcategories thus formed an explanation of the problem/phenomenon - the struggles of the teachers involved in this research project - which I wanted to explore.

The analysis using Axial coding took place on two levels: the actual text or words of the teachers and my own conceptualisation of their words. Working in this way, I could find relationships between categories which were subtle, hidden or implicit.

5.4.2.1 Deconstructing 'absent signs'

Okely in Saldana (2009:32) says that

Scrutiny of [the data] offers both empirical certainty and intuitive reminders. Insights emerge also from the subconscious and from bodily memoirs, never penned on paper. There are serendipitous connections to be made, if the writer is open to them...analysis comprise a movement between the tangible and the intangible...between the visible and invisible. Interpretation moves from evidence to ideas and theory, then back again. There can be no set formulae, only guidelines, sensitive to specific cases.

Because Qualitative Research is guided by inquiry, data organising and analysis, this involved understanding what the complex phenomenon of 'struggling' meant to the teachers who were part of the research process. Multi-realities were experienced by the research participants and favored the discovery of how the teachers constructed the many events and situations in their lives. I reviewed the data many times, both during the research process and also afterwards. My aim was to try to absorb and identify familiar and unfamiliar themes (stories, struggles, issues and theories). Derrida developed the method of deconstruction (see 3.3.1.2 & 3.3.1.2.2) when reading texts.¹⁰ The aim is to bring forth the 'absent signs' or undescribed meanings in people's descriptions of their lives. I found this very useful to remember as a researcher because it helped me to engage in the inquiry and contributed to the identification of the 'absent but implicit' (see 3.3.3) and its rich descriptions:

It is to the absence and silences in our talk, as well as to the discourses and practices through which they articulate their experience, that any analyst must look.

(Davies 1996:36)

The axial category is usually an event or a fact about the phenomenon, in this case struggling female teachers. The actions of the teachers as well as their interactions with other people revolved around the phenomenon. The following questions helped me to choose axial categories: what did my data refer to?; what were the actions and interactions that the data was actually concerned with? What were the causes and conditions that lead to the development of the

¹⁰ In making reference to Derrida, I am not proposing that life is just a text, but suggesting that people's expressions might present the opportunity to engage with them in conversations which can identify the absent but implicit (White 2000:37).

phenomenon? (Strauss & Corbin 1990:98). The following is an excerpt from a conversation with one of the teachers which show how “fear” was selected as one of the axial categories.

One of one the teachers (about 54 years old) came to me to talk about how she struggled with her illness and the fear of going back to her teaching job. During our conversation, I first had to understand her experience of this fear as well as the context. I also had to include her socio-economic context and the power relationships in her personal life as well as in the school culture. I was particularly interested in what the fear was speaking to in her life in terms of the ‘absent but implicit.’ What were the circumstances and conditions that made it possible for fear to thrive in her life? How could she use her experiences to discern her struggle with fear? By using Narrative questioning methods - such as White/Epston (see 3.3.6) and deconstruction (Derrida) - particularities of the teacher’s expression of her struggle with fear came forward. These particularities showed the traces of multiple and ‘absent signs’ or unstated descriptions and how these had contributed to the discernment of fear in her life. The axial categories are indicated in brackets:

Ana: I cannot to go back to my teaching job after my illness(*context*). I feel weak(*conditions*) and uncertain(*phenomenon*) if I can continue. I don’t see a future for myself(*context*). I am not young anymore(*condition*), but I know I must go back to the job, because I don’t have money anymore to buy make-up for myself and my husband says his money is his to spend(*phenomenon*). Some of the younger teachers are so disrespectful(*context*) and they make you feel as if you don’t belong in the workplace anymore(*phenomenon*). Before I fell ill, I avoided going to the staffroom at break times(*context*), I pretended to have a lot of work to do in my classroom(*condition*) just to avoid the gossip(*phenomenon*). They form ‘cliques’ and think they know everything(*context*) and the men always get away with doing as little as possible, for example at athletic meetings and why do I have to coach rugby to the grade one boys?(*context*)

Liezel: You said that you cannot go back to your teaching job, that you have been ill and

that you feel uncertain if you can continue. You also said that you no longer see a future for yourself. May I ask your sense of what or for whom you have been continuing on up till now? and What are you giving up on or have lost touch with that was important to you? Also, about your future, what are the possibilities for your future and what have been sustaining you to keep the future in sight?

Ana: The illness(*context, condition*) has really made me sad and angry(*consequence*). I was angry because the doctors first diagnosed me wrongly and then I was so ill from the chemo pills(*causes*). I always felt those pills were making me worse(*condition*), but decided to refuse further chemo pills and I actually became better(*consequence*) so that I can go back to school, but I am still scared(*phenomenon*). Thoughts about dying have come into my life. The doctors mentioned that I perhaps have a few years to live(*context*). I must admit I was shocked(*condition, phenomenon*), because I am only in my fifties(*context*).

Causes/contexts and conditions contribute to the occurrence or development of phenomenon, as was seen in the above example. It was important for me to clarify the properties of the conditions because conditions are normally set in a particular context with a set of conditions (Strauss & Corbin 1990:99). In this research interviewing and conversations created the opportunity to find the social, political and cultural environment as well as the individual teacher biography that lead to their actions and interactions (Strauss & Corbin 1990:104) to “better” their lives. Actions and interactions lead to some form of consequence for example:

Liezel: It is my understanding that you are not resigned to accept your “lot in life”?

Ana: I have loving relationships with my children, grandchildren and my friends. The flowers I arrange for weddings inspire me to continue to live. I still have some hopes and dreams for the future that I keep alive in myself every day.

We need to face the reality that our teachers are overworked and underpaid. South African Council of Education (SACE) spokesman confirmed recently to the *Sowetan* Newspaper (2015) that most teachers find themselves in financial trouble, not only because they are underpaid, but because of financial mismanagement. The editor of the article, Bongekile Macope added that financial burdens on our teachers are one of the main contributors to them falling ill (2015).

Most teachers, especially female teachers over forty, try to carry on in their teaching jobs despite financial difficulties, because it becomes difficult to find other jobs at their age. So, how do they cope?

The next step in the coding process involved Selective coding.

5.4.3 Selective Coding

Selective coding is the final phase in the coding process. Strauss and Corbin (1998:143ff) describe Selective coding as a process of selecting one ‘main’ category or theme and then relating all the categories to that theme. According to them, it involves a process of integrating, renaming and refining codes into a main category and then systematically relating it to the other categories. The categories and their interrelationships are combined to form a “storyline” that describes “what is happening” in the research. In this research it proved to be sensible to name the phenomenon in one word, namely struggling to which the axial categories related to. To help me in this regard I asked the following questions: what story is the data telling me?; what is the issue here?; what have I learned from the research?. I found that the main story revolved around struggling.

I have already acknowledged how it was a challenge to sift through the data in this research project. The literature I read for my literature study, plus the daily media coverage of the ongoing issues in our educational system proclaimed in the media, all reflect the troubles we are facing in our education system. At times it seems like a tangled mess.

5.4.3.1 Tangled threads of life

The data I collected through conversations, interviews, observations and reading, as well as my own lived experiences, began to cast a light on the research question I was exploring. Through telling their stories and carefully questioning the teachers in this research, I recognized the ways in which each participant’s story were productions of intersections with an overlapping theme: struggling. The stories bore unexpected similarities, even to my own.

Davies (1996:14) offers the following hopeful comment:

Through an examination of the ways in which they have taken up discourse as their own, at the same time and through the same process through which they were subjected, the

participants [as well as the researcher] in a collective biography can come to reveal something of the tangled threads of life in its simultaneous shaping and constraining and opening up of possibilities for resistance.

5.4.3.2 Generalizability of the core category

The phenomenon of struggling as the core category in this research could easily have developed only into a negative concept only. However, ‘the degree of generalizability of a theory developed in this way depends, at least in part, upon a process of abstraction that permeates the entire research procedure’ Böhm (2004:274). I found in this research that not all the struggling was experienced in a negative way by some participants. Some teachers offered positive responses despite of their struggles. The following is an example of such a response:

Emmi: Although I struggle and fall short, I know in the core of my being that I am blessed.
At His feet, I am given the strength and forgiveness to stand up, dust my feet off and start again.
For me, teaching is such a powerful ministry, a pity more people don’t realize the value of all teachers in the world.

5.4.4 The impact of coding on the research question

The described coding methods have helped me as researcher to access the thoughts and feelings of the research participants, in this the female teachers of Beaumont Primary school. This enabled me to develop an understanding of the meaning these teachers ascribed to their experiences. I was able to explore how these teachers felt and thought about their struggling. In other word, I could do an in depth exploration of the research question and the ways to improve the quality of the teachers’ lives. Although there are many ways to conduct Qualitative research, I found that the coding process has assisted me to analyze and manage the data effectively and bring order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data (Marshall & Rossman 1999;150).

Initially, it looked a bit messy, ambiguous and it was indeed time-consuming, but it was a creative and fascinating adventure which I think I would have missed if I had used computer

programs for the analysis. I agree with Schwandt's (2007:6) comment that 'while it does not proceed in linear fashion – it is the activity of making sense of, interpreting and theorizing data that signifies a search for general statements among categories of data'.

5.5 Reflexivity in research – ‘the interpretive crisis’

Although Steier (1991:6) insists that reflexivity in Qualitative Research is absolutely necessary, the problem of bias is still debated. There is a lack of agreement on how much of the researcher's influence is acceptable, or whether needs to be controlled. Denzin (1994:501) calls this 'the interpretive crisis' in qualitative research.

I decided at the last minute to include my research notes in the analysis. My decision to include my reflections as Qualitative Researcher in this research project is primarily an ethical one. I cannot claim that what I have described here is the absolute truth or even valid. My prime aim is to make the process of data gathering and analysis as visible and transparent as possible. Including some of my own thoughts and notes in this research makes it possible to reflect on what as researcher I could have done differently. It helps 'to clarify vision and our decisions' (Reinharz 1992:195). Moreover, because this research is also situated within the Feminist and Social Constructed paradigm, my reflections were:

...presented in ways that make it clear how the researcher's[my] own experiences, values, and positions of privilege in various hierarchies have influenced [my] research interests, the way [I] chose to do [this] research, and the ways [I] chose to represent [my] research findings.

(Harrison, Mac Gibbon & Morton 2001:325)

The Social constructionists approach created a context for me as researcher in which I could pursue understanding with each female teacher. Although every woman's story reflected unique and complex experiences and feelings, there appeared to be some commonality of feeling in hearing the women's "voices" – developed in feminists social sciences (Gergen 1991:13-35). Galligan (1982) argues that psychology is biased toward men because many research data have been collected from white, upper-middle class male students, resulting in theories constructed solely on that collected.

Tannin (1990:48) gives us a slightly different perspective: looking at how gender influence communication, she says: ‘We all want, above all, to be heard – but not merely to be heard. We want to be understood – heard for what we think we are saying, for what we know we meant’. In my conversations, I tried to hear what the female teachers thought was important about their struggles. This happened in a conversational interchange between us, each in different way, and I thought and reflected on their words afterwards.

These reflections I have included in this research report as my researcher’s reflections in text boxes to make them easier for the reader to distinguish. In the following sections I will describe how the data – ‘the tangled threads of life’ - became a meaning making process.

5.5.1 Researcher notes

There is relatively little research on the use of researcher notes or journal in the methodological research process as well as little guidance for researchers to the purpose of keeping notes as an integral part of the research process. I decided to record my personal struggles and reflections in this journey with the research participants in an informal research journal. This became a very valuable resource. As a construction that ‘originates in the various choices and decisions [I as] researcher under[too]k during the process of research’ (Mruck & Breuer 2003:3), the research journal helped me to make visible the nature of my experiences, opinions and thoughts as part of the research process and outcomes. Although I did not mention in the research proposal that I would include my ‘researcher’s reflections’, I have decided to do so in order to make the Narrative analysis process more transparent in this chapter. I acknowledge, however, that this decision could potentially create an ethical dilemma or what Denzin (1994:501) called an ‘interpretive crisis.’ This refers to the problem of bias and the lack of agreement in Qualitative research methodology texts on how much of the researcher’s influence is acceptable, whether or not it needs to be controlled and how it might be accounted for.

Qualitative research such as this one that is situated within Feminist Postmodern paradigms is

presented in ways that make it clear how the researcher’s own experiences, values, and positions of privilege in various hierarchies have influenced their research interests, the way they choose to do their research, and the ways they choose to represent their research findings

(Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton 2001:325)

My research notes became a vehicle of self-reflection where I could examine my ‘personal assumptions’ and clarify ‘individual belief systems and subjectivities’ (Ahem cited in Russel & Kelly 2002:2). I engaged with the ideas and enacted practices that made some degree of transparency possible. The data I collected in this research was collected through interviews and conversations. There is a general lack of agreement and views on how interviews should be conducted and the role of the researcher as interviewer. Scheurich (1997), in keeping with a Postmodern approach, suggests that research interviews should be made visible by making the interviewer’s history, values and assumptions open for scrutiny. This should not be an attempt to control bias, but make it visible to the reader. For example, in the first notes I made (see 5.6.1.1) I reflect on myself as the “expert” in the teachers’ lives.

Self-reflection in the form of my research notes, helped me to consider the ethics of power-knowledge relationships with the research participants. I also considered the role that my thoughts, feelings, fears, desires and needs played in the research. the process of reflecting helped o bring the unconscious into consciousness and opened it up for evaluation Scheurich puts it like this;

Interview interaction is fundamentally indeterminate – the complex play of conscious and unconscious thoughts, feelings, fears, power, desires, and needs on the part of both the interviewer and the interviewee cannot be captured and categorized. In an interview there is no stable “reality” or “meaning” that can be presented.

(1997:73)

In other words, my thoughts as interviewer had to have an impact on the interview through my reflections or notes and that is way I decided to include them in the thesis. My notes assisted me to map my growing and understanding of my own role as researcher in the study.

5.6 Narrative Analysis approach

At the heart of Narrative Analysis is ‘the way humans experience the world’ (Clandinin & Connelly 2000:2). For this project, I chose to study the way ‘struggling teachers’ experience themselves and their world through their stories.

The Narrative potential of data analysis gave me the opportunity and freedom to look at structured narrative interviews or observations with the teachers. Moreover, because people's lives are not lived in a linear way, I was also able to use excerpts from a story, or parts of a story or conversations in the analysis process. Riesmann (2002:701) suggests that people's stories are personal narratives in which they adjust to reflect a 'performed, preferred self' in 'unstructured' ways. The speaker narrates his/her story with a specific purpose – and this is what the research analyst wants to capture.

Narrative Analysis thus becomes a specialized form of discourse analysis:¹¹ it searches for that specific purpose by which the research participant make sense of their lives.

Henning (2004:102) suggests that the data should be 'interrogated' (in a good way), so that a rich description of the landscape of the research participants' lives can develop, together with the meanings they make during the analysis of the research project. I hope that this research project will reflect such a rich description. In analysing the data in this way, I have shown how the struggling teachers became aware of their own practices and how they 'turned their own analytical gaze on their teaching contexts' (Davies 1996:13) and on their lives.

5.6.1 Collecting stories, telling and re-telling

Smith's (1997:252) words resonated with me while I was collecting, telling and re-telling the stories of the teachers who were involved in this research project:

When we struggle together to meet challenges, we add to our complexity as individuals, our abilities to care and be cared for, our sense of rooted connectedness, and our capacity to re-humanise our world. Giving birth to the knowledge of hopeful dreams, we regain commitment to a meaningful way of life, no longer 'in fear of stepping out'.

The concept of 'struggling together' found its expression in the story-tellings between myself as researcher and the teachers involved in this research project. All our interactions, planned or spontaneous, were built on a relationship of shared and supportive action. As I, as researcher,

¹¹ In discourse analysis you need to keep in mind that: 'language users actively engage in text and talk not only as speakers, writers, listeners and readers, but also as members of social categories, groups, professions, organizations, communities, societies or cultures...they interact as women and men, black and white, old and young, poor and rich, doctors and patients, teachers and students...' (Henning 2000;116)

began to ‘struggle’ with the teachers, my story was simultaneously being extended in the expression of their stories. We understood that what was happening in our lives were essentially acts of meaning-making. Following Janesick (1994:215) I tried to: ‘Stay...close to the lived experiences of people [because it] is the most powerful means of telling the story.’ While such closeness involves the researcher struggling with others, I also found that ‘work with others is not to lose oneself, but first and foremost, to find a larger self (Welch 1990:163).

For example, it was important for me as researcher to listen to how the teachers told their stories and how they communicated with me as researcher. Every utterance, word or noise formed part of the narrative ‘text’ and could be related in the form of autobiographies, life stories, interviews, journals, notes, letters or any material that I had collected as a researcher.

I asked the following questions to guide me in this way of listening:

- In what kind of story did a teacher place him/herself and those whom she described?
- How was this story part of the larger organisational and societal narrative?
- What discourses presented itself in the story?
- Why was the teacher sharing his/her story?
- Were there any unique outcomes presented in the story?

5.6.1.1 The kind of stories the participants placed themselves in and those they described

The way the teachers positioned, portrayed and described themselves in conversations and interviews were strong indicators of their ‘preferred self’. As a researcher I was sometimes surprised by the way they emphasised certain parts of the storyline, but this emphasis was worth noticing. The following excerpt between myself and one of the teachers illustrates this well:

Liezel: Do you feel valued as a teacher?

Emmi: Although I sometimes feel that I don’t have energy to go on, I think I am more valued than I am aware of. Luckily for me, I am a believer so I know this is where God has placed me, so there must be great value in me.

Researcher's notes

My Narrative and Pastoral practices remind me that I am not the expert in these teachers' lives and that I can also be influenced in the research conversations. I am touched by this teacher's belief and 'knowledge' and am encouraged to be honest about my own context and beliefs. Her values of respect and courage reinforces my desire to be a Messiah-follower who tries to provide shelter for the teachers in their struggles (Is 58:57), who practices humility (Phil 2; 3, Is 38:9-20) and who values her experience of the Divine, rather than imposing my own ideas of God. I am reminded of Osmer's (2008:84) words that this is a spirituality of 'sagely wisdom' which 'puts aside the quest for certainty' and 'learns to live with uncertainty.' It is therefore not my role to question the teacher's beliefs of how she knows that God has placed her there and how her value as person is connected to that knowledge, but rather how the participant was able, in the context of struggling, to make meaning of her spirituality and faith.

5.6.1.2 The story as part of the larger organisation and societal narrative**a The larger organisational narrative**

Conversations with people in an organisation/institution such as a school are always difficult because of the hierarchies and power systems at work in the organization. Such power systems seem to feed of the societal narrative which promotes a dominant individualistic discourse (McNamee 2007:315). The focus is on the individual learner or teacher and their personal abilities and performances. Standardized tests and sport performances determine whether and how the individual 'measures up.' These mechanisms 'support our existing structures – specifically our educational system and the political and economic aspects of that system' (McNamee 2007:316). Such traditions create predictable discourses in that education 'serve[s] as a stabilising institution creating the sorts of people who will fit into our already individualistic existing world'. The following example is an excerpt from a conversation I had with the school's sport administrator:

Liezel: How do you see yourself and your role as teacher in the school?

E: I am the sport administrator, organiser and head coach of netball. I am not necessarily recognized or seen as one of the teachers in the school. Although I have my own office and work after hours and over weekends, the parents and some of the learners and colleagues treat me in ways that make me feel disrespected. I try to treat everyone with respect, but sometimes it is very difficult.

Liezel: How do you keep yourself motivated to go on despite what you experience?

E: The doctor has given me anti-depressants and sleeping pills. I think it's the meds that help me to go on, although some days I feel sick and I want to stop taking the meds, but I am afraid that I would not be able to cope.

Liezel: What can the medication, pressure from the school and society never take away from you? What knowledge and power do you have within in yourself?

E: I know my value as sports administrator in this school cannot be measured, because some of the other teachers have told me that they do not have the time or energy to do what I do. I try to teach learners values such as respect, caring, friendship et cetera through sport. In this way, I promote the development of the school.

Researcher's notes

Embodied activities

I was and still am an advocate for 'learning while moving.' I believe relationships are formed through people moving together and sport. Movement, whether through music, sport or play, formed a huge part of the 'curriculum' in the pre-primary I started ten years ago. I believe 'good things' happen in our bodies when we move or exercise. I agree with Holtzman's (1997:5-6) words that education or teaching should move away from 'what knowledge and learning and

teaching are' and move toward 'embodied activities.' McNamee (2007:316) sums it up as follows:

Embodied activities refer to visceral ways in which we move others and are moved by them, in conversation. This refers to more than the verbal or nonverbal aspects of our interactions. It is about those bodily experiences that also shape and are shaped by our relations with others

Quest Narrative

Quest narratives accept illness, whether from the mind or body, and seek to use it. It becomes a journey which becomes the quest. In this case, the teacher believes that she can gain something or cope through the experience of illness (in this case depression et cetera) through the use of medications. I am aware that each participant's story differs from each other though the voice of struggle is common. At times it caused a tension in me and I needed to recognize that each participant saw struggling and how to cope with it through a different narrative to how I saw it. It is difficult to admit that the quest and my own meaning-making about medicine in my life can potentially hi-jack how different ideas are shaped in this research.

Weingarten's (2003:22) words stand as a reminder before me in this regard in that I am the 'compassionate witness' in the narratives of this research. I am not on a 'fact-finding-mission,' but rather a conversationalist who encourages the telling and re-telling of the participants' stories and experiences and the co-authoring of possible alternative stories.

b The larger societal narrative

Liezel: Do you think it makes a difference in which school or area you teach?

E: I think the area or school where you work makes a difference to how you are treated as a teacher. Our school is a middle-class school with parents, teachers and governing body members who are used to getting their way. They treat us as workers

without any rights to disagree. It is my experience that underprivileged or poorer schools treat their teachers with more respect. Parents are also more willing to offer help and do not judge one another so quickly.

Emmi: I take the time out to salute those wonderful teachers in this country who don't have the support and infrastructure that we have. What an amazing job they do.

Researcher's notes

From my experience as teacher, mother and owner of a pre-primary school, I have come to appreciate the gift of parents' participation as part of the larger societal narrative and integral part of the school community. If the school community involve parents, they can play an important role in decision-making, enrichment, care-giving, maintenance and support of the school. Parental involvement improves education and, when parents are involved in a school, they are able to appreciate the struggles of the teachers. Unfortunately, this appears to become a distinct hope for the school community, especially because the larger community is also struggling.

5.6.1.3 The obvious question in Narrative Analysis is whether discourses presented themselves in the stories.

Discourses were indeed encountered during the analysis of this research. The discourses that were uncovered in the research conversations and interviews were introduced at various times by the participants. We discussed and deconstructed only some of them, however, not with the intention of altering the outcomes of the teacher's stories and experiences of their struggles, but rather to form some kind of understanding of their experiences.

One of the things that was very frustrating for me when working with the teachers in this research, was to cope with how difficult it was for them to think about breaking 'old patterns.' 'Old patterns' included issues like adult-child relationships, interactions with parents, power and

knowledge, patriarchal practices, women's bodies. Davies (1996:13) comments on how, in her work with teachers:

...old patterns of authority and knowledge seem to reassert themselves outside the range of conscious attention...the capacity to become reflexively and critically literate, to catch oneself in the act of constituting the world in particular ways, seems to most teachers I have talked to and worked with, outside the range of possibility.

Similarly, Weingarten (1995:7-22) acknowledges how 'discourse...holds ...our conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions, our sense of ourselves in the world...our ways of understanding our relation to the world are constituted through language and discourse.'

I was intrigued and encouraged by the fact that not all discourses were experienced in negative ways by the research participants. For instance, the discourses surrounding faith or spirituality frequently functioned as a strong brick in building their lives during struggles. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss some of the discourses that unfolded in this research, as well as the teachers' responses to them.

5.6.1.3.1 Power and Knowledge

The education system, and especially the teaching profession, cannot exist without being subjected to the discourse of knowledge and power. Foucault claims that power forms an inextricable part of knowledge: knowledge *is* power:

For...Foucault the 'is' connecting knowledge and power does not indicate that the relation of knowledge and power is one of predication such that knowledge leads to power. Rather, the relation is such that knowledge is gained prior to and independently of the use to which it will be put in order to achieve power (whether over nature or other people), but is already a function of human interests and power relations.

(Hay 1986:129)

Power appeared in the data in two ways. First, power resided in knowledge; and second, power was framed in language, either authoritatively or less visible. For example, the educational system of knowledge was experienced by some teachers as being oppressive and by others as an adventure.

Foucault describes power as an action and insists that ‘... there would be no power if it were not exercised by agents’ (Hay 1986:134). An example of power as an action is evident in a conversation I had with a teacher in which we talked about how she wanted to confront the school’s principal about her fear of losing her job. We deconstructed the fear component and the next day she sent me the following e-mail:

Dear Liezel

After our conversation yesterday, I had a very ‘open’ conversation with Mr B (school principal) this morning. I asked him if the school was thinking of replacing me. It looked like he was surprised and impress[ed] at the same time that I was so bold to ask him directly about my job security. This made me feel good about myself and gave me confidence to carry on with the conversation. I also realized that I was not alone in my fears and struggles, because I remembered that I had a similar conversation with Jo a few months ago about her age and fears to lose her job.

After our talk yesterday, I also realized that there may be other “forces” at work that might influence my fears such as power struggles between teachers in our school. That realization motivated me to also make an appointment with one of the male teachers who is challenging me on many levels and to “clear the air” with him.

Thank you again for our conversation yesterday. I never had the confidence before to speak my mind about my fears, but now that I have done it, I will do it again.

Love E

My experience with this teacher seems to be supported by Davies' (1996:18) statement:

Power is not a thing or an essence that can be described, but a complex set of relations amongst people and in the relations between people and knowledge systems – or patterns of discourse. On the other hand can power also consist of ways to resist, to deconstruct, to survive, to create, to imagine et cetera.

This echoes Pobe's (1979:147) statement that 'power is a delicate thing which has to be handled with great care'. The implication is that any power can be misused, depending on who is in charge of the power.

Researcher's notes

I was quite surprised and excited by this letter from E. I was not sure if she would really "act" after our initial conversation, but after reflecting about our words the previous day, I realized that my conversation with E involved a process. This process required of me as researcher and the teacher to try and understand her story, and the discourses in her story. She was able to create new understandings and meanings and new realities during the conversation. These new knowledges were generated through me listening carefully and not trying to pre-understand or guide E's story in a particular way, but working with her to negotiate new understandings. The emphasis here was on collaborative inquiry, a joint inquiry process (Gehart; Tarragona & Bava 2007:380).

I was again reminded of Davies' (1996:54) words that:

We do not know we can speak/write into existence until we've done it, since even those imaginary worlds through which we conjure up a possibility different from this world are discursively produced. We need to write and speak utopias, we need to rewrite the past and the present, we need to imagine who we might be if we were not constituted within the bonds of [discourse].

5.6.1.3.2 Punitive culture

...power [and knowledge] is always already there and one is never outside it.

(Foucault 1980:141)

Foucault's notion - that knowledge is power and power is knowledge – was particularly important to keep in mind during this research journey. White (1992) alerts us to the danger of internalising the dominant narratives of our culture to the point where we believe that they speak the truth about our identities. I found White's warning especially true in the struggles of the female teachers I worked with. A theme running through many of their conversations, and especially in their understanding of their identities as teachers, seemed to be rooted in the discourse of punishment. Punitive ways of thinking formed an important cultural thread in their workplace as well as in the societies of which they were a part. This is not something that is unique to our South African context:

From child-rearing practices, to the schoolyard, to the courts, we are steeped in notions of punishment.

(Denborough 1996:98)

It would seem that '[t]he general attitude of m[e]n to[ward] women, not only in Africa, has made woman in many cases unable to take her rightful place as a complete human being both in the family and in society at large' (Baloyi 2007:166). Such an attitude include that women should be oppressed and therefore be punished in some way. Cone (1975:17, 141-146) compares this to someone being enslaved and the implication is that her experience about everything, including God, can be different from other people. Baloyi (2007:48) comments that the victim experiences oppression different from the 'free person'. He says that 'we need to rethink now about how God can liberate women...theology must reflect upon what it means to be a woman'. Cone (1975:141-146) elaborates on this theme and says 'that theology must uncover the structures and forms of women experience, because the categories of interpretations must arise out of the thought forms of the women's experience itself.

An example can be found in some of our conversations when the female teachers used words with punitive connotations, like: *guilt, feeling guilty, difficult children, falling short, afraid to speak out, not recognized or seen, difficult times, obedience, fear of losing my job, being*

replaced by a younger teacher, not paid enough, too much admin, and feeling punished by the government.

Throughout my analysis of the data in this research, it was also clear that the taken-for-granted discourse of fear and/or punishment was so intricately woven into the teachers' practices that I was not sure if it could be disrupted or at least changed a little:

When the voice of "punish them" becomes the most ubiquitous in society, shutting off large numbers of people in physical and intellectual prisons, that society becomes like individuals with clogged arteries and diseased lives. It is a crisis. Fear and intolerance replace education and religion as symbiotic handmaidens; both leaders and citizenry become more and more mean-spirited. Education is sloganized as an instrument for indoctrination and training, thus endangering its ability to renew.

(Goodlad 1997:4)

Baloyi (2007:49) is adamant that this means that 'any form of victimization is not accepted in the eyes of God. It is therefore important for us to firstly take into consideration the pain and action that is caused by oppression of some kind, so that we can try to come up with a pastoral healing of such pain. Liberation will be an unfinished story if the concept of "hope" to the victims is not explained'.

According to Foucault, in some societies the voice of fear and distrust replaces the voices of hope and faith. Since this seemed to be the case in much of the teachers' conversations, I decided to create an opportunity for the teachers to talk about the discourse of punishment and its constitutive influence – how it fed the fear and how fear failed to provide them with discursive practices and alternative stories for their lives. It was in and through our talking, questioning and brain storming together that the model of fear/punishment versus disciple/love was born. This model will be discussed in Chapter 6.

This is an example of what Baloyi (2007:49) calls the 'climax of the liberation struggle of the oppressed. Even when people are still in the struggle, they need to be encouraged to hope for the good things thereafter'.

Researcher's notes

Writing and thinking about this, has reminded me about a girl I worked with at Faure Youth Centre. She was seventeen at that time and 'in' the centre for doing drugs and running away from home. She also belonged to the American gang. I remember one time when I could not find Samantha in the Centre and thought that she was perhaps released. I asked one of the guards, but she told me that Samantha was locked up in the high security unit for a week. Youths were put in the high security unit, actually cells (1,8m by 2m with a small window) as part of a punishment for breaking some rule. I asked the principal why Samantha was in the high security unit and she answered: for climbing on the roof of the sleeping quarters. I was allowed to visit Samantha, so I went to talk with her about the incident.

I asked her: "Samantha, why did you climb on the roof?"

She answered: "Juffrou (teacher) Liezel, I miss my mother and I thought if I climbed on the roof, I could perhaps hear her voice in the wind."

I remember now how sad I felt for this girl who missed her mother and who tried to "hear her mother's voice in the wind." She was punished for missing her mother. I remember that I was confused and angry. Confused, because she could not even 'escape' the facility, it had high electrified fencing all around, but I was also angry, because as Pastoral Counsellor, I was only a 'guest' in the centre and had no rights to ask about punishment methods.

Our belief systems about punishment translates into a large part and many forms during the day, especially in child-rearing practices. Greven says the following about this issue:

...punishment has always been at the root of much suffering on this earth...Incalculable suffering and pain have been inflicted on children...heeded and acted upon the words of Proverbs 23:13-14: "Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with rod, he shall not die. Thou shall beat him with the rod, and thou shall deliver his soul from hell."

(1992:60)

In an attempt to step outside the traditional notions of punishment and into different ways of speaking and thinking, Samantha and I decided to write her mother a letter. Denborough (1996:138) comments that 'In my experience, it is often the mother who is the carrier of alternative knowledges of the adolescent...who knows these stories of alternative life outside the realm of the influence of the problem.'

5.6.1.3.2.1 Punishing ourselves

A punitive culture can easily invite the punishment of ourselves. This can then overflow into castigation and humiliation of others, largely because of our beliefs and discourses about ourselves and what we deserve. Baloyi (2007:51) believes that

The reason why many women proudly accepts mistreatment and beating from men is because of their belief, which has also been taught from their childhood, that they are inferior to men. They are taught from their initiation to schools that they should never show any sign of revolting against men

It is my opinion that some teachers have almost perfected the art self- punishing and, in the process, are struggling (See also 3.2. The well-being of teacher). As the following examples will illustrate, it would seem that the voice of self-punishing finds ways to fan the fires of three negative affects evident amongst the teachers who struggle: isolation, rejection and loneliness.

a Isolation

Isolation is described as:

- A state of being separated from others
- Usually used in terms of separating a person who suffers from a contagious disease.

In conversations with two teachers, I asked them the same question about isolation:

Teacher 1

Liesel: Stef, you mentioned that you are not going to the staffroom at breaks anymore. Why is that and how does it make you feel?

Stef: Yes, I do not go to the staffroom at breaks anymore. When someone asks where I have been, I say that I had work to catch up or an extra music lesson to catch up. Why don't I go anymore? I believe some teachers are extremely jealous of me. My choir always wins Eisteddfods or do very well. I know I am smart and beautiful, they don't like that I take time to go to the gym. I feel isolated, yes, but that is the price I have to pay, isn't it?

Teacher 2

E: It feels as if I cannot breathe when I walk into the staffroom. It feels as if everyone is looking at me and waiting for me to make a mistake. I'd much rather walk around on the school grounds during breaks or make phone calls to organise sport events. Remember, I am only the sport administrator, not 'really' a teacher. Parents 'come down on me' when their children are not selected into the first teams. I am on my own, I have to work and I must accept the responsibility.

b Rejection

Rejection is described as:

- A state of being turned down
- In medical terms rejection is described as when the immune system of the body rejects foreign tissue

Teacher 1

Liesel: What does the voice of rejection say to you through the voices of other colleagues and parents or other people?

E: Although I am the sport administrator and work more hours than any other teacher in the school, my ideas are always rejected, especially by the all males [on the] governing body of the school. I always have to fight to be heard. Parents and children reject me when their children are not selected into the teams they want. I always have to be 'on guard', I cannot trust anyone. My husband is a Grade 7 teacher and he says that I just have to learn to cope.

Teacher 2

Ana: It feels like my husband has rejected me when I got sick and couldn't go back to my teaching job. I just want him to understand that I don't have the energy to go back and that I want to do my own thing outside of teaching. But I am married to him and I have to do what he wants, because he is the head of the house.

c Loneliness

Loneliness is described as:

- A depressing or sad feeling that comes from being apart from other people
- Also connected with isolation

Teacher

Liesel: Can you explain to me how the loneliness affects your life?

Ana: The loneliness causes a 'tiredness' in me. A tiredness of living a life of pretending that everything looks fine on the outside. I am lonely because I see things in the school and wider society which I do not agree with and everyone just seems to continue with their lives and wipe the issues under the carpet.

When I became sick, my sickness became everyone's story, except mine. Not even the doctors understood how I felt. Every time I had to go to the chemo room for treatment, I felt so lonely. The first time I had to go alone, my husband had a meeting and he couldn't go with me. The nurses try to make you comfortable, they give you nice chairs to sit in and so on and although I met nice people...I didn't imagine that the chemo room can be such a lonely place.

Researcher's notes

*I am reminded of Nouwen's (1990:83) words that the people in our modern Western society carry some of the most painful human wounds: isolation and loneliness. Over time, this creates a 'heightened anxiety' and, I believe, results in illness and death. I remember when I got ill, I read Nouwen's book, *The wounded Healer* (1990), and felt 'understood'. He says that there is no lonelier experience than illness. (See also 3.9.2.1.2)*

A few weeks after Ana and I talked, she told me that she 'was giving up.' Although she believed that the chemo was making her worse, her husband insisted she continue with the chemo and radiation treatment. He also decided to limit visitors to their home where she was treated by a nurse. She was not allowed to drive anymore and he took her cell phone away. She died on a misty morning in May 2013 and I received a short impersonal note of her death.

Baloyi (2010:730) mentions that loneliness has been there from the beginning of time. We see this when God created a mate for the first human being on earth because he saw that he was lonely (Gen 1:31). According to Baloyi this indicates that loneliness affects everyone and has almost become a 'disease' over time which affects us still today.

Hsu (1997:101) argues that 'We need to understand where our loneliness comes from' and Smith & Smith(2008:75) echoes the argument by saying that:

It is not the presence of people that prevents loneliness, but it is the presence of a sense of self-adequacy

(Baloyi 2010:730)

5.6.1.3.3 Gender – come closer, do not only look at the view out of the window

For a long time I struggled to work through and articulate Ana's life and death narrative. I noticed how fierce I became to ensure that women teachers would be heard in a respectful manner. I witnessed three more women teachers die of cancer, all of whom were teaching my Grade 8 son. I was angry and disappointed that no male teacher - not even the principal - took the time to talk with the learners about the tragedies in the school. I also realized that not one male

teacher from Beaumont Primary School, where I did the research, volunteered to participate in my research project.

The patriarchal discourse promotes power relationships in which men dominate or are privileged and in which women are subordinated in many ways. In the teaching environment and in the education system as a whole, many female teachers are subjugated by the ways in which (male) power is used. At Beaumont Primary School, the male teachers were usually grouped together at one table in the staffroom. They frequently appeared ‘sheepish’ and ‘guilty.’ Although the male teachers seemed to know in their hearts that the patriarchal discourse was wrong, it appeared as if they found it almost easier to passively support their roles as male dominators in the school environment and in society than to challenge it in any way. This behaviour supports Freedman and Combs’ (1996:32) statement that the constitutive power of a dominant discourse in our culture has an impact on ‘our preferred and customary ways of believing and behaving.’

Davies (1993:153) describes discourses as mostly invisible, like a pane of glass in a window:

[we] ...dis-attend the glass in order to look at the view out the window, so we generally dis-attend discourse. It is not until the glass fractures or breaks, for example, that we focus differently.

I found Davies’ metaphor particularly striking. The death of the three teachers – and the silence from the male teachers about these tragedies - had fractured and broken the glass pane: I was focusing differently. But I also realized that confronting the discourse of patriarchy head-on could potentially hurt not only me but also other people. I realized that I had to change the way I was thinking about patriarchal practices and women as a ‘victim’ of gender equality.

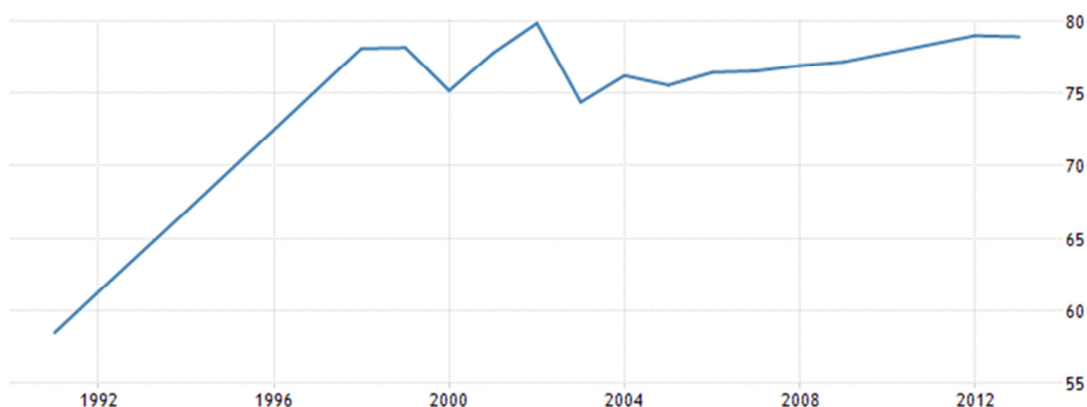
a Feminist approach

i Largest workforce in South Africa

The workforce in South Africa has, like America, seen an increase in female workers. The teaching profession has shown considerably more female workers than it had in previous years (Crouch 2001:5). In 1999 there were approximately 25% more female workers in the teaching

profession compared to the rest of the work force. By 2006, the gap had grown by 30%. Some teachers also show 56% more years of employment than other workers.

PRIMARY EDUCATION; TEACHERS (% FEMALE) IN SOUTH AFRICA WAS LAST MEASURED AT 78.90 IN 2013, ACCORDING TO THE WORLD BANK. FEMALE TEACHERS AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL PRIMARY EDUCATION TEACHERS INCLUDES FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME TEACHERS. THIS PAGE HAS THE LATEST RECORDED VALUE, AN HISTORICAL DATA CHART AND RELATED INDICATORS FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION - TEACHERS (% FEMALE) IN SOUTH AFRICA.



The largest demographic in America in 2015 were women in their forties and sixties and, by 2020, there will be nearly 60 million women between those ages. This is also the time when 60 % of divorces are initiated by women in their forties, fifties and sixties.

The younger teachers at Beaumont Primary School - those under forty years of age - were either too 'busy' to talk with me or ignored my requests for meetings with them. Three quarters of the teachers who participated in this research project were over female between the ages of forty and sixty. I am not going to speculate here on why the younger teachers did not want to give their input: this is a subject for another research project.

An interesting note is that age differences amongst teachers was also shown to differ from the rest of South African workers. The average age of teachers is increasing (Crouch 2001:5-6). According to Crouch, approximately 42% of all educators fall in the 31 to 40 year old range, 37% within the 41 to 50 year range, 14 % within the 51 to 60 year range. Only 5% falls into the 21 to 30 year range and 1% under the age of 20 years.

ii Why are ‘Women not considered fit to hold top positions ’ in education?

Crouch (2001:22) suggests that more quantitative and qualitative research is needed in the education system to assess the promotion strategies in schools. According to Crouch, the numbers does not add up – ‘where females are predominantly in the majority but within the most senior educator posts males are given preference.’ The question that comes to mind is what does this have to do with women’s bodies? According to Steyn, quoted in Crouch (2003:22) ‘[b]roader discriminatory tendencies in society as a whole have influenced past practices...As a result...women in general were under represented in senior management positions due to the perception that women are not fit to hold top positions.’

Taking into consideration that the age for promotions to senior positions in education is between 41 years and 55 years, it is no wonder that women of that age group are deliberately overlooked. For many women, these years also usher in perimenopause and menopause. The time a woman starts to pass from her childbearing years can start as early as 35 years and end as late as 58 years. Is this why women are perhaps seen as ‘not fit to hold top positions’?

Considering the above statistics and the fact that even more women will be entering the workforce in future, I was struck by the notion that, in order for me and other women to ‘heal’ from being the ‘victim’ of gender inequality’, we first had to confront our internalized sexist and patriarchal ideas: we had to change our consciousness. We had to think and be different, not like the “real” feminists who hate men, who are angry (hooks 2000: viii).

As difficult as it was for me to acknowledge, I had to agree with the feminist movement that a ‘female who remains wedded to sexist [patriarchal] thinking and behaviour...is a dangerous

threat' (hooks 2000:12). One of the most significant contributions which the feminist consciousness raising movement made was to 'demand that all females confront their internalized sexism, their allegiance to patriarchal thinking and action' (hooks 2000:12) This action raised a small form of feminist consciousness among men that began to '[teach] boys about what sexism [patriarchal practices] is and how it can be transformed' (hooks 2000:11).

Kate Ferguson explains consciousness raising as follows:

By exposing the contradictions and manipulations contained within a bureaucratic society, one can demystify the theory and practice of that society. Since the organisational society is maintained in part by creating and perpetuating the appropriate ideology, one that both reflects and distorts the reality it describes, a different form of understanding [can happen].

(Quoted in Reinharz 1992:192)

b Feminist consciousness raising –confront yourself

Consciousness raising helped me to find a 'new' or different way of understanding: a feminist approach that is not about women who want to be like men or who hate men. In other words, it is not about anti-man. The discourse about patriarchal practice helped me to understand that men and women have been socialized and socially constructed into thoughts and actions of patriarchal thoughts and practices. Before we as women can change patriarchy, we have to change ourselves, our consciousness. We have to learn and we have to be wise:

...feminist consciousness-raising emphasized the importance of learning about patriarchy as a system of domination, how it became institutionalized and how it is perpetuated and maintained. Understanding the way male domination and sexism was expressed in everyday life created awareness in women of the ways we are victimized, exploited, and, in worse case scenarios, oppressed.

(bell hooks 2000:2)

The following example from the data shows Feminist consciousness at work in the research:

Teacher E was in a meeting with the chairman of the governing body. She was always intimidated by him and his money and status. We deconstructed some of her fears of domination by men. Her feedback after the meeting was as follows:

E: Mr Smit has his own ideas: he feels strongly that we should appoint more male teachers in the school and that will solve all our problems. I told him that I agree to some extent, but that he as the chairman of the governing body should show more compassion and understanding for the existing female teachers who do more than is expected of them. I can see that he is struggling to think on a practical level.

I then explained to him that we as teachers struggle to manage everything because we have to juggle our time between work and family and we feel that we have to give our best in the class as well.

I think eventually he saw my point.

By naming the problem (discourse) as ‘not understanding’, it went directly to the problem, regardless of the female teacher or the chairman’s gender.

Next, I will briefly focus on how the Feminist movement hoped to raise children without sexist/patriarchal practices in teaching.

c Feminism and Teaching

Rachel Hare-Mustin (2001:9), drawing on Postmodern skepticism writes in her book *Making a Difference: Psychology and the Construction of Gender* (1992) that the meaning of gender is not only determined by traditional focus on male-female differences, it also was invented by human societies. She argues that industry invented this imaginary dependence on reproductive differences by reinforcing gendered differences in every sphere of life. Over time, as people participated and repeatedly reinforced the gender stereotypes, it was taken for granted and

became increasingly difficult to move outside the constructed gendered language and gendered identities.

The following little poem illustrates the point beautifully:

“Mother, may I go out to swim?”
Yes my darling daughter.
Hang your clothes on a hickory limb
But don’t go near the water.”

- Mother Goose

Within the Feminist movement, the radical component of the movement hoped to create a world where there would be no sexism or patriarchal influences. Their attention was mainly focussed on girls and teaching them about sexist biases and patriarchal practices: ‘that all men had it better than all women...The assumption that boys had more privilege and power than girls fuelled feminists prioritizing a focus on girls’ (hooks 2000:72). But that created a problem because the emphasis on gender differences obscured the questions of patriarchy, dominance, privilege and power. Western science and knowledge are based on comparing and contrasting and males are usually accepted as the standard of comparison where women are either different or alike the male. This creates an endless exploration about differences and the male remains in the privileged position (Hare- Mustin 2001:9).

Although today’s girls have much more freedom than women of previous generations, their lives are still shaped by ideas of sensitivity, romance and relationships, opposed to being aggressive or active. The consequence is that women believe that they should always be supportive, put others first, good listeners, nurturers et cetera (Hare-Mustin 2001:5).

A major difficulty that challenged feminist thinkers when confronting sexism and patriarchy in

the education system was that, more often than not, female teachers were and are the transmitters of such thinking:

Again, it must be reiterated that most people assume that a woman [teaching] children, especially sons, will fail to teach him how to become a patriarchal male. This is simply not true.

(hooks 2000:73)

At Beaumont Primary School, where both the principal and deputy principal of the school were male, the female teachers continued to teach children sexist/patriarchal thinking, such as ‘girls like to read and girly stuff, while boys like to do sport’; or ‘you may never talk back to an adult, it is disrespectful.’ I believe that ‘naming and shaming’ or bullying practices lays the foundation for other forms of abuse. In order for me to bring the seriousness of the point across I would like to take Levine’s comments on motherhood and place the word teaching/teacher in the place of motherhood:

In a maddening paradox, [so-called] “experts”, idealizes teaching while it devalues teachers. We are regularly scolded and chastised and warned that our smallest mistakes can have negative lifetime consequences for our children. We are put on notice to “get it right”.

(2006:202)

Unfortunately, in the teaching context “getting it right” often means physical, emotional and psychological violence against children. This is the one problem to which most feminist thinkers did not want to draw attention. While the movement called attention to the patriarchal culture of domination over children with no rights, the fact is that ‘masses of children are daily abused’ (hooks 2000:73) by some teachers in our schools.

d The game we play – ‘the personal is the political’

Our boys are also often subjected to shame in school when they do not conform to the sexist notion of playing a contact sport such as rugby. My own two sons did not want to play rugby at school. One son wanted to do athletics and did not want to get hurt during rugby tackles. My other son wanted to play music: he can now play three musical instruments. Both were often shamed by teachers and other children in school who had bought into the sexist discourse. At

home, my husband and I decided to respect our sons' decisions and supported them when they were bullied. We intentionally practised feminism in action:

When...parental caregivers embody anti-sexist thoughts and behaviour boys and girls have the opportunity to see feminism in action. When feminist thinkers and activists provide children with educational arenas where anti-sexist biases are not the standard used to judge behaviour, boys and girls are able to develop healthy self-esteem.

(2000:75)

I believe that although resisting the reproduction of the industry's construction of gendered identities can be fatiguing for most parents and teachers, we cannot be neutral. Feminist theory uses the phrase 'the personal is the political' which suggests that our experiences have political meaning. We are not free from how gender politics are infused in the ways we create our lives (Hare-Mustin 2001:9).

e To love again

One way of going beyond gender today is to embrace feminist thinking , which teaches the practice of creating loving bonds with our children and with each other. Unfortunately, the early feminist movement critiqued and influenced many to believe that love was a trap for women to prevent them from achieving self-actualisation. Instead of challenging patriarchal assumptions of love, love was portrayed as an invasive monster that wanted to punish us in a cruel and unjust manner.

Although the radical feminist critique was misguided in many ways, men and women need an alternative vision for the journey of love:

...there can be no love when there is domination. Feminist thinking and practice emphasize the value of mutual growth and self-actualisation in partnerships...this vision of relationships where everyone's needs are respected, where everyone has rights, where no one need fear subordination or abuse, runs counter to everything patriarchy upholds about the structure of relationships.

(hooks 2000:104)

The following excerpt is an example of how one of the teachers experienced her strength through the value of love:

Carol: Love is an important value for me in terms of how I see other people and my work as a teacher. I believe that if I love my neighbour, it is easier to work with them, but if I hate someone, it is difficult to work with that person.

Researcher's notes

I cannot see my inquiry into our struggling teachers as isolated incidents. Our schools are becoming war zones of clashes between patriarchal and feminist thinking. I am part of stoking the fires of sexism and patriarchal thinking and away from love.

Through feminist consciousness raising, I hear the voices of teachers in pain, grief and rage moving away from their natural instinct: to love.

I was so sad and angry after Ana's death. I was the 'angry' Feminist who was angry about the patriarchal society and I 'hated' her husband for her suffering. But I have accepted that true love is rooted in recognizing and accepting that we are all responsible, that justice combines acknowledgement, care, knowledge and commitment through understanding that 'love has the power to transform us, giving us the strength to oppose domination,...a choice to love' (hooks 2000:104).

I believe that these are examples of what it means to go beyond gender. As gender is one of the major categories of my inquiries in this research, however, there remains tentativeness in me to completely 'de-gender' my questions. The fact remains that certain perspectives and actions are grounded in historical association with women or men. For example, menopause cannot be described or defined in the same language for women and men. Our inquiries need to be explored from history and at the same time go beyond it.

There will always be inquiries to be made and questions to ask to go beyond the status quo and challenge the dominant discourses.

Another process in my Narrative Analysis was to ask the question: How was the teacher telling the story about herself? In the next paragraphs, I will try to answer this question in a different way than before, by discussing the findings in the data.

5.6.1.4 How the teacher tells the story about herself

My initial involvement with the teachers of Beaumont Primary School started when I was asked to help them with their values implementation process. This soon became more than just helping with the values implementation, but flowed over into counselling sessions and conversations. In my conversations with the teachers I soon realized that some of them were experiencing something (see also 1.4.2) which they were afraid to see or admit. Although the teachers appeared friendly, I observed that the atmosphere in the staffroom was especially hostile. Moreover, when questions were asked, they were asked in aggressive and attacking ways.

This hostility reminded me of Levine's (2006:206) words:

Certainly the fear of appearing vulnerable is not limited to [certain people]. Many people chose not to expose their emotionally tender spots. For many of us, being wary comes from repeated experiences of not having our needs met when we were vulnerable...For women who continue to fear that those around them will exhibit aggression rather than compassion, presenting a "perfect" and formidable front is the best insurance against being exploited and misunderstood. It is also an exhausting and ultimately empty performance.

a The paradox of the private becomes the public secret

A major challenge to being an effective teacher, is the feeling that we may be out of step with our teaching community. There are many teachers who have an uneasy sense that something is wrong with the education system. And that, despite education receiving a huge portion of the budget and curricula being updated regularly, the emphasis is on 'more.' The education system seems completely wedded to the cultural norms of achievement and status. But, unfortunately, most of our teachers stay silent, feeling like the odd person out. As a result, nobody says that the metaphorical 'emperor has no clothes.'

But sometimes, as can be seen in this research project, teachers share their thoughts by using a ‘public language’:

[Their inner] nuances of consciousness, emotions both subtle and profound, inner yearnings, unconscious desires, the whispering of conscience – all of these [were] created in the matrix of this language. The words form and deform around us as we speak and listen. We swim in a sea of words. Only that which is public can be private. We dwell in paradox

(Gergen 2001:53)

For example, in a conversation with one of the young teachers in the research project, we talked about the knowledge and wisdom that some of the older teachers have to offer the younger teachers. I asked her which teacher she thought had the most to offer. She mentioned the teacher. She went on to tell me how this teacher had been very outspoken when she was younger, but that she had now decided never to speak or complain again or even talk to anyone in the staffroom. I acknowledged that this was sad to hear and then asked her why she thought that the teacher decided to do that. She said that the older teacher had told her that as she only has two years of teaching left before she retires, she has decided to keep her head down because she felt that she that she doesn’t have a voice anymore because of her age. I asked the young teacher how she interpreted the older teacher’s words. She shrugged her shoulders and said: “Maybe she’s right.”

I realized that in this research inquiry I needed to keep empathic ears and eyes on the issues faced by these teachers. Kotzé & Kotzé (2001:3) calls this a special kind of ‘compassion’. It would have been both inaccurate and misleading to characterize these teachers’ attitudes as unfounded or even non-existent. Most teachers are loving and generous people, who try to do their best in their work, despite personal and cultural pressures. They hide their vulnerabilities in front of their school learners, but the obstacles and challenges confronting them are real. No amount of “You have nothing to complain about; you have four holidays a year” can change the fact that their personal and social struggles can become overwhelming.

5.6.1.4.1 Hearing the unheard

My choice to adopt a Social Construction and Collaborative Inquiry approach created a research context in which I could focus on hearing each teacher in the context of the teaching profession. Interestingly, only female teachers responded to my request to participate in the research. Although each teacher's story reflected unique and complex experiences, descriptions and feelings, there was a strong common theme: *not being heard* either by professional therapists and colleagues or by family members. Gergen (1991) and Gilligan (1982) argue that the field of psychology is biased toward hearing what men has to say and against what women has to say because most research has been done on white upper-middle-class males. Gergen (2001:14) argues further that Feminist empirical psychologists are 'by definition committed to a political stance that is not value neutral,...which supports objectivity in all matters,...[and] tended to value quantitative research over qualitative work.' The Feminist empiricists' focus tend to be rather on issues relating to sex differences, for example in mathematical achievements, leadership, helping behaviour, group performance, conformity et cetera than on hearing what women has to say (Gergen 2001:18). She calls for new theories and research that is focussed on women and on honouring women's voices. Tannen (1990:48) gives the following perspective:

We all want, above all, to be heard – but not merely to be heard. We want to be understood – heard – but not merely to be heard. We want to be understood – heard for what we think we are saying, for what we know we meant.

The challenge for me as a researcher was to spend enough time with the teachers to ensure that they felt heard. I had to check constantly whether I was merely responding to my own ideas and meanings of the words I was hearing. I also had to check whether my own ideas and knowledges as a teacher tempted me to offer generalized ideas to all situations, which would prove not to be useful.

5.6.1.4.2 Hearing from a slightly different perspective

Tannen (1990:48), when investigating how gender influences communication practices, suggests that hearing is more than listening: 'It is a process involving a negotiation of understandings.' Anderson and Goolishian (1988, 1992) contribute to this idea of hearing through their innovative language systems theory. They argue that the interactive process of understanding is mutually collaborative and dialogical in nature and results in a nonlinear process of understanding.

As a researcher, this meant that the information I heard and the meanings that I formed in this research, were not independent, discrete and objective representations of the teachers' reality that were carried in the language they conveyed to me. Rather, the teachers' words were evolving through socially constructed exchanges with me and others. Their words were also influenced by prejudices, biases and experiences as well as the settings in which the conversations took place. There were, in fact, multiple interactions that influenced the exchange of words. As a researcher I was not 'simply hearing' what the teachers were saying; I was actively interpreting what I thought was being said. For example, when I heard that a teacher was afraid of losing her job because of her age or because she was struggling with her body, I conceptualised and interpreted her words through the lens of my own experience of menopause and aging. This reflects our tendency to make meaning from the words we hear by responding with our own ideas: these are frequently generalizations, and not based on the particularities of that person's words.

In my conversations with the teachers, I tried to hear what the women thought were important about their experiences as teachers. Although the conversations began differently with each person, all of them were organised around a general idea that they considered important for me to know about their experience. Examples of these general ideas included menopause, patriarchal practices and health.

5.6.1.5 Themes of women's embodiment

a Identity

The-woman's sense of identity remains closely tied to her physical condition..., to be in a certain bodily condition is to "be oneself". Or to be who one is, is to be in the unified totality of one's self-in-body.

Gergen (2001:82)

The following two examples from the data illustrate the different ways in which two teachers experienced their bodily identities – their 'self-in-body':

E: I feel so tired all the time, even in the morning before I come to school. You know, I loved to exercise when I was younger. I even took ballet classes at age 30. Now, my body is just in pain. It feels as if I have lost all my fight for life.

Carol: I get so much feedback from parents who thank me for what I am doing for their children. When we go out in public, my husband says it's like being married to a celebrity. Children come running with their little arms open and shout at the top of their lungs: "Mrs Viljoen!" I get hugs and "I love you" from them. This is what makes me get up in the morning with a smile – to come to school because there are 30 plus little people who are getting up and looking forward to being with me.

Gergen (2001) also identified a second theme that was evident in women's accounts of their bodies, especially in later years: the notion that we are relational beings.

b Relational beings

This is a subtle manifestation in which a woman's identity is inter-relationally mingled with other people and with God. As a result, her identity (self) becomes an extension of her bodily relations with other people and with God. The following excerpts are examples of conversations I had with two of the teachers in the research project in this regard:

Carol: I have been at Beaumont for about eight years. I have had about 250 children pass through my hands and class, many of them siblings from the same family. These parents and their children are the core section of the community that make me feel valued as a teacher.

Quita: My relationship with God makes me feel valued. It helps me not to get swayed or affected by people's negative words and actions. That is where I get my strength, it is the foundation from which I operate. I don't know how people cope who don't have a relationship with God.

Gergen gives the following summary:

To be a woman is to be embodied; to fail in attending to one's corporeality would be to ignore the culturally defined essential core of being.

(2001:87)

5.6.1.6 The journey every woman must take

Because most of the research participants were women and over forty years of age, interesting issues presented themselves in the research data. These issues were especially around the bodily experiences of the women. Rich (1977:14) raises an important point about women's embodiment which I also discovered was reflected in the research data:

I know no woman – virgin, mother, lesbian, married, celibate – whether she earns her keep as a housewife, a cocktail waitress, or a scanner of brain waves – for whom her body is not a fundamental problem.

This 'fundamental problem' is mainly due to the cultural norms and discourses which our male narrated life projects onto women's lives when our lives are defined by some important experience, such as menopause.

Although I prefer the term 'the journey every woman must take', some of the so-called 'problems' that teacher's bodies 'presented' in this research will be discussed briefly below.

This is also a time that no woman can escape. Although her body needs time to prepare and adjust, it does not mean that she becomes useless and unable to work. The symptoms a woman can experience during this change can depend on her physical, mental, spiritual and emotional state, as well as the society she lives in. Physical conditions - such as hysterectomy, chemotherapy, radiation, diseases and stress - can aggravate the symptoms. This journey that every woman must take, is called by different names in communities around the world, but in our Western society is called 'menopause'.

5.6.1.7 Menopause

Menopause is a natural part of aging that usually occurs at the end of the menstruation periods of a woman. Around the age of forty and upwards, a woman's ovaries gradually stop producing egg cells and the hormone oestrogen (<http://men.wemd.com/guide/male-menopause>). This means that her body changes and the changes can affect her emotionally and psychologically.

5.6.1.7.1 The social construction of menopause

Gergen (2001:118) defines menopause as 'a social construction given meaning and value by the language community that we all share.' I found it surprising to discover that, in comparison with the vast amount of medical research and literature on menopause, there were much less understanding of menopause from a qualitative experience perspective. Moreover, it would seem that meanings of menopause are heavily influenced by the socio-historical contexts in each culture. This makes menopause not merely a biological phenomenon but also a socially constructed event. For example, the Kung women from a traditional tribe in Africa, do not even have a word for 'hot flushes' associated with menopause. This might suggest that these experiences are regarded as a natural experience and part of change. Research shows that there is a difference between how traditional and non-traditional Navajo women experience menopause: the traditional women had fewer "symptoms" than the non-traditional women. The symptoms of menopause also appear to be much lower in women in Asia than in Western societies.

Baloyi (2013:1-7) did a study on menopause in the (South) African context. He argues that

because most of the African cultures live by the motto of *Ubuntu* - 'I am because we are' - it is easy to be affected by what other people think and say about you:

The implications [are] that the way other people in the surroundings view menopause, particularly those who place negative connotations on it, makes it an expression of harassment to those who want to feel accepted in the community. Consequently, it debates their self-esteem. Therefore, from a gender-equality point of view, it is my contention that the view of some African cultures on menopause is a cause of concern. This is because women who pass the stage of menopause are viewed as unequal or less worthy by their husbands who tend to view the change negatively.

(Baloyi 2013:4)

It would seem, that this view is also true in the Western world where menopause conveys a strong negative message to women about their value, especially in the workplace. Estok and O'Tool (1991:27-39) comment that there are many examples of stigmatized meanings of menopause. For example, a newspaper article from 1977 reported that Jane Byrne, the female mayor of Chicago, displayed 'unacceptable' behaviour when she criticised the political machine for corruption. The journalist attributed Byrne's comments to 'merely being due to the "change of life".' He concludes that: 'you wouldn't want a president of the bank making a loan under these raging hormonal influences.'

5.6.1.7.2 How we made sense of menopause in this research

My own menopausal passage sparked my interest in delving deeper into the research participant's experience of menopause. I found that most of the female teachers I talked with in this research did not appear to have a clear idea about menopause or what was happening to their bodies when they got older. They would mostly complain or articulate the impact of menopause on their bodies and their lives in the following ways:

- 'I am 45 years and I feel tired and depressed all the time.'
- 'My body feels old and sore.'
- 'I feel so emotional, some days I just can't stop crying.'
- 'It must be the "empty nest syndrome" that makes me feel so empty now that my children have left home.'

- ‘The principal always says that we need more younger teachers, I feel so insecure and frightened that I will lose my job.’
- ‘My husband says I am old and over the hill, he wants to trade me in for a younger model – that is hurtful.’
- ‘My doctor has given me anti-depressants and sleeping pills, but I feel terrible in the morning.’

The teachers I briefly talked with, who had not yet entered the journey and who had not educated themselves about menopause, mostly had negative associations with it, especially regarding their own mother’s experiences.

Gergen (2001:120) found that menopause has been implicated as having a detrimental factor in women’s lives. Gergen quotes Cowan, Warren and Young’s (1985) study in which attitudes about menopause indicated that ‘women did not view menopause as negatively as members of the medical professions did.’ They found that women’s views were formed by how menopause was defined: ‘as a medical problem, as a life transition, or as a symbol of aging, with the medical context eliciting the most negative attitudes.’

5.6.1.7.3 How menopause affects the lives of female teachers

As the above statistics show (see 5.6.1.3.3), teaching is a female-dominated profession and as we have seen in this research, support for women who are teachers whilst at the same time experience symptoms of menopause does not feature high on any school management agenda. Research done in England and Wales by the National Union of Teachers (NUT) suggest that although all women experience menopause at some stage in their lives, teachers can be more affected than other women in other professions because of the nature of their work. Menopause must therefore be recognised as an occupational health issue for female teachers and more should be done to improve the school environment for women who are going through menopause (www.teachers.org.uk/node/10513).

Women who go through menopause can experience physical symptoms such as hot flushes, headaches, sweating, and bladder problems. Compared to most women in the corporate and other

work sectors, the workplace of female teachers consists of high temperatures (classrooms with thirty plus children), poor ventilation, poor or non-existing toilet facilities, lack of cold drinking water and inadequate resting time. All these can make the symptoms of menopause worse. This is especially true for female teachers in the South African rural areas.

An article in the *Daily Mail* (2014) says that some school principals are also targeting older women with disciplinary proceedings and threatening to replace them with younger teachers, rather than addressing problems the teachers might face such as menopause. We have seen this in the words of teacher E (see 5.6.1.3.2.1) when she was repeatedly threatened by the principal and chairman of the governing body of the school to be replaced by a younger (male) teacher.

5.6.1.7.4 Making sense of menopause as ‘illness’ narrative in women’s lives

For many centuries, women’s menopausal passage has been viewed as an illness. Mythical fearful stories of old witches and misconceptions of women’s experiences have formed our imaginations and painted a negative picture of menopause. As a result, many people today are still ignorant and afraid of it:

...the majority of women suffer during the transitional years of menopause. Although the symptoms tend to be organic and physical, the psychological symptoms predominate. There is an ancient mythology amongst some African people indicating that menopause is a sign that renders it forbidden for a woman to engage in sexual activities, and the myth is still evident in some African cultures today...It would not be surprising for an older woman to tell her husband that it is time that he took a new wife, as an indication that she is ready to be exempted from her sexual obligations.

(Voda 1997:133 cited in Baloyi 2013:2)

Baloyi (2013:3) argues that in many ways, menopause ‘is taken as another form of undermining women.’ I agree with Baloyi’s argument that Pastoral Counsellors should ‘investigate female menopause in order to reveal possible ways in which [all people] can approach menopause without the negative perceptions which might lead to divorce, polygamy or seeing the wife as no longer an important person in the house.’

Gergen (2001:92) states that middle age/menopause has not been adequately researched by psychology. She argues that most research and textbooks focus on the excitement of childhood and puberty, and when that is over, women become 'invisible as research objects of research' (Gergen 2001:92). Sadly many times menopause is described as the 'beginning of the end, where osteoporosis, widowhood, Alzheimer's, dependency, and death are liveliest topics that follow' (Gergen 2001:92).

5.6.1.7.5 The Change

Galligan (1997) points out that not until recently, women have played a minor role in research. She argues that the major theories of human development have been about men, and women have missed out as research subjects in the formulation of theories. Developmental theory uses men's experience and competence as a baseline against which both men's and women's experiences is judged, often to the detriment of women (Belenky 1997:6). Galligan (1982) proposes that the power of women's voices in research can expand our conception of human development.

Gergen (2001:93) says that she has found it a difficult task to challenge menopause and the name fixture 'change of life' in her research with menopausal women. She argues that women accept the vision of menopause that the medical profession constructed and that women seem to have assimilated the vision that psychology (directly/indirectly) has provided, especially in self-help books:

Since I began this work, notions of menopause have grown in their power to reduce women to pitiable creatures, overwhelmed by chemical imbalances. The medicalization of menopause has succeeded in turning all women nearing the age of 50, and afterwards, into patients' (Leng 1997, cited in Gergen 2001:93).

Sigmund Freud was particularly responsible for fuelling the fires in the medical and psychological worlds around the misconceptions of menopause. He described menopausal women as 'quarrelsome, peevish, and argumentative, petty and miserly.' Psychiatrist David Reuben declared that after menopause, a woman becomes 'not really a man but no longer a

functional woman' (<http://www.macrobiotics.co.uk> > menopause). These views have damaged the way many women perceive and experience their menopause. They are also de-humanizing and wrong. How is it that the psychological and scientific world can give credit to men who make opinions about a subject only women experience?

As I have mentioned before, when a women goes into the phase of her life when her body can no longer produce children, there are also emotional changes that take place. The following and are the most common emotions experienced by menopausal women (<http://webmd.com>):

- Irritability
- Sadness
- Lack of motivation
- Anxiety
- Aggression
- Difficulty concentrating

According to Avis, Assmann, Kravitz, Ganz and Ory (2004); Lopez, Soares De Lorenzi & d'Adretta Tanaka (2010), the majority (80%) of women in their menopause report that menopausal symptoms are severe enough to affect the quality of their daily lives. Many women get sick during menopause. Cancer, strokes, and auto-immune illnesses are common among menopausal women. One would think that we live in a time where serious attention should be given to practices such as hormone replacement therapy. Why is it still prescribed by doctors despite the devastating known risks involved? Can a possible answer be found in our Western plastic surgery, youth supporting and sex-obsessed society which turns a 'blind eye' to the contributing factors why women get sick during menopause?

Cross-cultural studies indicate that attitudes toward symptoms of menopause are not necessarily universal. In Asia, for example, women are liberated from pregnancy by menopause and their personal freedom is increased (Maoz, Dowty, Antonovsky & Wijsenbeck 1970, quoted in Gergen 2001:121). Depression, which is considered one of the main psychological ailments related to menopause, is found only in cultures where the women's status are decreased after a certain age (Bart 1971; Datan 1997, quoted in Gergen 2001:121). Becker (1964) says that

depression in women after they have completed their maternal role is not simply a matter of hormones or a lack of hormones, but rather a lack of a purpose or alternative to options for the future.

5.6.1.7.6 Menopause - a 'conspiracy of silence'

In this research project, the effect of menopause on the struggles of female teachers could easily have been overlooked because menopause is frequently regarded as a taboo subject in our society. Research done by the National Union of Teachers in the United Kingdom found that 80% of respondents did not disclose that they were experiencing menopause. Some respondents said that 'such a discussion would have been embarrassing' (www.teachers.org.uk/node/10513). Although the subject of menopause was rarely openly discussed in my conversations with the teachers, it was nevertheless alluded to as 'an embarrassing problem' or, as I prefer to describe it, 'a conspiracy of silence.' Several women expressed the view that there was no place for acknowledging menopause in their workplace or that they would just have to accept the fact that their husbands did not love them anymore.

I realized the critical role played by the social context in which these teachers experienced menopause: the teaching profession and Western society. Most of these teachers got their knowledge from the medical world or through witnessing their mothers' experiences. Their cultural experience co-constructed their view of menopause so that it continued to represent menopause as a negative experience signifying aging and illness.

In order to deal with menopause, these women had to make a number of accommodations in their daily lives. These will not be discussed here. Because of their lack of knowledge and preparedness for the onset of menopause, the women were surprised by the changes that were occurring in their lives and confused by what was considered as 'normal':

This in itself indicates the need for some kind of counselling for women during the menopausal transition.

(Baloyi 2013:5)

Baloyi's suggestion is echoed elsewhere:

Besides counselling, where else can women find hope in the many challenges and stressful moods of menopause and the midlife?

(King et al 2005:38)

Now that I have identified and analysed the problems and discourses in this Narrative Analysis, I need to present that golden thread – the unique outcome - in the teachers' lives that stands against the problem story and supports the alternative story of their lives.

5.7 Were there any unique outcomes in the research?

This is an important question to ask as Pastoral Narrative Counsellor. While I was working with the teachers in this research project, I had to listen to the stories brought by the teachers. I heard the stories that fitted with the problem story of struggling, but I also heard events that seemed to 'stand against the problem's influence' or were 'different or outside of the problem's influence' (Morgan 2000:51). These are known as 'unique outcomes':

[a unique outcome] can be anything that the problem would not like; anything that does not "fit" with the dominant story. They are instances/events that would be difficult to achieve in the light of the problem.

(Morgan 2000:52)

The challenge for the Pastoral Narrative Counsellor is to notice the unique outcomes:

[unique outcomes' can often go unnoticed, unless the therapist listens and watches out for them. People tend to place less significance on these events and will often mention them very quickly or in the passing...the therapist is interested in unique outcomes...because they can be doorways to alternative stories.

(Morgan 2000:54)

5.7.1 Noticing the unique outcomes

When enquiring about the effects of struggling in the teacher's lives, I was actually quite surprised to find that in many of the conversations the unique outcomes were almost the same or in the same line of thought.

The following are examples of unique outcomes that emerged from this research:

Emmi: Where I often fall short, I am blessed to know that it is at His (Jesus') feet I am given the strength and forgiveness to stand up, dust my feet off and start again.

Carol: We have a culture of caring, our Christian values help me to know that if I am struggling with something, even if it's personal, I am not alone. There will be support for me. This is like a safety net.

Quinta: I feel valued by what God thinks of me, without sounding too spiritual.

E: I believe in God and I believe that His love carries me through difficult times.

Helene: I try to listen to learners, parents and colleagues and then I ask God to guide me in that situation. I know that my belief in God make my life less chaotic.

Interestingly, the unique outcomes consisted mainly of the same themes, that is, belief, faith, religious practices and spirituality.

In my analysis of the data, I decided to include the words 'faith' and 'belief in God' under the category of 'spirituality.' I am convinced that all the terms actually represent closely related perspectives – the institutionalized and the personal. The institutionalized spirituality is what we do with others, for example Christianity, but faith and belief is the spirituality within ourselves, in our hearts.

5.7.1.1 Spirituality

The word spirituality is used frequently nowadays and defined in many contexts. The one definition that I could find that closest fit the unique outcome of the Narrative approach, as well as the teachers' descriptions in this research, is by Van de Walt and Valenkamp. They describe spirituality as a symbol:

...of one's actions to the absolute and towards others and to their own being, core values and practices. Spirituality, therefore, is concerned with one's longing for meaning, wholeness and connectedness in the sense of connectedness with one's inner self, with others and with a higher power.

(de Klerk-Luttig 2008:510)

a Spirituality is relational

If spirituality is defined as relational, then materialism, rationalism and secularism are at the polar opposite side. Ramphele (2012:76) voices her concern:

[as South Africans we] have gravitated towards becoming a nation that reduced 'being' into 'having'... We pride ourselves as South Africans on the value we place on *Ubuntu* – which could be translated as *beingness* – a core of our philosophical orientation. One would have expected that 'being' would be a feature of our social relationships rather than 'having'

From the Judeo-Cristian perspective, spirituality asks for space for the Holy Spirit to renew us for the love and service to our neighbours (Rom. 12:2). Spirituality is therefore the way in which we become conscious of God's grace through His Son, the Messiah, and the work of the Holy Spirit who brings meaning into our daily lives (Downey 1991:271).

In the examples of the teachers' words given above, I found that each one experienced spirituality in a variety of ways. Some experienced it as the need for inner strength and a way to cope with life's struggles; others experienced it as peace of mind and reassurance of their value as a person. Some experienced it as a bigger entity which holds them together when they feel they are falling apart; while others experienced spirituality as a healing process and a longing for God.

b Spirituality in education

The teaching profession is sometimes referred to as ‘a calling’ – a vocation - by Christians. Burger (2005:24-25) proposes that a ‘calling assumes a firm conviction that I and my whole life are in service of the living God.’ A person’s calling and professional life is described by Paul as ‘living Christianity’ in Romans 12:1-2. It is my opinion that where the struggles in the physical dimension of teachers’ lives become visible, their approach to life is still a spiritual approach; spirituality is never absent from the educational situation. It is therefore important to create spaces for discussing spirituality, rather than trying to create a specific form of spirituality.

A large portion of time is spent in teaching on subject content, on *what* should be taught and *how* to answer correctly. Seldom are questions asked concerning *who* is teaching and *why* is he/she teaching? Schumacher gives a strong view on this point:

Education cannot help us as long as it accords no place to metaphysics. Whether the subjects taught are subjects of science or of humanities, if the teaching does not lead to a clarification of metaphysics, that is to say our fundamental convictions, it cannot educate a man [sic].

(1978:76)

5.8 Conclusion

As we have seen in the analysis of the data in this chapter, the various challenges of being a teacher in South Africa - and more especially being a female teacher over the age of forty - are greatly aggravated when teachers feel fragile and vulnerable. We have seen how their struggles can be as a result of many things, including: societal and personal discourses; age related issues (menopause); and illness. Although there is no quick fix for this scenario, by acknowledging the struggles of our teachers, we can form some understanding of the personal and social challenges that they face. The analysis of the data in this research project has shown that virtually no teacher - and especially no female teachers - are exempt from struggling.

There is a concept in psychology of the IP or ‘identified patient.’ The concept works like this: when a member of a family is brought for therapy, the therapist assumes that this member – the

IP - carries the problems of the whole family. For example, a daughter struggling with depression carries with her the possibility of a family system gone awry. Treatment can usually help the daughter with depression, but the parents and other siblings have to get involved so that the system as a whole can heal. I use this as an example to show how our teachers have become the IP of the struggling education system. We cannot ‘treat’ one teacher at a time without considering the dysfunction of the whole system:

The Yoruba people of Western Nigeria say that people are not merely human by being born, but all human beings are connected by their deeds and actions. They call this the philosophy of “Omoluabi: the way of human beings.” Omoluabi speaks about respect for the self and others which is demonstrated out in being part of a community. In other words, a person is called as Omoluabi.

(Okome & Vaughan 2011:19)

The analysis of the data in this research, has also revealed that spirituality acts as a means to emancipate the bonds and limitations with which the teachers struggle each day. How can we create space for the transformations wrought by spirituality to take place? Bahá'u'lláh (1952:259) provides a useful metaphor:

[human beings are like]... steel, the essence of which is hidden; through...good counsel and education, that essence will be brought to light. If, however, he be allowed to remain in his original condition, the corrosion of lusts and appetites will effectively destroy him.

Although steel is hard, cold and dark, it has the potential to become soft, warm and light. These qualities can only be manifested through the process of transformation. The same alchemy holds true for our teachers. Creating a space for spirituality in education on a physical and intellectual level could empower teachers to attain a sustainable way of being in the world, including being a teacher in all the challenges, frustrations and possibilities of the South African context.

In the next chapter, I will present the model that evolved out of the research project.

CHAPTER 6

Good research is not generated by rigorous
data analysis alone,
but by going beyond the data
to develop ideas,
thus initial theorising, however small
is derived from qualitative data
(Groenewald 2004:23)

6 Introduction

As evident in the previous chapters, I have found the Narrative approach a good fit for the Pastoral Counselling I did with the teachers of Beaumont Primary School. But narrative is a broad term and has been used by many scholars in various fields. While I was working with the teachers in this research, I realized that the concept of a model – or ‘curriculum’- could be applicable to the context of Pastoral Counselling with female teachers (especially) and particularly in South Africa. Education in South African faces unique challenges, such as diversity and other difficulties emerging from its apartheid past. This, together with the findings in this research regarding the struggles of ¹²female teachers, convinced me that an integrative approach would be more beneficial to the growth of every teacher. Instead of using a single approach or idea for my model, I looked at the richness that a few other models could offer. These included: The Letsema Circle of Healing (Chapter 1, 2.6) and the models of well-being (as seen in Chapters 2, 3 and 5). These models provided useful concepts and ideas for the construction of a model for the female teachers of Beaumont Primary School. My aim was to

¹² When I mention teachers in Chapter 6 & 7, I will mostly refer to female teachers, especially those over forty years old, because they were the main participants in the research.

find ways in which Pastoral Counselling could be beneficial to the whole person/teacher: a model that would honour her – and her struggles – as a person who was created in the image of God. Heitink (1999:151) reminds us that Practical Theology is based on the real life of people and their experiences. It therefore creates ways to integrate methods. Practical Theology is also a theory of action in practical ways. Thus it encouraged me to create a model that perhaps could be used and understood by other teachers as well and that could assist them to grow into the fullness and wholeness of their lives. This attempt to create a model is by no means perfect or complete. Life itself is a process or progress in stages and, as I experienced with the teachers in this research project, nothing is ever ‘fixed’ – least of all, life. Flexibility is part of the process, and the goal is to grow, no matter what approach it takes to reach there. Next, I will briefly explain the approaches I looked at to make the narrative work with the teachers effective and broad in its application.

6.1 The Letsema Circle of Healing

Ramphela (2012:182) describes how the Letsema Circle of Healing model evokes our African idiom:

...we are heeding Carl Jung’s injunction to acknowledge that our heritage from previous generations is not only genetic, but includes the important element of cultural heritage that helps us to be a rooted people.... Our circles of healing are affirmative spaces for communities that are often looked down upon and suffer of inferiority complex.

What resonated for me in this model is the African world-view that the life of the individual is not isolated from the rest of the community. In contrast to Western societies’ emphasis on individualism and isolation, the communal theme that runs through the African world-view rests strongly on mutual interdependence between people. Such a philosophy is the basis of ‘I am because we are, and since I am therefore we are’ (Mbiti1989:145). These ideas link up with Combs and Freedman’s (1999:27) concept of ‘communities of concern’ evident in the narrative approach. The Letsema Circle has been experimenting with healing wounded communities in South Africa and encouraging them to become ‘engaged citizens’ (Ramphela 2012:182). This is also an aim of the narrative approach. Weingarten (2000) talks about how every person needs a

community who will listen to and help stand against the dominant discourses in their lives. White (1995:9) underlines the importance of meaning-making in the community because it ‘is at once a personal, relational and cultural achievement’.

As can be seen in previous chapters in this research, teachers in post-apartheid South Africa are struggling with many issues – including patriarchal practises which devalue women. The communities the Letsema Circle worked with in the Eastern Cape struggle with many similar issues. I believe our female teachers are a ‘multitude of wounded people’ and their struggles and work stress manifests in their health and underperformance in ‘a nation relative to our potential’ (Ramphela 2012:182). Healing is the focus in the Letsema Circle where it ‘creates circles of encounters that permits...connections to be discovered and acknowledged from the first entry point into a new area.’ As the name indicates, the Letsema Circle is in the form of a circle, which is an important symbol in African traditions.

The research participants and I decided to use the cyclical concept as a frame for our model, as will be seen below. The Kiswahili people call the cyclical concept *Maisha ni mzunguko/duara*, which means: ‘life is a circle’. According to this African belief, the circle of life goes on, even after death when a person meets with ancestors in another continues life circle (Mbiti 1989).

6.2 Model of well-being

Well-being is an important theme in the Pastoral Counsellor’s way of approaching and working with people. In this research, the well-being of teachers of Beaumont Primary School – particularly of female teachers - came under the spotlight in conversations and interviews. My own well-being as a teacher and researcher was also highlighted (see Chapters 1 and 5) as evidence of how the researcher is also changed through this research process:

At the same time the researcher has to be changed by the participatory process. We constantly work towards viewing research as a relational activity, ‘a relation that acts in the world, blurring the boundaries between self and other’ where the post-patriarchal conception of knowing involves the reimagining of the self, not just of the other.

(Heshusius and Ballard 1996:172)

White (1995:7) underlines the ‘practices of narrative therapy [as to] assist people to break free from the identity claims that are associated with the problem-saturated accounts of their lives.’ Patriarchy, illness and menopause were some of the main discourses that contained ‘problem-saturated’ (White 1995:7) accounts of the struggles of some of the female teachers. As a result, we saw that many teachers’ overall well-being was affected and some even died prematurely. Weingarten (2001:112) reminds us that the impact of illness is huge. Illness, or more accurately, our relationship to it, threatens the way we know ourselves and how others know us.

There are many models of well-being available, especially in the Psychological field. I looked at a few that were applicable to this research, for example Piechowski’s model of well-being and Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (in Mendaglio 2008).

Piechowski’s (2006:25-57) model of well-being describes well-being in four ways. As I have already referred to this in Chapters 3 and 5, I will not elaborate here. Suffice it to reference my earlier discussion:

- 1) Awareness (consciousness) of oneself (see 5.6.1.3.3)
- 2) Relations with others (see Chapter 3 and 5)
- 3) Connection to the broader universe and spirituality (see 5.6.1.4.2)
- 4) Attachment to a place/institution (see Chapter 5)

All four of these must co-exist in a form of ‘care’:

If care is also viewed as a social practice, it is not only directed to the “other” (those in need), but also at self and the physical environment as well as the interrelations between the two.

(Sevenhuijsen 1998:18-19)

Statistics and the general well-being of our teachers in South Africa are also discussed in detail in Chapter two. What follows next, is a description:

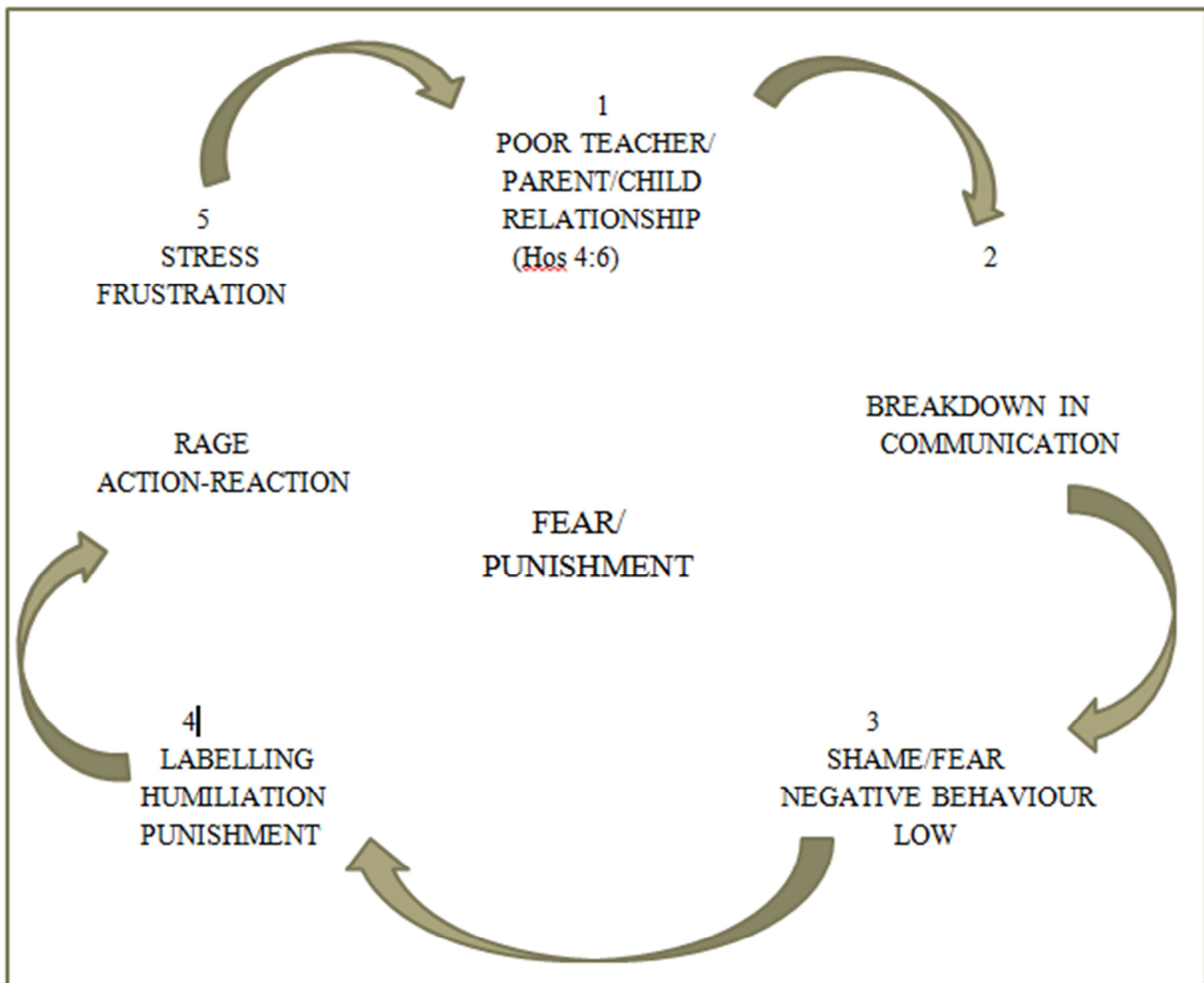
6.3 Framing our ways of thinking

I believe that research and theory go hand in hand in that each plays a part in our understanding of the world. In this research project, theory guided the creation of a model for this research. Issues were explored within the group of teachers whom I investigated through the questions that

were asked and conversations that took place. Research thus became a ‘co-search’ and ‘co-research’ (Epston 1995), a process in which all the participants had constituted their own ‘identifiable stake’. Kotzé and Kotzé (2001:10) caution about the ethical component of research: ‘Only if participants benefit from the research will it contribute to ethical acceptable academic knowledge.’ Heshusius and Ballard (1996:15) also warn against research as exclusively ‘an intellectual affair, because these stories simultaneously have private value and value beyond their own existence.’ The model that follows emerged from our conversations as a group and was inspired by the narratives of each research participant in this research. We called the new model: a rainbow model.

The first stage of the process of creating the rainbow model involved examining the discourses around the ‘model of punishment’ which most of the teachers believed they were living (see Chapter 5 for detailed discussion of the discourse of punishment). To aid this process, I attempted to construct a visual concept of this model, as can be seen below. My aim was to compare the ‘model of punishment’ with the new model we were creating and to demonstrate what we did not want. This was especially relevant with the research participants, because they are teachers and they use visual material every day to demonstrate the world to their learners. It was also an attempt to use visual material to show the process of facilitating and reframing of some of the understandings and meanings that were formed in the research process. In the end, it was also an attempt to demonstrate what and how we think when we are imprisoned by patterns of certain discourses and actions (see section 5.6.1.3). The differences between the two models were striking. Many teachers commented after we were finished on how their thinking has changed by looking at the two. First, we will look at the ‘punishment model’. This was the one that no one wanted.

6.3.1 Punishment/Fear model



Below is the explanation of the model. Please take note that I included this model to show the reader what the teachers experienced when they saw the comparison with the rainbow model.

1. Some teachers mentioned that they had very poor relations with the parents, learners and colleagues. In order to demonstrate how we sometime presume the worst (punishment) in other people, I asked them if they knew the true story of the polar bear and the dog. Since nobody knew the story, I related it. One day a man in Poland was drinking coffee while he was watching out of his cabin window. It was the middle of winter, the snow was thick and food was scarce. Through the window he saw a white polar bear approaching his house. The man was terrified - not for himself

but for his dog that was chained to a pole in the yard. He knew the bear was probably hungry and looking for food and that he had picked up the scent of his dog. The man could only watch as the hungry bear approached his dog. (At this stage, I could hear “ah” and “oh no” from the teachers). The man probably knew that his dog would not survive an attack by a polar bear, but he kept on watching. The bear approached the dog and, when he was about a meter from the dog, the dog lay down. The bear stopped and the man thought that this was the moment when his dog would die. What he saw next surprised him so much that this story was recorded and photographed for the National Geographic magazine. Instead of attacking and killing the dog, the bear started to play with dog. They played together for about an hour, without the bear hurting the dog, and then the bear left. The next day, the same thing happened and eventually the bear did not come back. (By this stage, some teachers were in tears). I asked the teachers if they perhaps sometimes feel like the small vulnerable dog when a parent or colleague approaches them, expecting the worst (punishment). Or if they had the attitude of “playfulness” and “approachability” when dealing with parents, colleagues or learners. They all said: “we usually expect the worst”, to be attacked verbally, or devalued and bullied.

The Bible reminds us in Hosea 4:6 that ‘My people perish for lack of knowledge’, in this case the knowledge and understanding that we are relational beings. The teachers agreed that our assumptions and ‘lack of knowledge’ of how a situation may turn out or if the parent or colleague are really who we think they are, may cause us to judge them and their motives and, in the process, isolate us from ‘the other’. Heshusius & Ballard (1996:31) says ‘We construct our understanding through dialogue with other [not our own ideas].’

2. When a discourse becomes dominant in a person’s life, it invites people to develop an identity around other skills (Kotzé & Kotzé 2001:141). Those teachers I talked with in this research had initially internalized their struggles: their struggles became the focus and invited them to develop their identities around struggles rather than around their other talents and skills, such as communicating with parents, learners and colleagues. Some teachers mentioned that they were terrified of ‘Parents’ night’

- which required standing in front of thirty plus parents, explaining their teaching approach and how they planned to guide their children through Grade 7. In my opinion, if the teacher does not feel secure or is not ‘well’, then this creates the ideal circumstances for a breakdown in communication between teacher and parent and maybe also learners.
3. Shame, fear and guilt are emotions that most teachers could identify with, especially when there had been breakdown in communication between them or in their families (marriages). Patriarchal discourses kept these emotions captive. It manifested in negative behaviour such as withdrawal and silence (not voicing themselves), which jeopardized their health and overall well-being (Chapter 5).
 4. Teachers tend to be over-responsible and internalize their emotions. In our conversations around discussing this model, most teachers agreed that this is a form of self-punishment. The voice of self-punishment found ways to create negative affects such as isolation, rejection and loneliness. When we looked back on how this happened, we saw self-punishment connotations in words like ‘falling short, afraid to speak, not paid enough, feeling punished by the government, humiliation’ (see 5.6.1.3.2; and 5.6.1.3.2.1). Power relations also contribute to a punitive culture in institutions like schools. Power is not a thing or essence that can be described, but is rather a complex set of relations among people (Davies 1996:18). Power struggles with colleagues, administration, parents and even learners (by labelling them) were a theme running through many conversations (see 5.6.1.3.1).
 5. We saw that this cycle led to stressed, burnt out, ill, depressed, angry and dying female teachers. Teachers over forty were struggling most of all (see 3.2). Although this fear/punishment model is also cyclical, the cycles represent an ongoing negative spiral of action and reaction. There can be no growth (life) in this model. It ends in death on many levels: physical, emotional and spiritual.

The creativity of teachers always amazes me. When we agreed that we did not want to live in a punishment model, their immediate reaction was to suggest that we should construct a model that would represent positive actions and growth. The Rainbow model that follows was co-created by the teachers of Beaumont Primary School.

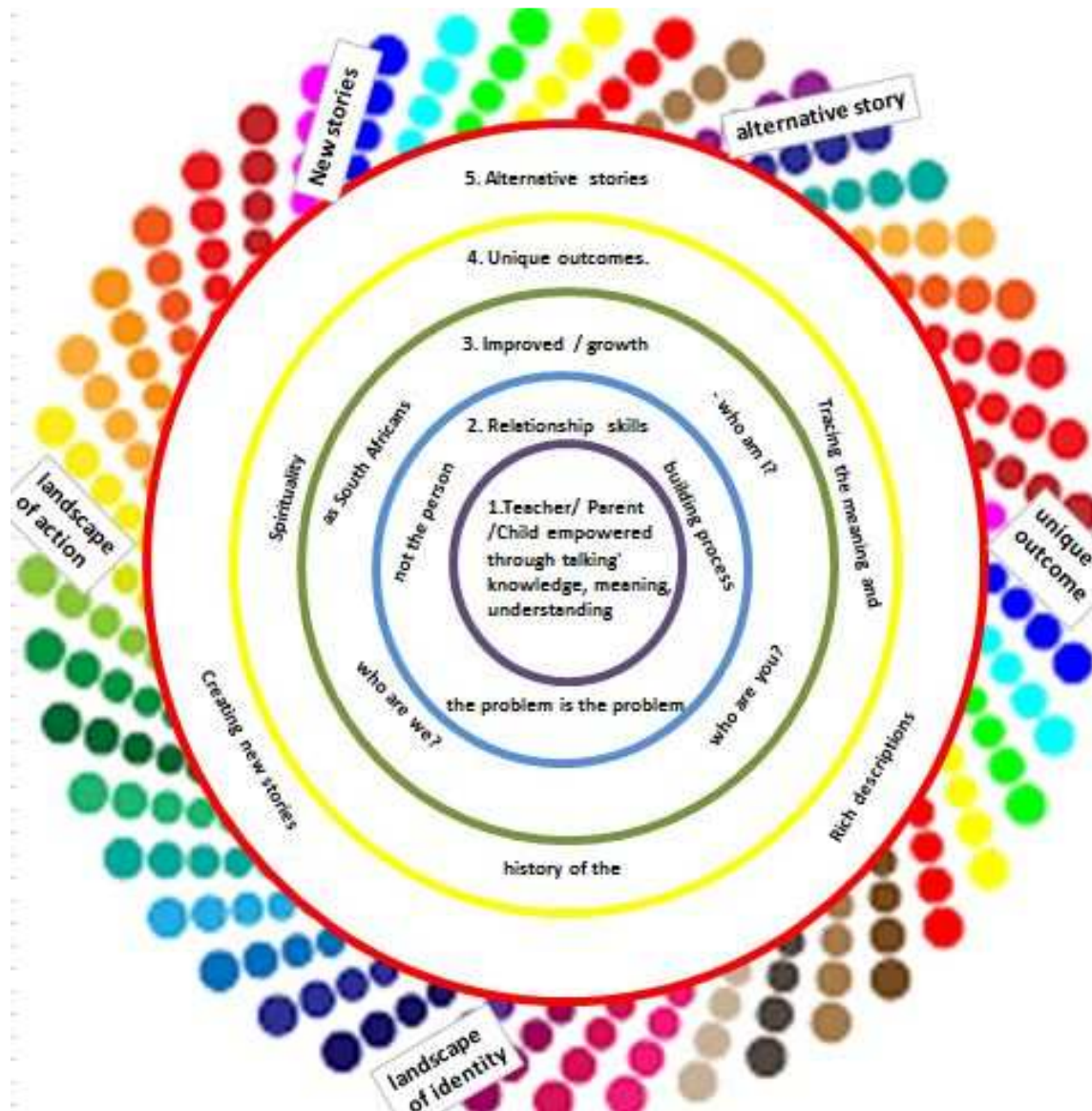
6.3.2 Narrative Pastoral (Rainbow) Model

The teachers agreed that the rainbow was a fitting symbol for the model, because it represents ‘inclusion’ of different learners and people in South Africa. We are the only country in the world that uses the term ‘rainbow nation’ as a representation of all the different people in our country (see 1.3.1.1).

The rainbow was also a reminder of the story of Noah (see 1.3.1.1). A question that came up in our conversations was: ‘Why did God give the rainbow as a sign? For what?’ The whole ark building experience, together with the unimaginably frightening storm experienced by Noah and his family, must have made an impression on their memories. Memories of the ark being battered by howling winds, rolling thunder, enormous waves, earth quakes, and underwater volcanoes spreading ‘fountains of the great deep’ (Gen 7:11).

But, when Noah and his family eventually stepped off the ark, the entire world had changed. Animal life, geography and weather patterns were chaotic; the world was ‘broken’; and Noah and his family were placed in ‘an uncertain world.’ No doubt they needed reassurance that such a catastrophe (punishment) would never happen again. It was out of God’s grace and mercy that the beautiful rainbow was given to Noah and the rest of the world as a reminder of God’s protection. Every time they saw the majestic rainbow, it would remind them of the security they had in their heavenly Father. The same promise holds true for us.

A Model: A Narrative Pastoral (Rainbow) model, co-constructed with female teachers of Beaumont Primary School.



What follows is an explanation of the co-constructed Rainbow model:

1. People's lives are shaped through the stories they tell and the experiences they have in performing these stories (Epston & White 1992:82). But, as we have seen in the lives of the female teachers in this research, dominant discourses - like patriarchy, illness and menopause

- threatened the way teachers knew themselves and how others knew them (Weingarten 2001:112). Although most of the teachers initially denied the existence of dominant discourses in their lives but, through talking about their struggles, they were able to establish narrative coherence: they could discern the interrelationship between the plot, characters, roles and themes in their lives. The experience of being able to hear themselves enabled them to listen to 'restitution narratives' (Weingarten 2001:117) and, in the process, were empowered. Their stories became units of knowledge: through interpretation, meaning and understanding their stories provided a new frame for their lived experiences and their relationships with colleagues, parents and learners. Or, as Epston & White (1992:80) suggests:

It is through stories that we obtain a sense of the unfolding of events of our lives through recent history, and it appears that this sense is vital to the perception of the "future" that is in any way different from the "present".

2. Morgan (2000:8) argues that our lives are multi-storied and that there are many different stories by which we live our lives in relation to others. This is linked to the social constructionist idea that there are no 'true' self (Freedman & Combs 1996:35). Multiple selves are constructed through language and come out in different contexts. In this research, narrative practices - such as externalizing - assisted the teachers to break free from identities that were associated with the problem-saturated accounts of their lives. For example, externalizing teacher E's struggles with age and fears of being replaced by a younger teacher, reduced the likelihood of guilt and self-blame for the 'defect' of aging in her, and reclaimed agency: she discovered the courage to go and speak to the principal about her fears (see 5.6.1.1.3). This motivated her to reclaim herself from the problem and to hold the problem had over her. She was able to see that the problem was the problem – a core narrative idea - and not herself.

3. The problem was examined with the purpose of identifying any discourses that might block the discovery of new/alternative stories. As we have already seen in this research, there were a few dominant discourses that were revealed through our conversations. For example:

power/knowledge, patriarchy, illness and menopause. I found that there was a need among the teachers to engage in conversations about questions - such as Who am I? Who are you? and Who are we? – that would help them negotiate through the minefield of culture and traditions represented in the diverse South African democracy. This raised other questions, such as: How can we learn in respectful ways about ourselves and one another's customs, cultures and traditions? Do female teachers in other cultures experience the same issues with patriarchy, illness and menopause, or are their experiences different? I believed that these were important questions because it related to the issue of 'being' which defines us as humans. We pride ourselves as South Africans on the value we place on *Ubuntu* – which is *beingness* (Ramphele 2012:76).

4. Unique outcomes are the 'sparkling events' in the interview or, in this case, the research (Epston & White 1992:86). In this research, the unique outcome were the conversations around the teachers' faith/spirituality (see 5.6.1.4.2). What created the environment that had made these unique outcomes possible? I suggest that by positioning myself as researcher in a post-modern perspective, I was able to ask different questions – such as: What do you think your spirituality might reflect about you as a teacher? How does your spirituality inform your practices as teacher I post-apartheid South Africa? These questions allowed each teacher to express her own story of God:

...it is in the context of intimate interactions that a person continues to co-create an evolving story that is uniquely his or her own, not dominated by my story, not a psychological story, nor even the story of his or her particular religious doctrines.

(Griffith 1995:137)

5. Alternative stories focus on 'new stories'. In an e-mail I received from teacher E, she proudly told me that after our conversation, she went to the principal and asked him if he was going to replace her with a younger teacher (see 5.6.1.1.3). He told her that he was not and that helped her to challenge the voices of age and depression. She realised that she could step out of the shadow of fear of losing her job. In the days that followed, she decided to stop using the depression and anxiety medication and after stopping to take the medication, she was confronted by voices of failure telling that she was unable to live a life without pills.

Landscape of action questions helped teacher E to recognise the times in her life when she stood up for her rights. For example, when she stood up and applied for the sport administrator post, and got it, even though she did not have the ‘best’ qualifications.

Landscape of identity questions helped the teachers to speak about their abilities/knowledges and skills. These questions were woven back and forth to assist the teachers to form a new and different story or, as White (1995:31) suggests:

In re-authoring work we invite persons to traffic in both of these landscapes [action and identity] – by reflecting on what alternative events in the landscape of action might mean, and by determining which events in the landscape of action most reflects the preferred accounts of characteristics, of motives, of beliefs and so on – so that alternative landscapes of action and of identity are brought forth.

6.4 Hearing the researched

In traditional research, the relationship between researcher and researched is mainly hierarchical: the researcher is the ‘knower’ whose ideas are valued and ‘heard’. But in this research, I invited a collaborative research relationship. This allowed me as researcher and the teachers as participants to work together to explore each teachers’ experience, as well as her unique and untold story.

As mentioned above, my premise for this research inquiry was that people are usually not heard in research projects;

Hearing sometimes sounds like a simple concept – an everyday experience in which we all participate...[but]...one does not simply hear what another person is saying but is actively interpreting what she thinks is being said.

(Penn 2007:112)

In my conversations with the teachers I tried to hear what they thought was important about their struggles and what was important for me to know about their experiences. My aim was to value the uniqueness of every teacher and allow them to explain what they considered important.

Encouraging a narrative - or story - format provided the teachers a platform to be heard without simply being reduced to statistics and categories, a stance which could have kept me as researcher distanced from their hurts and struggles:

It is much easier to believe that it won't happen to me, if I am staying at a distance. It is not until facing each woman and hearing her story that we face our own vulnerabilities.

Levin 1992:51

6.5 Narrative Pastoral counselling with teachers – de-constructing, re-constructing and co-constructing

Narrative pastoral counselling from a feminist viewpoint, challenges us to engage with people, especially women, in ways that affirm and acknowledge their experiences and emotions (Bons-Storm 1996:16). I believe my role as pastoral carer was to relate to the female teachers who chose to participate in the research so that they could relate to their own narratives in hopeful ways:

... women first have to tell their stories among themselves, get used to their own voices, and listen to one another. It is not easy. Solidarity among women...in...different situations and positions has to be won the hard way. Together women practice their subject quality and power to speak, and find the strength to endure the scorn of the dominant discourse.

Bons-Storm (1996:147)

This insight informed my decision to construct a model (as seen above) that could support the female teachers in such a way that they did not feel that they had 'to be silent about parts of their lives', such as menopause or illness (Bons-Storm 1996:17).

The discourses that were de-constructed in this research report included: power/knowledge (section 5.6.1.3.1); punishment (section 5.6.1.3.2); gender (section 5.6.1.3.3); and menopause and illness (section 5.6.1.3.4). These discourses inevitably implicated meanings and practices

which were constructs of the teachers and featured greatly in my engagement with them in terms of pastoral care and counselling. The dominant discourses tried to subvert the re-construction of their preferred meanings and actions. The co-construction of a model that could support them in their teaching community, was also a co-construction of their identities. But before we could do this, I examined the ways in which, as a female teacher, my own life had been influenced by gender descriptions and reflected on how these had shaped my identity. I needed to investigate the ways in which the myriad of subtle and blatant discourses convinced me to take an active role in my own subjugation (Bons-Storm 1998:10). I believed that doing this would enable me to be transparent about my own views and standpoints and to appreciate the ways in which I had struggled with and resisted discourses in my own life. I could also better connect in solidarity with the female teachers in their struggles and re-construct ways in which they preferred to view themselves. As the model shows, together we found ways to encourage, understand, support and co-construct many possible selves:

Human beings are characterized both by continuous personal identity and by discontinuous personal diversity. It is one and the same person who is variously positioned in a conversation. Yet as variously positioned we may want to say that that very same person experiences and displays that aspect of self that is involved in the community of multiple of selves.

(Davies 1991:46)

Being with and co-creating a model with the female teachers, became a ‘restorative’ action in a way that allowed many voices to decide what the model could include, with other teachers in their communities in mind. In the next section I explain the thinking around such restorative community work.

6.6 Teaching as restorative community work

The idea to ‘restore’ fits well with the need for *restitution* in our country and especially the restoration of our education system (see 1.1 and 1.4). But, as White (1997:172) suggests, restoration is also a statement of hope: it creates a healing effect on those who participate as co-researchers as we ‘re-story our lives together’.

The dictionary describes the word 'community' as a 'society', 'neighbourhood', 'population' and 'group that is like-minded' (Webster Third International Dictionary 1976:460).

The word 'work' offers interpretations such as 'effort', 'trouble', 'employment', 'job' et cetera (Collins South African School Thesaurus 2003:655).

As I have discussed before (see section 3.9.2.1.5), the African view of community views the life of the individual as a life in communion with others. This thought promotes interdependence between people, in other words, *Ubuntu* (Mbiti 1989:145) the mutual interdependence between the individual and the community (see also 3.9.2).

These concepts link up with the narrative approach of 'communities of concern': people's identities and relational selves become possible in relational community with others (Combs & Freedman 1999:145). A teaching job can be described as work in the community, because the teaching profession often invites descriptions that include words like 'sacrifice', 'tedious', 'hard' and a 'performance of duty' (Schoeman 2003:49). Many teachers fall into this category. The teachers with whom I worked in this research all agreed that their teaching job constituted a 'common unity, common goals [and] common work' (Schoeman 2003:49). According to them, teachers become isolated from each other through individual achievements and, as a result, they become competitive and set up against each other. In so doing, '[w]e cannot struggle together easily' (Debbink & Ornelas 1997:17) and consequently, they act in a punishment/fear way towards themselves and others.

We see teachers as a community also as a form of professional community. For example, when a group of people come together as a sporting/book club community, their focus is on their common interests, goals and aspirations. Teachers' professional community, in contrast, looks at the multiple contexts in which they work and which help to shape their role as teachers. Their work becomes a personal experience in a professional community. It 'is at once personal, relational and cultural' (White 1999:9).

When I became actively involved with the teachers, I moved away from the ‘status of stranger to friend’ (Lather 1991:57). In this way, the teachers and I could mutually create the space where we shared our experiences and stories, thus, ‘trying on voices’ (Lather 1991:57) and slowly restoring their long-denied voices and narratives. For me, restoration in the community of teachers meant an ‘active involvement rather than detached explanation’ (Ackermann 1995:34)

I discovered that when I thought of a model for the research as something ‘out there’, I became anxious to find the ‘things’ that would work. But when I moved to enjoying my engagement with the female teachers in the research instead, the model ‘happened’ amongst us. This is engagement is what Heshusius (1995:121) calls this ‘participatory consciousness... [in which the researcher] ...temporarily dissolves the boundaries of the self, making complete attentiveness to other possible, and in turn opening up access in new and unanticipated ways.’

Adopting a Narrative approach also confirmed the importance of the contribution of other people in the lives of the teachers, even those who were not present or alive anymore. I tried to listen for and invite reflections on the contributions made by others - for example, family members - in the teachers’ lives. I remember how touched I was during a conversation with teacher E’s daughter. She knew her mother was struggling with many issues at school and personally but, despite all the hardship her mother had experienced, the girl described her mother as a ‘flowing river’ containing many beautiful pebbles and stones. When I told her about her daughter’s description, Teacher E was overwhelmed. In this way I invited ideas that connected her to a person not present who had made a contribution to her life.

6.7 Beyond the possible

In South Africa, female teachers’ lives are enmeshed by discourses of patriarchy, which contribute in many ways to their struggles. They are silenced by ideas of inferiority and internalised patriarchal views. They usually work harder than their male colleagues. This idea is supported by Reinharz (1992:168): ‘[t]raditionally, the presence of women was limited to their being mentioned as ‘there’. Women’s ‘being’, when mentioned at all, was defined in terms of men’s needs’. Patriarchy has indoctrinated female teachers, physically, mentally and spiritually – a kind of ‘colonization of the mind’ (Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:48). This

colonization of the mind extends to all races of female teachers in South Africa: ‘Nobody asks what they are for themselves...they are [only seen] in relation to men’ (Reinharz 1992:52).

South Africa needs restorative support for our struggling teachers, to break with abusive practices which keeps inviting oppressive acts and subjugating bodies through fear and anger (see section 6.3.1). Cochrane, De Gruchy and Petersen (1991:6) remind us that as pastoral caregivers or narrative pastoral counsellors we need to face up to this challenge:

[we have to] seek genuine reconstruction...with the historical effects of apartheid, including the widespread destruction of respect of law, the baleful inheritance of malnutrition and of bad (or absent) schooling...

It is imperative that we consider our commitments carefully and not add to the failures of our history in this country. According to Couture (2000:69), ‘theology happens between people for the people by the people.’ We need many people with a great deal of courage, reliability, tenacity and determination within each contextual environment. We must recognise that the teacher with whom we do pastoral counselling and care:

...is not an isolated individual being nor a mere soul separated from his or her body, but being-in-community, a social being who, if separated from social or communal existence, would cease to be human.

(Cochrane, De Gruchy & Petersen 1991:2)

When we think of finding ways to support our struggling teachers in the ‘new’ South Africa, we should not think of an ‘either/or’ situation, but rather a ‘both/and’ one. This can only happen if teachers are allowed to talk or tell their stories; only then can ideas develop and solutions can be found together. I am reminded of Debbink and Ornelas (1997:27):

... [development and growth benefit communities when] it is the creation of the people ... [using...their thinking, their decision-making powers, their resources, and their knowledge. Development must be the transformation of reality in harmony with the population’s dreams.

6.8 Conclusion

The model that we co-constructed was an attempt to construct or perhaps deconstruct a sense of ‘agency’ with the teachers involved in this project. They played an active role in the shaping of their lives and in co-constructing a model that could demonstrate just that. The teachers showed how they possessed the capacity to influence developments in their own lives according to their own purposes and to bring alternative outcomes into existence. The practices of deconstruction assisted the teachers to separate themselves from problems and dominant discourses in their lives and to be curious about alternative versions of who they might be:

...a curiosity in regard to those alternative versions of who these persons might be...is not just a curiosity. It is a curiosity about how things might be otherwise, a curiosity about that which falls outside of the totalising stories that a person has about their lives, and outside of those dominant practices of self and relationship.

(Epston & White 1992:146)

In Chapter Seven, the final chapter of this document, I reflect on the ways in which this research has woven new meanings, understandings and actions in the lives of the participants as well as my own. I also discuss briefly how further future research can benefit the well-being of teachers in South Africa.

CHAPTER 7

This is how practical theology typically begins...
with a situation, a concern, a question,
an expectation, an issue, an event – something at least,
that claims attention.

Veling 2005:217

7 Introduction

In this final chapter, I will reflect on my research journey and, more particularly, on how Practical theology is ‘concerned with the unique, the particular, the concrete – this people, this community, this place, this moment, this need, this concern’ (Veling 2005:16). The chapter will conclude with recommendations for further research.

7.1 Looking back on the research journey

Chapter One mapped the road for my research journey by introducing my epistemology. My research aims (section 1.7) guided my research question: In what ways can a Narrative approach with teachers in a Pastoral Counselling context be explored to improve the quality of life for teachers in South Africa? I also explained the research procedure I intended to follow. The research journey, however, eventually led me to encounter the complexities, challenges and struggles of a few female South African teachers in a local primary school. It explored the effects of the struggles on the participants’ lives.

I took a social constructionist position in order to form an understanding of the teachers’ world (sections 2.1 & 2.2). I concur with Freedman and Combs’ (1996:23) ideas that understandings are rooted and developed from concepts and categories that are historically and culturally specific. I therefore invited into the research journey those voices that stand in relation to the

struggles of the teachers. The voice of patriarchy, more particularly of our patriarchal history in education in South Africa proved to be very dominant in the practices of these teachers.

An important departure point for the research project thus became the educational context in which female teachers operate in post-apartheid South Africa. Because contexts are shaped by dominant discourses, the deconstruction of such dominant discourses formed an integral part of this study. I viewed the dominant discourses at work in the teachers' lives through the lenses of power/knowledge; illness; gender; and feminist approaches. Although my initial involvement with the teachers of Beaumont Primary School was to help them with the implementation of their values program, my emphasis shifted: listening to their stories and struggles became pastoral counselling. I discerned that, despite their good ideas and intentions, their stories lay dormant, buried beneath the dominant stories of culture, position, patriarchy, illness et cetera. As a result, their preferred stories never had a chance to rise to a general consciousness. Because the philosophy and techniques of the narrative approach have had a profound influence on my work as pastoral counsellor to schools in the past, I decided to use this approach for my consulting with the teachers of Beaumont Primary School.

The narrative approach assumes that humans are interpretive beings with the result that stories are the product of actually shaping our lives and constituting our experiences so that they "embrace" our lives' (White 1995). Adopting the narrative approach freed me from trying to 'solve' the teachers' problems. Rather, my focus shifted to inviting the community of teachers to re-write their stories in a way that allowed for new interpretations and new behaviours.

Teachers in South Africa operate daily in a multi-cultural context. I therefore included the African concept of *uBuntu*, an orientation that guides us away from an individualistic worldview towards a 'way of being' in community with others (section 2.5 & 2.6). The framework for my methodology was Narrative Inquiry, which positions the research participants as actively involved in the research, not 'bound, static, atemporal, and decontextualized' (Pinnegar & Daynes 2007:11).

In Chapter Two I unpacked the concept of teaching and what it means to teach in the South African historical context. I also discussed the well-being of teachers in post-apartheid South

Africa and the concept of 'community' in the lives of teachers. I concluded this chapter with an overview of the way Jesus taught – a great teacher of his time.

Chapter Three identified the literature that supports the study, more particularly an investigation into the interdisciplinary fields of theology, education and the social sciences. I explored literature that could identify resources which could suggest a caring model to address the struggles teachers face as a community.

Chapter Four focused on the concepts that frame the design and methodology of the research. I used the following data collection tools: Interviewing; Agape listening; and Participatory Observation. These helped me as researcher to form in-depth understanding of the teachers' experiences, especially the female teachers.

The participants' stories were voiced in Chapter Five: stories which made visible the unspoken and brought forward those discourses that were constitutive of their lives. During our conversations together we were able to explore the effects these discourses had on their lives. By investigating the struggles of being a teacher in South Africa today – especially being a female teacher over the age of forty – unmasked the multi-factorial nature of their struggles. These factors included societal and personal discourses, age, menopause and illness. The data analysis revealed that virtually no teacher - especially no female teacher - was exempt from struggling.

Chapter Six introduced the model that evolved out of the research. The model resonates with the Kiswahili saying: *maisha ni mzunguko*, which literally means that life is a circle. A person's life is represented in a story which continues to go around in a circle. The end of the circle is not death, but the ultimate experience of making meaning of life's challenges and struggles. The result is a life of maturity and wholeness which continues after we leave the planes of this world.

Chapter Seven summarizes some of the research report; reflects on the main concepts, including my reflections as researcher, on Narrative Pastoral practices, and on Practical Theology; and then concludes with recommendations for further research.

7.2 Researcher's Reflections

Undertaking this research project has been an invaluable learning experience. I have gained a deeper understanding of the nature of Qualitative Research. The cyclical, sometimes messy, nature of the research process taught me, for example, that things cannot always fit neatly into categories and that the research journey itself is paradoxical: at times enormously frustrating, yet also immensely exhilarating.

I have come to realize that the struggles of our teachers in post-apartheid South Africa, more particularly our female teachers, have become so thoroughly the product of a patriarchal, professionalized, institutionalized society that it is increasingly difficult for them to imagine different alternatives of how their lives could be. I am reminded of Burbules' words:

The search for one best way of teaching has preoccupied philosophers in the West since Socrates. Today this search is more typically couched in the language of scientific efficacy and efficiency. In the process, teaching in many schools is becoming less and less creative, personal, and rewarding.

(2004:7)

For this reason, I believe it was important in this research to recover the 'personal image' of the female teachers – the 'creative, personal, and rewarding' aspects of their lives that did not fit into these conventional roles and contexts. I have an immense sense of gratitude for being allowed to witness the narratives of struggling in the lives of the female teachers mentioned in this research. bell hooks (1994:74) suggests that 'it is not easy to name our pain, to theorise from that location, it takes courage to "expose wounds" and to lend one's experience as a mean to "chart new theoretical journeys".' It is my belief that this journey was borne out of the few female teachers' commitment to 'create theory from the location of pain and struggle' (bell hooks 1994:74). I am therefore indebted to them, as co-researchers on this journey, for their willingness to do that.

It seems appropriate to pause and reflect on my 'personal tale of what went on in the backstage of doing research' (Buchner & Ellis 2001:741). Reinharz (1992:194) proposes that in feminist research, learning occurs at three levels: at 'the levels of person, problem and method.' For me

this meant ‘that the researcher would learn about herself, about the subject matter under study, and about how to conduct research’ (Reinharz 1992:194).

7.2.1 My experience as teacher researcher

Both worldwide and in South Africa, well-educated men – frequently speaking in a voice of patriarchy - have dominated the education world on a senior and decision making level (see sections 5.6.4.4 c and 5.6 B). Professor Baloyi, who supervised this thesis, is a man and also a previous teacher and pastor. His PhD dissertation focused on how patriarchal structures can be a hindrance to women’s rights. He has also written many articles dealing with women’s issues such as abortion and menopause. I have great appreciation for his wealth of practical and academic knowledge and experience on the subject of teaching and gender. It was my experience as teacher and researcher that, although he was male, we nevertheless shared a point of orientation in regards to gender context. Bons-Storm (1998:18) calls this an ‘ultimate point of orientation.’ Sadly, when I spoke to some of the female teachers in the research, the dominant discourse I found was mostly patriarchal interpretations of what it means to be a female teacher. The majority of teachers who volunteered to participate in this research were female teachers over forty. The fact that no male teacher participated in the research frequently left me wondering about the ‘truths’ that I experienced during the research journey. In some instances, I questioned the relevance of dominant discourses - such as those surrounding illness or menopause - and was only convinced after many conversations with the female teachers. When these discourses were ‘exposed’ during our conversations, I became aware of the absence of understanding and the shame that so frequently surrounds these taboo subjects. This also confirms that patriarchy succeeded in providing two different worlds in which males and females are living separately.

The research participants’ sense of shame or and tendency to avoid speaking about difficult topics - such as menopause as a ‘rite of passage’ - was often intensified by the difficulties they had in formulating the concept of ‘menopause’. Even more difficult was their inability to coherently articulate their experiences and understandings around the subject. The participants often commented on how difficult it was for them to verbalize and give expression to their meanings and understandings.

Verbalising their experiences was, however, not the only challenge. The fact that relevant resources – resources that dealt specifically with menopause and female teachers in the South African context – were non-existent. Moreover, the information that was available was frequently written from an American perspective. The only other information that was available to these teachers was their experiences of their mothers' menopause: this too was frequently cloaked in shame and avoidance.

7.2.2 Participatory approach by the researcher

I entered into this research as a person with specific knowledges and experiences. My experience as a teacher and pastoral counsellor working in schools; my personal experience of menopause and illness; my fears, emotions and convictions were all injected into the research process. Such a participatory approach by the researcher held consequences both for me as the researcher, as well as the research process. It meant that all my constructions were present in every conversation I had with the teachers (Anderson 1997:94). Although I was aware of the possible effects which listening to the stories of the female teachers could have on me, I was unprepared for the depth of emotions I would experience when I was reflecting afterwards. I soon realized that I had to take precautions to manage my own well-being and to be aware of the constructions I held regarding the discourses we were uncovering. I therefore decided to talk to a psychotherapist on a two-weekly basis and to keep a researcher's diary. This was very helpful in that it 'absorbed' some of my own emotions and reflected these back to me for inspection. The talking and the writing were almost a de-sensitizing process in that it created a protective hedge around my constructions. Although initially I did not intend to use the diary in any way other than a place to write and reflect my thoughts, I later decided to include some parts of the diary in this thesis (see Chapter 5).

7.2.3 Subjectivity and vulnerability as researcher

Reinharz (1992:32-34) challenges the conventional ways of research which are usually situated in positivist scientific theorising and guided by neutrality and objectivity. She proposes that good feminist practice should thus include the researcher disclosing herself during interviews. This practice can promote honesty and accountability in the research process. Following Reinharz, as I listened to the female teachers' stories - particularly their struggles with menopause, illness and

patriarchy - I also reflected on my own experiences of illness, menopause and the ways in which this had been shaped by patriarchal practices, and I shared some of these experiences with the participants. I sensed that by sharing parts of my story, the teachers almost showed empathy and greatly appreciated my honesty: some commented that it helped them to voice their own vulnerabilities, insecurities and fears. In this way, I was able to research *with* the teachers rather than do research *on* them. Heshusius (1994:15) conceptualises this notion of participatory research. Freeing ourselves from objectivity and subjectivity in order to move to an understanding between self and other makes possible a deeper kinship – a ‘selfother’ - between researcher and researched. This ‘selfother’ includes self-reflection and disclosure – ‘...an attitude of profound openness and receptivity’ (Heshusius 1994:15).

7.2.4 Collaboration promoted learning and shared power

My decision to share some parts of my story in relation to the teachers’ experience opened up the way for collaboration and shared agency: it allowed a shared meaning-making experience into the research journey. My transparency as researcher promoted collaborative learning and the sharing of agency which included the co-construction of knowledge (Anderson 1998:66). It also invited the sharing of power:

...to reflect on ourselves implies to reflect on the way power operates in our research and in the production of knowledge. Continuous awareness of the potentially dangerous possibilities of our research can assist us in doing ethicising research.

(Kotzé 2002:26)

Because power is a very relevant discourse in the context of teachers lives (see section 5.6.1.3.1), I reasoned that exposing myself to similar vulnerabilities and risks as those experienced by the teacher participants would facilitate power-sharing.

7.3 Reflecting on the dominant discourses that define and operate in the lives of female teachers

The core of this research was to identify and explore the effects of dominant discourses in the struggles of teachers in post-apartheid South Africa. In the next section, I will reflect on the discourses which I encountered in my conversations with those teachers at Beaumont Primary School who participated in this research. The discourses at work in relation to their struggles, and how they were interpreted by the teachers, were formulated and analysed in Chapter Five. Kotzé (2002:9) explains that how knowledge is interpreted is very significant, because poststructuralism does not view knowledge as an ‘entity’. These interpretations and explanations piqued my curiosity.

The discourse of power/knowledge was one of the primary influences on how female teachers view their struggles. Deconstructing this discourse helped us unmask how these issues operated in their lives.

7.3.1 Power and knowledge as a dominant voice in teaching

In the view of the French philosopher Michel Foucault, modern education has resulted in many learners and teachers from diverse populations accepting and tolerating increasing degrees of subjugation. His work examines the effects of contemporary educational institutions and practices on the people who work there. Foucault (1982:218-219) argues that in institutions such as schools, the relations of power and knowledge come to support and link up with each other in the form of ‘blocks of capacity-communication-power’. These ‘regulated and concerted systems’ fuse together and manipulate language, things and people, adjusting behaviour via ‘regulated communications’ and ‘power processes’ resulting in the restructuring of how teaching and learning take place. Foucault argues that schools are multifaceted amalgamations of economic, political, judicial and epistemological relations of power and that at the heart of the teaching job, is a regulated and defined network of surveillance which acts to improve efficiency.

The research participants’ stories (especially the older female teachers) in this research shared the unspoken message that power was in the hands of the principal, heads of departments and the education department. Consequently, the teachers who seemed to exercise power in the school were as caught up in and subjected by its functions as the learners and colleagues over whom

they exercised power. In everyday teaching situations, it is the teachers who ‘perform’ under the gaze of others, over whom power is exercised. Just as Foucault was intrigued by why teachers do not avoid the dominating or minimizing practices of power, so too was I both when I started teaching and throughout my involvement in educational institutions during subsequent years. I discovered that relations of power were inextricably intertwined with feelings of guilt, obligation, verification, ignorance, dependence and achievement. Moreover, I also heard the use of such punitive words in many of the conversations I had with the teachers during this research (see section 5.6.1.3.4). The punitive culture seemed to invite teachers into practices of punishing themselves and, as a result, they were struggling with their own well-being. The voice of self-punishment found ways to spiral into negative affects like rejection, isolation and loneliness (see section 5.6.1.3.2.1). This created a ‘code of silence’ which kept the teachers in the grip of fear and ignorance.

7.3.1.1 Silence is not always golden

Silence emerged as a strategy used by the teachers - especially the female teachers over forty - to deal with power struggles between colleagues and self-punishment. During a meeting I attended about the values implementation at the school, it was clear that the chairlady, who was also the head of Grade Six department, was ‘in charge’ of the meeting. Throughout the meeting I saw how some teachers wanted to voice their own opinions, but were cut off by her words like: “You all agree with me, right?” and “We all want to stand together, not so?” Another time I was asked by the deputy headmistress to observe in the staffroom while she presented her view on the values implementation. She said she was afraid of the reaction of some of the teachers. This speaks of local politics (see section 3.3.1.1.1) as defined by Foucault (1980:88). The historical norm was that no one disagrees with the chairperson in a meeting, for example, or with the principal or any teacher in a position of authority. As a result, the teachers found it difficult to express their own opinions: they feared that challenging the people in authority would result in marginalization.

When power is appropriated by and accorded to individuals with positions and so-called expert knowledge, it becomes the ‘current truth’ which is subjugating of local knowledge and people (Foucault 1980:88). Struggling with power in relationships was very visible in Anna’s life as well. When Anna, a female teacher over forty, became ill, her husband insisted that she undergo

chemotherapy, even though she felt that the treatment was wrong for her. Anna's community of friends, family and colleagues also thought that she should choose the chemotherapy option. Because her husband worked in the medical field, and thus possessed so-called 'expert' knowledge, Anna's desires and beliefs regarding alternative medical solutions became unspeakable – a taboo subject: she was not allowed to think outside of the conventional medical discourse. Anna only spoke with me about her beliefs about the treatment, almost in secret. I could sense her relief to have had the opportunity to voice her beliefs with me but, after two weeks, I heard that she eventually succumbed to her husband's pressure to take the chemotherapy route. Anna died a month later (see section 5.6.1.3.3). Weingarten (2004:14) explains that when women cannot voice themselves and ask the question *why*, especially when they are ill, dominant discourses - such as those we find in the medical world, as well as in patriarchy - are reinforced and stay dominant. Eventually these become the unquestionable 'truth'. I also saw with other teachers that silence supports secrecy, especially secrecy regarding their struggles with health. For example, nobody knew that the deputy headmistress of my son's school had cancer until after she died unexpectedly. When teachers do not speak about their struggles these mutate into taboo subjects, implying shame and guilt. Silence about the struggles our teachers face in general reinforce similar beliefs of shame and guilt. Foucault (White 1992:138) calls this a 'ruse' that disguises what is actually taking place (see section 3.3.1.1.2).

According to Foucault (1988:18), power practices have almost been perfected over the centuries in institutions like schools. These 'technologies of power' (see section 3.3.1.1.3) determine how individuals should conduct themselves and submit them to domination. I found the 'technologies of power' very prominent in the Beaumont Primary School staffroom. Some teachers told me that they did not go to the staffroom at break time any more. One female teacher (forty-four years old) said that she was so emotional when she heard that some teachers were jealous of her achievements with the choir and her looks that she decided never to set foot in the staffroom again. I also saw how cliques formed around the tables when I went there to observe for the deputy headmistress. For example, the junior phase teachers sat together; the male teachers were seated at the back of the room; and new teachers sat together. I was reminded of my experience as student teacher. When we did our practical at schools, we were told beforehand by the headmaster or a senior teacher, that the staffroom was not actually for the use of students. We could come in and get tea or coffee and, if we really had to sit down, there was a designated area

for the student teachers close to the door. I also remember the cliques, gossiping and unethical discussion of children and parents during break times. It would seem that things have not changed much in the thirty years I have been involved in education.

It would seem that the tyranny of silence in the teaching profession prevents teachers from speaking about traumatic experiences such as illness, menopause and patriarchy. As a result, some of our teachers (especially the women over forty) are struggling, because a message of trauma is communicated through the silence and social pain. Ramphele (2012:162) reminds us that we cannot erase social pain and Weingarten (2004:14) argues that trauma is transmitted generationally by silence. The mind set of teachers (especially female teachers over forty) that they are old and are less important than younger teachers - or should be replaced by younger teachers - together with their belief that they should be 'controlled' by an authority figure (usually male), has the potential to create and contribute to their struggles which manifest in many ways as we have seen in this research. The fact that these beliefs were evident in most of the teachers' stories led me to conclude that patriarchy still entraps female teachers in the position of being a passive recipient, thus frequently leaving their struggles neglected or unattended. In the next section I will discuss my findings on patriarchy in this research.

7.3.2 Patriarchy as a dominant voice in teaching

Patriarchal philosophies were visible in most of the teachers' stories in this research. Their practices were organised along patriarchal lines and the idea of inequality was present at times. As older teachers, most of the female teachers did not see themselves equal to the male principal, for example, who was the same age as them. I believe this hierarchy hold true for most older female teachers in South Africa and it is manifested in behaviours such as submission or aggression. The teachers felt that the principal or governing body (mostly male) or the education department's ways of doing things should be prioritized, often to the detriment of the female teachers' needs. This was especially so in terms of their struggles. For instance, teacher E was experiencing depression as a result of comments that the principal and chairperson of the governing body had made regarding the replacement of older teachers with younger teachers. They used the term 'getting in new blood'. Despite using anti-depressants, sleeping pills and relaxation medication, she regularly experienced panic attacks, emotional outbursts and crying. When I asked her what she thought the problem was, she said that she lived in fear of being

retrenched especially because the headmaster always hints that he is going to replace the older teachers with ‘younger blood’ (section 5.6.1.3.1). The workforce in South Africa has seen an increase in female workers (Crouch 2001:5). In 2006 there were 30% more female workers in the teaching profession than in other professions. According to Crouch (2001:5-6), most female teachers are over the age of forty. The paradox is that most senior teaching positions are not filled with senior female teachers. For example, most principal positions are still occupied by men between 45 and 55 years old (see section 5.6.1.3.3).

Another form of patriarchal philosophy was found in Ana’s married life. She believed that being a Christian and having grown up in a Christian home, she was not allowed to go against the wishes of her family/husband. She received the unspoken message that she ‘sinned’ if her husband did not control her body and her life. I remember a conversation I had with her five years ago. She was struggling with menopause and candida yeast infections. She complained that her husband was very impatient with her about not being able to have sexual intercourse. She said that she felt that she was defined and determined by sex in their marriage and that her husband controlled everything in her life. Biblical passages, such as 1 Corinthians 7, are also used to shape female sexuality, especially the notion that women should always be available for the sexual gratification of their spouses Masenya(2005:188)

Women’s sexuality is often defined and controlled by men in the church and in the households. Female bodies become sacrifices at the altars of male power and pleasure. (Masenya 2003:102)

The salary from Ana’s teaching job had to go into the household budget, but she could use the money she earned from the flower arranging she did for weddings and functions to buy herself makeup and personal treats. When she became ill, she stayed at home for a few months but, before she was completely healed, she returned to her teaching job. As a result, she fell ill again. This time her condition was much worse and she was ill for months. When I spoke to her a month before she died, she told me that she had no money left: her husband would not even give her money to buy makeup.

7.3.3 Taking women's stories seriously

Giving my time and attention to the teachers in the research project, were actions I took to 'do' theology and care 'with' them (Sevenhuijsen 1998:19). This praxis meant that wherever and whenever I was called on to listen - for instance during athletics meetings, in the hallway, a classroom or an office - I would listen and commit myself to immediate action. I saw this as an act of 'being there': being present in my physical body was an 'embodiment' of care and hope (Davies 1991:50). My listening was not 'neutral concentration' but a political act to make visible the body that belonged to the words and voice (Bons-Storm 1996:81; Davies 1991:50). Listening meant that I could hear stories that were probably never voiced before, for example, their struggles with menopause. The privilege and honour of listening to the accounts of their struggles with a 'rite of passage' such as menopause was like taking out and holding fragile porcelain that had been locked away for many years. I found Couture's (1998:38) words a reminder of respectful practice:

God is present and actively involved with every person we meet. Therefore, we must treat others with gentleness and respect...When we begin to recognise God working with us, we begin to know ourselves.

I was learning: being present with the female teachers (especially those over forty), involved experiencing menopause as a 'change of life' which marks the beginning of a life season that can focus a woman's skills away from her family to the community. Sadly, few of the female teachers were treated with celebration and honour to welcome this rite of passage into their lives: at best, it was ignored; at worst, it was a source of shame and embarrassment.

7.3.3.1 Menopause – a 'rite of passage'

'Wise blood' is how ancient societies expressed the time in every woman's life when she has lived long enough and experienced enough to become 'one who knows'. It is a beautiful expression of richness, dignity and the promise of a new season of life. It is often a time when many women's spiritual life truly begins. Menopause as a 'rite of passage' involves three stages:

1. Separation: this is a stage that women fear. It requires moving from the secure to the unknown: it means letting go. The support of the community is especially very important at this stage.
2. Transition: this is a time when our faith is tested: will we surrender to the journey ahead, or will we try to hold on to the security of the past?
3. Incorporation: this time phase represents the 'return' of the woman, but forever changed.

Down the centuries, menopause as a rite of passage has connected women to each other in meaningful ways. The menopausal women's role and wisdom were carried and considered with much pride so that all women were united and proud to carry such a responsibility.

Today, much has changed. Gone from our lives are the teachings of the different stages of our lives. Gone, indeed, are the communities and structures that upheld the rites of passage of menopause. Women all over the world are struggling to understand the meaning of their lives, and our female teachers in South Africa especially struggle to uphold the image which says: 'I have to be young and perfect, it's either this or be hidden away.' Instead of honouring and celebrating menopause in their lives, the female teachers in this research were threatened with replacements by younger teachers (see sections 5.6.1.3.3 b & 5.6.1.3.4). They were treated as hormonally imbalanced and corrected by the medical profession with drugs (see section 5.6.1.3.4.2). Female teachers experiencing menopause are not treated equally in the workplace to females in the corporate sector (see 5.6.1.7.3). What message does this give menopausal teachers? Maybe something like: at your age you are not valued, better avoided, or even done away with all together.

The absence of knowledge, understanding and a rite of passage for subjects such as menopause in modern western society has had a detrimental effect on the society at large for both men and women. This research has shown how not voicing the struggles female teachers have with menopause affected their lives and well-being (see section 1.2.2 & 2.3 & 2.4 & chapter 5). They carried shame and self-loathing. They also suffered from the loss of pride in their role as 'wiser women', a role revered in previous generations as the foundation of the community. They struggled to live in a man's world; they felt not strong enough, not clever enough, not young enough. Sadly, over the years the importance of older women as wise teachers has been forgotten not only by society, but also by themselves.

We as a society need to address this issue and bring healing and wholeness back to our female teachers. One of the recommendations I have for further research is how we can resurrect or re-create rite of passage ceremonies like menopause that mark the changes in a female teacher's life. My aim is to bring hope and knowledge, not only to our female teachers struggling with the confusion of menopause, but also to bring understanding and respect to our children, our future generations. We need to break down the walls, erected by patriarchal builders that separate us from ourselves as women and embrace the lost parts of ourselves, vowing never to let them go again.

7.4 Reflecting on spirituality as a unique outcome

As a narrative researcher, I had to be alert to all the unique developments or outcomes that were occurring in the teachers' lives. My observations, conversations and interviews with the teachers provided the ideal opportunity for this:

Unique outcomes are those that the [researcher] believes clearly facilitate, for those persons who seek...the re-authoring of lives according to preferred stories, and are developments that might not have been exactly or generally predicted by the [researcher]. The unique outcomes constitute the more 'sparkling events' of the [research].

(White 1992:86)

I found this to be true especially in the research with the female teachers from Beaumont Primary School. I remember how surprised I was that in most of the conversations with the teachers, the 'sparkling event' turned out to be their faith or spirituality (see section 5.6.1.4.1 and 5.6.1.4.2). The identification of spirituality as a unique outcome provided a safe place during the research journey for externalizing, deconstruction of discourses and alternative stories to develop in a collaborative context. Their stories of faith were invitations to thicken their spirituality by re-telling. By deconstructing the meaning of their struggling and the role of faith/spirituality during times of struggle - such as during illness, menopause and as a result of patriarchal practices - the teachers were allowed to acknowledge the presence of God as 'alongside' them, rather than being 'responsible for' their struggles. This process was almost as if they 'struggled with the Angel' - like Jacob in Genesis 32:24-32 - and would not let go until they received a blessing (see section 1.3.1.2).

White (2000:131) describes such spirituality as a decent 'into the caverns that are imagined deep below the surface of one's life.' Such spirituality experiences the divine deep within a person and made manifest through relationships with God and other people. For the teachers involved in this research, spirituality was about their personal ethics and finding alternative ways of being that were not situated in their problems or struggles.

Much has been written about the many ways in which women's voices have been silenced and marginalized. Neuger (2001:72) asserts that '[w]omen's naming of self, context, and creation is necessary for the full participation of humanity in the on-going co-creative process with God.' In this research, I invited the female teachers to investigate, compare and imagine creatively what their spirituality meant for them. Most of them embraced many of the traditional descriptions of women's roles as submissive to men and frequently used patriarchal discourses as a measure of worthiness in their lives and actions. Lyall makes the observation that:

The religious history of an individual is not something separate from the story of a person's whole life...The spiritual journey of the client is nearly always a reflection of important themes in that person's life.

(1995:84)

I found that although most female teachers were connected to certain religious ideas, they embraced descriptions or understandings which they had of God and spirituality that did not fit the set rules of traditional regions. They were liberating God and spirituality from restrictive descriptions towards more multi-faceted understandings. White (2000:132) suggests that such a spirituality is 'about the exploration of the options for living one's life in ways that are other in regard to the received modes of being.'

As their spirituality became more visible in their lives it became a transformative spirituality: it provided the basis for the constitution of new identities that were becoming different. Transformation is also a central theme in the Narrative approach, on which I will reflect next.

7.5 Reflecting on the Narrative approach

The purpose of this study was to explore effective ways to counsel teachers pastorally. Narrative expression by people is a way that is natural to all human beings. It is a process rather than a template through which we experience and share our interactions with other people (White 1994).

My primary aim for using the Narrative approach in the teachers' lives in this research was to give them the opportunity to express the struggles they were experiencing. Our conversations were shaped by the premise that, in order for them to express their experiences of their struggles, they had to engage in acts of interpretation of these experiences. Not only did it make it possible for the teachers to give meaning to their experiences with struggling, but these acts also shaped their expression of this lived experience. These acts of interpretation encouraged them to derive meanings through the interpretive resources that were available to them in their lives and negotiated in the communities they work and live. As a result, their meanings instantly became personal, relational and culturally relevant.

Because teachers tend to fall naturally into storytelling, the Narrative approach was an obvious approach to use in my consultation with them. Our Narrative conversations privileged the teachers' interpretive resources in the form of the stories they told. Stories provided a frame in which the teachers could negotiate meaning and make sense of their struggles by linking together their experiences of the events (struggles) in sequences that unfolded through time according to specific themes (Morgan 2000:5). I used White and Epston's techniques in the interviews with the teachers (see section 3.3.6). These techniques helped them to bring alternatives and hopeful stories to the surface. Teachers in general tend to be over-responsible and may try to blame themselves for the struggles they face. In their eagerness to find fault with themselves, the teachers (especially the female teachers over forty) often overlooked larger forces at work, such as patriarchal and other discourses. The externalizing technique unmask this internalizing tendency while deconstruction of discourses helped the teachers to find the problem outside of themselves. Although teachers rely on attributes such as patience and compassion in their work with children, they frequently do not show compassion to themselves. They work themselves into the ground, and do not make time for their own needs. There exists a cultural myth that teachers retreat from the real world for reasons of weakness and incompetence. For example,

“Those who can, do; those who can’t, teach.” In this research, the narrative method helped the teachers to hear their own words. Responding to questions helped them to respond with new-found fortitude in a way that traditional consultation, with its focus on the ‘outside world’, could not.

In this research, I accepted the premise that schools are emotional systems. Through observation I realized that we had to change the community story. For instance, the deputy headmistress suggested that I meet with each grade group teachers to discuss struggles and possible solutions. I made appointments to get each group together, but the meetings were either postponed or cancelled every time. This went on for weeks and I became frustrated by the excuses. It was the time that Anna died and I decided to write the teachers a letter (via e-mail) about her death and what she had meant to me as teacher and friend (see section 5.6.1.3.3 e). I also suggested that, since we could not find time for group meetings, I included a few questions for them to answer and send back to me. The impact my letter was considerable: it changed the emotional field for the teachers who did not even know Anna, but who could resonate with her life and death.

The Narrative approach freed me as researcher/consultant from the pressure to try to be an ‘expert’. By positioning myself as a curious co-researcher, I felt much more effective. I was not trying to impose a formula I learned elsewhere but was committed to uncovering alternative stories with the participant teachers – stories that spoke to their strengths and resilience, and not to their guilt and shame. As useful as I found the Narrative methods in healing the teachers struggle situations in this research, I am interested in further application of Narrative approaches in more teachers’ lives in South Africa. What follows are some of the questions I have for further research.

7.6 Recommendations for further research with teachers using a Narrative approach

Following the spirit of a Narrative approach, I will use a question format (almost like a research question) to formulate the recommendations for further research:

- If we see problems our teachers face as being inside themselves, do they become dominated by that perception or story?

- How can teachers escape dominant stories about them?
- Do teachers think the Narrative technique of ‘externalising’ is a useful one in discussing personal and work problems?
- Do teachers instinctively use Narrative techniques with children?
- Do teachers think the Narrative method reduces or enhances feelings of personal responsibility?
- If we desire children to take responsibility, does it mean that we as teachers have to start seeing the problem outside of our children and colleagues?
- Can using stories as a Narrative technique have an impact on the emotional climate in a school?
- Would it be possible to use the Narrative techniques in day-to-day intervention in the lives of teachers and children?
- Can Narrative techniques provide new ways of approaching problems in the lives of teachers and children?

Involving wider school communities in South Africa in interpreting and re-interpreting their experiences could nurture a sense of achievement which, in and of itself, could be healing. The act of collective story telling can be empowering for all involved. Moreover, it could be possible to help teachers tell stories about themselves - healing stories of hidden power and resources - which can create new realities by replacing the stories of hurt, guilt and blame. This willingness to open oneself up to others can provide a place where:

[w]e come in touch with a depth within our humanness when we live from generosity, and we touch others’ humanness when they extend their generosity toward us. Needless to say, we hope that others will respond...by receiving something from it that makes their lives better, just as they hope that we will respond by enlarging our lives because of their gifts to us

(Couture 2000:57)

Narrative Pastoral praxis, as I understand it, it is a way of doing and being whereby we cooperate and collaborate with people, in this case the teachers, in their contexts. By caring and

committing, we stand with them as they find the face of God in new ways. Brueggemann (1993:20) encourages us with the hope that:

[it] is not a grand scheme or a coherent system, but the voicing of a lot of little pieces out of which people can put life together in fresh configurations – they can become their imaginations.

In this research, Narrative Pastoral practices created a construction site for all of us. We were empowered to re-construct and co-construct new ideas of our worth as women in the world. Sharing knowledge and empowering the female teachers in this research project to manage their struggles in their contexts, confirmed my ideas that Narrative Pastoral Counselling was a useful way to find opportunities for self-care, so that ‘the concept of wellness moves even further toward a positive vision of health...and self-responsibility’ (Couture 1998:47). I liked the idea that we could care and relate with each other in an ‘ordinary’ daily teaching and personal context and ‘do hope’ (Weingarten 2000:93) with and for each other. I believe that by listening and sharing the narratives of surviving struggles we were also making theology. And this is exactly what Practical Theology is about.

7.7 Reflections on Practical Theology

There is a real sense in which Practical Theology is a ‘restless’ theology: always moving, it cannot stop to formalize and gather itself into a neat and tidy system of theology. And, while it tries to debate the formalities in academic circles and papers, Practical Theology continually finds itself ‘without a home’ (Veling 2005:215). In this way, Practical Theology almost resembles its teacher who had ‘nowhere to lay his head’ (Matt. 8:20), and who moved with His disciples from one town to another ‘with no bag for [our] journey, or sandals, or a staff...proclaiming the kingdom of heaven’ (Matt. 10:7,10).

So what did it mean for me to do Practical Theology with the female teachers of Beaumont Primary School involved in this research? I felt like being on a narrow road - on a journey and not a vacation - struggling along to the top of a mountain. In this section, I would like to reflect

on Practical Theology in the experience of female teachers (especially those over forty) whose lives are filled with struggling, almost like refugees.

7.7.1 Reading the signs of the times

Practical Theology begins with a concern:

practical theology...is a theology *generated* by concern – there is always something that sets it off and gets it going.

(Veling 2005:217)

As Practical theologian in this research, I found myself caught up in ‘a situation, a question, a concern, an issue that claimed my attention’ – in this case, the struggles of female teachers (especially those over forty).

When I was asked to help with the implementation of the values program at Beaumont primary school, I did not foresee initially that I would find myself caught up in the struggles of the teachers. I soon realized that I had to work from within the situation rather than aside from it and so I found myself ‘inserted in the moment’ (see section 1.4.2) to help find alternative ways of dealing with their struggles. Veling’s (2005:217) reminder that ‘practical theology means therefore, a commitment not to swerve from the presentations of life or signs of the time’ resonated with me. But reading the ‘signs of the time’ was sometimes an excruciating task for me as researcher in this project. It meant ‘naming the present’ which implied that I also had to name our current situation with all teachers in South Africa (see section 1.1.1 & 1.1.2). The problem with going so wide in the research was that I could end up groping and tentatively searching rather than having a clear-sighted awareness of the teachers’ struggles. I therefore chose the methods and instruments of Qualitative Research to help me understand the *what*, *how* and *why* of the struggles facing the female teachers at Beaumont Primary School. My aim was to understand the ‘depth’ rather than the ‘quantity’ of the teachers’ experience (see section 4.1). I chose to explore ‘the density of the present’ in the form of a few teachers’ experiences with their struggles. In the end, it turned out that an even a smaller/denser group of teachers (mainly female teachers over forty) participated in this research.

Back in 1994 perhaps nobody would have guessed the extent to which our teachers would be struggling in post-apartheid South Africa today. I remember that most people felt optimistic about the rainbow nation and could not wait to put apartheid behind us, hoping that we may have learned some vital lessons from it. Little did we know then that, although the dynamics of our country might have shifted, the struggles facing our female teachers did not change; instead, many became worse (see section 1.2.2). A question comes to mind: Are we perhaps trudging our way through history again? Especially in regards to the struggles facing our female teachers? As we have seen in Chapter Five, the female workforce in South Africa has increased over the past decade. Of this workforce, 30% of women work as teachers. This phenomenon is something *unique* to our time and, as such, their lives should claim our attention. Their struggles are a reality that is particularly pressing for us today.

My own experience as teacher has led me to take an interest in the plight of our female teachers. I believed that one of the ‘signs of the time’ – the struggles facing female teachers over the age of forty - was to examine my own life as teacher. This could enable me to see whether there were affinities in our experiences that could bring me into solidarity with the concerns and struggles affecting other female teachers in our society and country. This is not to say that everything had to be reduced to my experience. Rather, I developed a keener reflection on my own experiences and concerns. I have no doubt that my own struggles as a teacher are but a poor reflection on the struggles of the majority of female teachers in South Africa. Nonetheless, it at least provided me with a way to become involved in other teachers’ concerns, to feel something of their struggles, and to want to speak on their behalf and to join in their struggles.

7.7.2 Living attentively

Practical Theology promotes a life lived in truthful and attentive ways:

...to live life truthfully, is to live with integrity and honesty. It is to live life with responsibility, rather with numbed silence or cold indifference.

(Veling 2005:13)

It was very sobering for me to realize that the test of ‘truth’ is not measured in any kind of theory or model we create, but rather, by the fruit we bear.

7.7.3 Reflecting on Theological models - a way of life

In this research, I used theory as a method or path of inquiry that helped me to explore the struggles of female teachers. I discovered that the paths of thought and the ways we travelled from one place to another were often more interesting than the actual destination. This pursuit of knowledge was crucial as a forerunner for the ideas we included in the model (see Chapter 6). The danger was that by constructing a model we would be tempted to see it as the way of truth. Another challenge could be that the model would give us the illusion of control: that we could steer everything in accord with it. We had to be careful that the model did not become yet another set of rules or procedures that would drive everyone to behave in a certain way. In the end we agreed that the rainbow model was a method of concepts not a finished project: it was a path, a way, a practice to follow as a way of life.

Veling (2005:240) warns that it would be a mistake to think that practical theology's aim is to work for practical method or models:

...something that will turn our systematic workings into practical workings. Rather, it is arguing for the somewhat maddening idea that we actually have to live the gospel message much more than we think.

Practical Theology should be expressed, not by only thinking of Christ, but by practising or imitating the life of Christ: this is what it means to follow the way of Christ (John 14:6). This is what it means to speak of Practical Theology as a way of life:

Along with the learning the “tools” and methods of practical theology, we must also develop an essential “relatedness” to theology, whereby theological practice becomes a way of life, where it enters our dwelling in the world and reveals “all hidden riches of its nature”. Practical theology is a craft in which we continually “answer” and “respond” to the call and vocation of apprenticeship and discipleship in God's ways.

(Veling 2005:16)

7.7.4 Practical theology is a mixture of artfulness

Practical Theology always strives to honor human experience. It is concerned with asking questions about history, culture and society, and urges us to respond to the needs of people in this world. This is not an easy task. In this research, it was a difficult and complex task to try to interpret the realities around the struggles the teachers (especially female teachers) face today. It required partnering with other disciplines, especially the social sciences, to help me better understand what was actually going on in their situations (see section 3.4.2). My experience during this research journey resonated with Veling's (2005:26) observation that:

Most disciplines in life are a mixture of method and artfulness...the best practitioners of any discipline are those who develop a certain "intuition" or "naturalness" in the practice of their discipline that takes them beyond an attachment to "rules" or "methods" alone'.

Because Practical Theology is primarily defined and explained in a western kind of understanding. I as South African theologian, felt obliged to ensure that we apply and use our own knowledge to fit in our own South African context. I therefore also explored African Theology for knowledges.

7.7.5 African theology in the context of Practical Theology

...by African theology we mean a theology which is based on the biblical faith and speaks to the African's soul...It is expressed in the categories of thought which arise out of the philosophy and word view of Africans... [and is not] ...the accretion of western civilization and culture which have come to be considered as inseparable part and parcel of

Christianity.
(Setiloane 1986:49)

South Africa, as part of the larger continent of Africa, has seen many difficulties in the form of slave trading, colonialism, imperialism, apartheid and economic exploitation. In 1994, we managed the first transition to democracy by working together. South Africa was blessed by a leader who showed wisdom and generosity to everyone. President Nelson Mandela was willing to forge a new pathway between those who opposed apartheid and those who supported it. He set

in motion the process of reconciliation that moved the country forward as a united (rainbow) nation. However, twenty-two years later, President Mandela's legacy has unfortunately not freed us from failing to successfully transform our education system. As we have seen in literature reviews in this research (Chapters 2 and 3), successive post-apartheid governments are continuing to commit the same crimes against learners and teachers as those perpetrated under the apartheid government of Verwoerd and his predecessors (Ramphela 2010:134). Consequently, our teachers are struggling. This research explored only a small percentage of teachers' (mainly female teachers over forty) struggles. I leave it as a challenge to other theologians and researchers to consider further exploration of our teachers' struggles: to investigate other approaches, apart from the narrative approach that can be applicable and effective in finding ways to work with our teachers in South Africa. I believe that most of our teachers are:

Afflicted with social pain, suffer[ing from] depressive states manifested by apathy, helplessness and hopelessness...The greater the sense of one's humanity being affirmed by others, the higher one's sense of worth and self-esteem will be, and such affirmation is at the heart of the wellbeing of human beings who are creatures meant to live in community

(Ramphela 2010:162)

7.8 Conclusion

In this research I have attempted to propose a model which highlights the importance of promoting the quality of especially female teachers' lives. As we have seen in this research, implementing the model effectively in their teaching, relationships and personal lives had implications for reform in their own lives and the school they teach.

The research has demonstrated that teachers deal with stressful situations – in the classroom, interpersonal relationships, bodily issues, gender and power issues and more. Overall, our education system is under huge pressure in South Africa. These factors compromise teachers' ability to develop and maintain quality physical, psychological, spiritual and social-emotional wellbeing in their personal and professional lives. The empirical results in this research showed that teachers are struggling and they do not know why. The validity and use of "old knowledge"

such as the punitive approach is something most teachers fall back on when they have to deal with their struggles. Such an approach has become highly questionable and outdated in the times we live in and especially in the “new” South Africa. Practical theology has given me the tools to ‘imitate’ the life of Christ in a model – He taught us the Narrative approach through the stories He told and He taught us the meaning of the word discipline, which is to “follow/imitate” Him. I propose that attention be directed to explore the testing of this model in a variety of contexts. It is my belief that it has the potential to promote the quality of more teachers’ lives.

7.8 A final say

The final say in this research report comes from Emmi, one of the teacher participants and a co-researcher in this research journey:

Teaching is such a powerful ministry, a pity more people don’t realize the value of all teachers in the world. I also take time out to salute those wonderful teachers in this country who don’t have the support and infrastructure that they need, what an amazing job they do!

(2013)

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<http://www.macorbiotics.co.uk> > menopause

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Appendix A

Ethical Clarification

I followed the following steps in this research report:

I was verbally approached by the deputy headmistress, Mrs Helene Saayman (as an initial step) to get involved in the values implementation program of the school.

Mrs Saayman “handed me over” to Mrs Ingrid Koekemoer, the second deputy headmistress as she was heading the values implementation program. Mrs Koekemoer gave me permission to enter and work on the school premises.

After obtaining permission from the principal, Mr Gordon Redell, Mrs Koekemoer announced to the rest of the staff in meeting in the staffroom that I would be involved as consultant to the school for the values implementation as well as individual consulting.

Mr Redell announced to the staff in a meeting that I would be doing a PhD study at the school and asked the teachers to volunteer for the project. He gave permission to use the information AI gathered and said he would also inform the Education Department.

I had a meeting with the chairman of the governing body, Mr Riaan Smit where I discussed in detail the research project and he gave his permission for the study at the school.

Written permission was also given by the participants in this research. See an example in Appendix B. In some cases, because of the negative “staff room culture” and harsh criticism to which teachers are exposed to from time to time, some teachers agreed to let me use an initial rather than their full name.

All communications and signed consent forms were treated with the utmost discretion.

The research proposal (which included the ethical clarifications) was presented to the ethical committee of UNISA and approved.

Appendix B

LETTER OF PERMISSION

I,....., give my permission to Liezel Stapelberg to use my name and words in her dissertation for the University of South Africa.

- * I understand that I was invited to join as research participants representing.....School.
- * I understand that the telling of my stories and conversations I have with the researcher (Liezal) will be honored as having a lot of knowledge.
- * I understand that our conversations will be a celebration of my strengths and qualities.
- * I understand that should I decide that I do not want my words or story to be published, I can withdraw my permission at any time

signature

date