



**A REFLECTIVE TOPICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN ART TEACHER,
EXPLORING HER PROFESSIONAL GROWTH.**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the professional growth of teachers, their knowledge bases, the interplay of professional growth and research, and includes a discussion on meaningful art teaching and learning. Social Constructionism provides a lens to explore the life and the voice of an art teacher. This study emphasises the importance of lifelong learning and professional development, which are both key in quality teaching and learning.

As a generalist teacher, the researcher was not fully aware of the value of art in education. She had no formal training and did not understand its significance. When she became consciously aware of her teaching, she realized she needed to grow professionally to teach art meaningfully. Through offering her personal story, she encourages teachers to start their own intentional processes of professional growth.

This dissertation explores the professional growth of an art teacher, through the methodology of a reflective topical autobiography (RTA) and is framed in a qualitative, narrative paradigm. Data is drawn from an autobiography. The data analysis is a deep reflection on selected professional incidents. The meaning of these incidents is probed using the prescribed process of RTA. This reflection will result in a reflective topical autobiography, which will be formalized into research findings. The findings clearly show the interconnectedness of personal and professional growth, which are the result of intentionality. The researcher develops a reflective approach towards her teaching and starts questioning her identity as a teacher of art. The researcher is also actively participating in the process of her research and is not distanced from it which makes her experience of the research process, as a form of action research, deeply personal.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, Eugene.

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CHAPTER 1

1.1. Introduction

“Quality and meaningful visual art education provides opportunities for learning and holistic development,” (Westraadt, 2011). Quality visual arts education also opens unique channels for knowledge (Wright, 2003:279). Involvement with the visual art triggers the imagination, enhances observational skills, and encourages flexible and critical thinking (Eisner, 2005). Eisner (1972:8) also states that visual art has a valuable contribution to make to the development of creative thinking. The views and sentiments of these theorists probed a generalist art teacher to write this self-study as she was determined to improve her own teaching of visual art and most importantly to grow professionally.

This thesis will seek to explore the professional development of one particular generalist teacher of art, as she embarks on her journey of intentional professional and personal development. This study will document her journey as she strives to equip her learners with quality and meaningful learning in visual art. Through a consciously reflective approach, she will slowly come to realise her responsibility for guiding children to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in the making of art. As a generalist teacher of art she has a limited understanding of visual art education and in particular, visual art teaching (Bowie and Dowson, 2005:7). Of significant interest, is her intention to change and to improve as she is introduced to the process of a reflective practice.

In this first chapter an in-depth background of this self-study is given. The researcher is introduced to the reader. Thereafter the aims, the purpose, as well as the significance of the research is noted. A brief discussion of the research questions follows. The structure of the thesis as well as a short chapter summary concludes the first chapter.

1.2. Background of the self-study

I have chosen to write this discussion in the first person as this thesis is a self-study. Having many years of experience in teaching, I have become aware of the expressed frustration of generalist teachers of art. I had to teach art because of the needs of the school. I had no formal training in art education, and had no content knowledge of art

and none of the skills needed to teach effectively. This affected the way that I approached art lessons, both in facilitation and in planning. As I was not concerned with the way in which I was doing my job, I was not consciously aware of how I was impacting on the teaching and learning process. My career had reached a plateau after many years of teaching. I felt demotivated. I did not examine my teaching to determine the impact I was making. It is important to note that even if I had identified shortcomings in my lessons, I would not have known how to change the way I planned my lessons. I did not have the knowledge bases of which Shulman (1987) writes. I was not thinking about my teaching while I was teaching. I had a job and was earning a salary. These are the thoughts that shaped my thinking as I formulated and refined my research question. Once my questions were refined I needed answers to the following: What is professional development? What is meaningful art teaching? Why is the knowledge-base of Schulman so important when teaching for meaning? How does research involvement influence my practice? Through writing a Reflective Topical Autobiography I highlight significant factors that answer my research questions.

1.3. The researcher

This section describes the type of teacher I was before and after my Advanced Certificate in Education undergraduate studies. It focuses on my development as a generalist teacher of art as well as on the type of teacher I was to become. As a primary school generalist teacher of art, I was not fully aware of the true value of art in education, because I had no formal training in art and did not understand its significance for meaningful thinking. After twenty-two years of teaching, I felt stale. I enrolled for an Advanced Certificate in Education qualification in Arts and Culture, simply because there was space in this funded course, and I realised that I should take this opportunity to improve my qualifications.

I was exposed to new learning and thinking. As the new knowledge began to influence my practice, my understanding of visual art education grew. This new understanding translated into more valuable and meaningful lessons. I became more aware of the way in which I was teaching art, and of the value of art in education. Following this course, I enrolled and completed a B Ed Honours degree with visual art didactics as my specialist subject. This course further deepened my understanding of visual art teaching and enriched my practice even more. I understood the value of meaningful teaching. I will, through a Reflective Topical Autobiography, document my journey of

purposeful and intentional personal and professional development. The impact of the interconnectedness of professional growth and in-service formal training is strongly emphasised in my work. The significant impact of professional development on my teaching as well as my identity as a generalist teacher of art is intensely explored.

1.4. The aims, purpose and significance of this self-study

The aim of this study is to emphasise the importance and the effectiveness of lifelong learning and professional development. Lifelong learning and professional development are both key in quality teaching and learning (Bates and Morgan 2018). Through offering my story, I hope to encourage teachers to start their own intentional processes of professional development. Observing one teacher's professional growth gives the reader the opportunity to understand what impacts on, or influences her growth. We may observe the life story of one particular art teacher with her fears and challenges, and her conscious and intentional development of the teacher knowledge base for teaching. In this study, I hope to offer an insight into the way in which one art teacher grows and develops in her profession. In order for me to reach the aim of this study, and to fulfil its purpose, I need to answer the following questions which are central to this study:

What are the factors that have influenced my professional growth?

- a) What is professional growth?
 - i) How has research impacted on my professional growth?
- b) What is meaningful art teaching?
 - i) Why are knowledge bases of teachers important when teaching visual art?

Teachers benefit from professional development in countless ways (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). These theorists, Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner (2017:14), highlight the importance of professional development: "it provides time for teachers to think about, receive input on, and make changes to their practice." According to Darling-Hammond (2010:227), "when the duration of professional learning is continuous, teachers have the chance to identify a problem of practice and will have the opportunity to solve it". Teachers judge professional development to be most valuable because it provides opportunities to do "hands- on" work that builds their content knowledge and pedagogic skills (Korthagen, 2017). As a generalist teacher of

art I had the opportunity to explore my own creativity as I completed visual art projects during my undergraduate studies. In this way my content knowledge deepened. I engaged in meaningful discussions about teaching visual art and I could apply this new knowledge to my lessons. The aim of this study is also to note how my deepened knowledge impacted on my lesson delivery.

The teacher knowledge bases of which Shulman (1987) writes include both formal as well as informal knowledge that teachers need to fulfil their roles in the classroom. It describes the elements that teachers need to consider to ensure that meaningful teaching happens during lessons. Comber (2016:409) urges teachers to think deeply about developing new knowledge (content knowledge, pedagogic knowledge), so that the new knowledge they accumulate can continue to grow and flourish in productive ways. Liu (2015) emphasises that one of teachers' key competencies is being able to analyse and adapt their teaching to suit the needs of their learners. Feedback and reflection are two distinct but complementary processes and are critical to deepening knowledge and understanding (Schön, 1987). Vermunt (2014) writes that it is not enough just to teach well, or to motivate learners to learn. He mentions further that teachers should also be able evaluate (give feedback) and monitor learners' progress effectively. Schön (1983) records that reflecting on one's teaching is crucial because it highlights areas that warrant improvement.

1.5. The structure of the thesis

This section gives the reader an overview of the structure of the thesis by giving a short description of each chapter. It concludes with a chapter summary.

1.5.1. Chapter one

Chapter one gives a brief background of the study. The researcher is introduced to the reader. The aims of the research as well as the research questions are detailed. The significance as well the purpose for this study are described in depth. The last section of chapter one gives an overview of the thesis using the metaphor of a metamorphosis of a butterfly. A personal comment from the researcher as well as a chapter summary concludes chapter one.

1.5.2. Chapter two

This chapter includes a review of relevant and current literature applicable to the study. The concept of professional growth is discussed and the interplay between theory and practice as it pertains to this study is detailed. A comprehensive description of how the researcher's entry into research has influenced her professional growth is noted. Shulman's (1987) teacher knowledge bases and how these inform constructive, meaningful art teaching are discussed in depth. A brief discussion on teacher identity, follows. These topics anchor the purpose of this study.

1.5.3. Chapter three

This chapter describes the process and the methodology needed to answer the research questions and sub-questions. A study of this nature needs to be centered within the qualitative paradigm (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The broad goals of qualitative research acknowledge that there are many approaches to this research methodology. Three types of qualitative educational research methods relevant to this study are briefly discussed in this chapter. They include the following: Teacher Action Research, Narrative Research and Personal Narrative Research. There are several different approaches within narrative research, and the one that I shall select to explore more deeply will be a Reflective Topical Autobiographical approach (Johnstone, 1999; Levine, 2006). This particular approach will give me the opportunity to extract specific (topical) incidents that have occurred along my journey of professional development. I shall reflect on these incidents deeply to extract their significance to my research questions. The methodology is aligned with the Reflective Topical Autobiography process. Social Constructionism, which describes human uniqueness as a construction of society and relationships (Gergen, 2008) is used to underpin the theoretical framework. Further qualitative methods will be examined and narrative research will be explored in particular as this is an autobiographical study.

The analysis that follows will lead to the findings of this study. This will enable me to find ways to answer the research question. I shall discuss ethical matters which include the concepts of validity, trustworthiness, and most certainly, truth, as this study defines a Reflective Topical Autobiography. A chapter summary is detailed at the end of this chapter.

1.5.4. Chapter four

In this chapter I will begin to record the data, and will include the analysis of this data. It will represent the contemplative phase of a Reflective Topical Autobiography. Extracts from the autobiography will be reflected upon, and the analysis of this intense reflection will be recorded. The methodology will enable me to reflect on particular incidents that have contributed to my professional development and will also give me an opportunity to identify the factors that have influenced my professional development.

The data is a reflection on significant extracts from my autobiography in search of new meaning. The analysis of this reflection will be detailed. Each extract has a topic followed by a discussion. My interpretation and the meaning I ascribe to these extracts will translate into the findings of the study. These extracts are selected specifically to trace the progress of my professional development during my under- and post-graduate studies. The complete comprehensive autobiography will be attached as addendum 1. A chapter summary is included at the end of this chapter.

1.5.5. Chapter five

Chapter five represents the final phase of the reflective topical autobiographical methodology, which is the writing of the actual Reflective Topical Autobiography. This will progress to a discussion of the findings. I will use photographs, my learners' artwork, as well as relevant documents to support my findings. Suggestions for further research as well as recommendations for generalist art teachers are included in this chapter. I shall note the challenges and limitations of this study. In the last section of this chapter, the findings and discussions are summarized and concluding remarks are given. I shall explore the process of data analysis and the findings. The analysis of chapters three and four will reflect on the influences that have contributed to my professional growth over the years of my teaching career. This will take the form of the final Reflective Topical Autobiography, which is the last phase of this methodology. I hope to be able to encourage generalist teachers of art to gain specialist training in art education. I shall trace the challenges and limitations of the study, and will conclude with a personal reflection of the process of this study, as well as a short chapter summary.

1.6. Personal comment

I note my intention to be honest with the reader throughout the research process. This carries profound value for me. I believe that this study will yield valuable data, wherein readers will find resonance. Lifelong learning is key in quality education and teaching; this thesis provides the reader with the significance and the implication of lifelong learning. I hope that the contribution of this study will be to increase the awareness of the value of professional growth and the influences that impact an art teachers' professional development.

1.7. Chapter summary

Chapter one serves as an introduction to this study. An introductory discussion describes the intentions of the researcher. It presents the aims and the purpose of the study. A brief background of this self-study is sketched. The last section of the introduction gives an overview of the thesis. The chapters which follow provide more detailed descriptions and purpose of the literature used in the study, as well as the theoretical framework and the methodology used to investigate the research questions.

CHAPTER 2

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I review current literature that explores the factors which influence the professional development of an art teacher. After much thought and extensive reading, the following topics emerge that will be used to reflect deeply on the factors that influence the professional development and personal development of an art teacher in particular. These topics include:

- Professional development (Bates & Morgan,2018)
- Teacher knowledge bases (Gess-Newsome, 2019)
- The value of research involvement (Tattoo, 2015)
- Isolation as a barrier to professional development (Stone-Johnson, 2016)
- Meaningful art teaching (Punzalan, 2018)

The topics above will be discussed in depth to give clarity and help answer the overarching research question which is: What are the factors that influence professional and personal development?

The value and influence of research on professional growth is discussed and analysed. The impact of a knowledge base on professional growth is noted and a detailed description of meaningful art teaching is documented. This discussion on meaningful art teaching supports the knowledge bases of which Shulman and Turner- Bisset (1999) speak.

As this thesis is lodged in a self-study on the professional growth of an art teacher, the knowledge base of which Shulman and Turner-Bisset speak is highlighted. For the purpose of this study, I focus on pedagogical content knowledge, content knowledge, knowledge of the learner and knowledge of self. I include a discussion on knowledge of self, because the teacher's identity depends on her personal and emotional beliefs and how these beliefs affect her teaching practice (Turner-Bisset,1999), and in this case, visual art in particular. This chapter concludes with a discussion on isolation as a barrier to professional growth (Stone-Johnson, 2016) and a chapter summary.

2.2. Professional development

2.2.1. Definition of professional development

According to Kennedy (2017) professional development programs include theories of how students and teachers learn. Dadds (2014:10) explains that professional development provides an opportunity whereby teachers can stay in touch with changes, increase their skills and become more effective in their work. Bautista et al., (2015) add that the process, by which educators keep their knowledge bases current, is referred to as professional development. Dadds (2014:10) writes that the digital/information age that is rapidly changing our lives has important implications for teaching and learning. As technology becomes more integrated into their work environment, the challenge is for teachers to stay well-informed (Dadds,2014). According to (Bates & Morgan, 2018):

“Professional development should, happen over time and should contain learning opportunities necessary for teachers to integrate new knowledge into their own practice. Professional development should be an ongoing activity and not a once-off experience.”

Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, (2017) agree with Dadds (2014:9) that professional development is an on-going process of continuous improvement. It is not an isolated event or series of events. Bates and Morgan (2018) write that teachers should guard against complacency in their professions. Vermunt (2014) urges teachers to reflect on their teaching practice and to record the process. These recordings will provide valuable insights into how they can grow professionally, and improve their teaching (Vermunt, 2014). These views are relevant to my study, and strengthen my choice of methodology, which is a Reflective Topical Autobiography.

Bates & Morgan (2018) state that professional development is the important factor that links effective teaching and meaningful learning. Current teacher professional development theories put the teacher, as learner, at their centre (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Little, 1993). There are two types of professional development. One is compulsory, and the other is voluntary. It is possible that these two types of learning may overlap (Moore, 2009:19). Darling- Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner (2017) state that in compulsory professional development, teachers make choices about how

new practices fits into the existing context of their classrooms. Researchers expand on this theory by stating that professional development can be seen as an intentional process.

Professional development needs to be purposeful and linked to the teachers' needs and practices, not as someone else defines them, but as the teachers themselves perceive those needs to be. Darling-Hammond, Hylar and Gardner (2017) agree that to make effective changes in teaching practice, teachers need professional development that is interactive with their teaching practice and meets their professional needs.

2.2.2. The value of professional development

According to Bates & Morgan (2018) a teacher who has grown professionally has “acquired a base of knowledge from which he or she practices, mastery of that knowledge, and independence in making decisions regarding application of that knowledge”.

Educational literature urges professional development to be responsive to teachers' needs (Bautista & Ortega-Ruíz, 2015; Caddle et al., 2016; Desimone, 2009). Therefore, in recent years, researchers have increasingly focused on what makes professional development effective (Darling-Hammond, Hylar and Gardner, 2017). Research studies have explored teachers' learning during professional development activities, and how learning effects changes in their classroom practice (Korthagen, 2017).

Little (1993) believes that workshops do not allow teachers to explore new concepts and teaching strategies in depth, while Lieberman & Mc Laughlin (1992) strongly suggest that workshops are likely to be more effective because they are often steered by resourceful teachers who are able to give meaningful guidance on methods to improve teaching practices in the classroom. Darling-Hammond, Hylar and Gardner (2017) write that a “focus on content knowledge and active or inquiry-based learning approaches” are key features that ensure effective and valuable professional development.

2.3. A knowledge base for teaching

The previous discussion highlights that one who has grown professionally is committed to lifelong professional development. It can therefore be assumed that professional growth in teaching also encompasses extending the knowledge bases of teachers. According to Shulman (1986,1987) since the 1980s, extensive research has been concluded on how to describe the knowledge teachers need to be able to teach effectively.

According to Turner-Bisset, (1997):

“When these knowledge bases are broadened and deepened, the mastery of knowledge through extended education impacts on the practices and processes of teachers.”

It can therefore be assumed that continuous professional development has a positive impact on what happens in the classroom and most importantly how the teaching and learning unfolds. Teachers use this new knowledge to improve their own practices. Practical knowledge is deepened through their own teaching experiences. Lastly, they adopt a reflective approach to their teaching practices (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999).

2.3.1. Pedagogical content knowledge

Shulman (1987) combines knowledge of subject matter with pedagogical knowledge. According to Shulman (1987:8) “pedagogical content knowledge blends together content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics or problems are organized and adapted to the diverse needs and abilities of learners”. This suggests that pedagogical content knowledge is a critical element in the knowledge base for teaching. Pedagogical content knowledge can be divided into two parts. The first consists of the way knowledge of the subject is understood in relation to the teachers’ context and therefore what needs to be taught. The second involves how the knowledge of the subject connects to the learners’ knowledge and the learning process (Guess-Newsome et al., 2019).

It can be concluded that there is an interconnectedness between content (what) and pedagogy (how) and that how we teach is guided by what we teach. Pedagogical

content knowledge is described by Milbrandt and Milbrandt (2011) as the way of teaching that a teacher slowly acquires after years of experience. It includes knowing how to teach the content in ways that are understandable and meaningful to the learners (Sandell, 2009:289). Johnson (2012:75) writes: "*The value of pedagogical content knowledge is that it is the pathway that makes learning accessible to the learner*". According to Kennedy (2016), if "*students could learn curriculum content simply by reading textbooks there would be no need for teachers, but students need help making sense of new content*". Therefore, as stated by Johnson (2012:75) pedagogical content knowledge makes learning "accessible" or "possible".

We can therefore assume that a teacher's sound pedagogical content knowledge is key for students to make meaning of new content, and this is particularly important in visual art. A very important part of visual art pedagogical content knowledge is how content knowledge is applied to practical lessons (Baker, 1990). Baker (1990:23) writes: "*Integrative experiences and information, should characterize the nature of art instruction for young children.*"

Burriel (2005), Sahasrabudhe (2006), Constantino (2007) and Milbrandt and Milbrandt (2011) all agree that integrating content knowledge with art-making allows learners to engage meaningfully in the entire learning process. Therefore, a teacher's pedagogical knowledge will relate greatly to the way visual art content knowledge is integrated within practical lessons. It will also define how teachers plan their lessons, and their belief of how children's creative skills are developed.

2.3.2. Content knowledge

Knowledge of content, or subject knowledge, refers to a teacher's knowledge of the content that she needs to teach. Studies exploring teachers' knowledge of content help determine what, and therefore how, teachers teach, because teachers use their content knowledge base to plan and decide what they are going to teach (Shulman, 1987). Content knowledge as described by Newton and Newton (2001) "is the process that supports planning, presentation and effective teacher response".

In art education teachers of art with a thorough content knowledge of the subject will deliver beneficial art lessons and will be able to respond to the learners' questions in appropriate, positive ways. Newton and Newton (2001) very strongly state that learners

should be guided to understand the process of the art experience. Learners could only be guided to understand the process of the art experience if visual art teachers are able to develop a student's thinking, imagination and creativity (Jolley, 2016 cited in Punzalan 2018).

Art is a deeply personal experience where learners are guided to explore their own unique creativity and express their ideas in meaningful ways (Ochshorn, 2016 cited in Punzalan, 2018). They should be given opportunities to grow in confidence and ultimately display artworks that carry meanings, and expressions of their thoughts and emotions (Booth, 2016 cited in Punzalan 2018). To Sahasrabudhe (2006) artistic expression means being able to organise different media and to use art elements in ways that make artwork meaningful and beautiful.

Lowenveld and Brittain (1987) write that teachers should choose lessons that are appropriate to avoid learners being excluded from “engaging in learning, exploring, responding, imagining, and of making meaning”. Lowenveld and Brittain (1987) found that all children pass through stages of maturity as they develop their imagination and creativity. Lowenveld and Brittain (1987) suggests that children find it difficult to understand artistic style in art. To the contrary, and very interesting to note, Wachowiak and Clements (2001) disagree and write that the development of a visual art vocabulary allows children to speak confidently about art. In visual art education the transfer of information is not “linear”. Instead, it is the way in which the child interprets the information that holds meaning for the child. This is significantly interesting to note (Lowenveld and Brittain, 1987).

The application of skills, techniques and the learning process to use and understand different materials properly are fundamental to art education (Lowenveld and Brittain, 1987; Wachowiak and Clements, 2001; Sahasrabudhe, 2006; Richmond, 2009). Wachowiak and Clements (2001) emphasise the importance of using art elements and design principles in the teaching of art. Lowenveld & Brittain, (1987), Wachowiak & Clements, (2001) and Sahasrabudhe, (2006) believe that children should develop a sense of awareness and visual perception to be able to express themselves meaningfully when engaging in art activities. Because of the complexities of art education and the teaching of art in particular, it is fundamental that teachers of art have a sound subject (content) knowledge, so that learners will benefit optimally.

2.3.3. Knowledge of the learner

There does not appear to be very current research on this topic. I have decided to use the work of Newton and Newton (2001) and Turner- Bisset (1997) in particular. Knowledge of the learner, according to Newton and Newton (2001) and Turner- Bisset (1997), is equally important with having a strong content knowledge, because the relationship between teacher and learner provides an opportunity for meaningful interaction in the process of teaching and learning. The value of this relationship also depends on the *empirical* (social) and *cognitive* (ability to think) knowledge that the teachers have of the learner. Newton and Newton (2001) agree that the teacher's relationship with the learners is of equal importance to good content knowledge. This allows an opportunity for both learners and teachers to have meaningful teaching and learning experiences. Therefore, it can be assumed that planning art activities for learners does not only rely only on pedagogical content knowledge, but also on knowing the learner.

A teacher who knows the background and life history of her learners will be able to design art activities and deliver art lessons that are significantly more meaningful to the learners. They will have art experiences that could impact deeply on their daily lives (Palmer, 1998:31). Motivating learners is important in all subjects including visual art education. Wachowiak and Clements (2001) agree that art lessons should be interesting and hold the attention of the learners. They should also be topical and relevant to the age group. Learning new techniques of producing art should be an inspirational and empowering experience to learners. Once again, this can only be achieved with sound *empirical* and *cognitive* knowledge of the learner.

2.3.4. Knowledge of self

The school is the place where children and teachers form their identities through the experiences that they have. Teachers' beliefs about teaching change as they grow in their professions. The "core beliefs" with which they enter the profession change constantly as they face challenges, (Walkington, 2005: 54). As professionals they draw on "resources" and "traditions" to add meaning to their lives. (Katsuno, 2012: 11).

Theorists believe that teachers exist as "people" before they become teachers. The importance they attach to their sense of "personal identity" or "knowledge of self" will determine the importance they attach to their work (Clandinin & Connely, 1987).

Knowledge of self is not included in Shulman's original list. The knowledge base of "self" was later included by Lambert (1984), Kagan (1992), Clandinin & Connelly (1987) and Turner-Bisset (1997). Teachers who have a strong knowledge of themselves and a strong sense of a teacher identity will know that meaningful teaching is more than teaching what children should know (Turner-Bisset, 1999:46). They are better able to understand their own practices as teachers and are able to develop better ways of teaching and planning.

A teacher's effectiveness is not the quantity of knowledge, but rather the link between the different types of knowledge she possesses (Kennedy 1990). For the purpose of this discussion I refer to content knowledge and knowledge of self in particular. The degree of interconnectedness separates a "competent" teacher from an "excellent" one, (Turner-Bisset, 2001: 131-141). Turner-Bisset (1999) explains that a deeper knowledge of self allows teachers to reflect on their practices at a higher level.

Johnson (2012:68) suggests the following: *"Why do teachers need to be aware of, and work with, their own emotions? I believe that it is to enrich the teaching and learning process, and to imbue it with meaning that goes beyond content and context"*.

I include a discussion on emotions based on a study by Becker et al., (2015), Frenzel (2014), Kelleretal (2014) and Schutz, (2014), which confirms that the way students behave during lessons impacts on the teachers' emotional experiences. Therefore, a deepened knowledge of self will allow teachers to reflect on the impact of these emotions and evaluate how they affect their teaching. According to Penso, (2002) teachers reflect on and assess their decisions based on the knowledge they have. This includes knowledge of self. Studies on teacher beliefs and teacher training also find that "teachers who are trained to think about their own teaching make better choices" (Gess-Newsome 2019). They will also have a better relationship with their learners which is crucial in education, because the teacher is the connection between the subject and the learner (Gess-Newsome,2019). In conclusion, "teachers have an impactful presence in the lives of learners" (Johnson, 2012:50) and therefore a sound knowledge of self is crucial.

2.4. The value of research involvement

This discussion investigates the interconnectedness between research involvement and professional growth. As Darling-Hammond (1997) writes, “research provides a strong argument that effective professional development is the key to creating opportunities for fundamental school reform”. One of the ways in which teachers can grow professionally is by becoming involved in the process of formal research. There is a strong link between professional growth and research. One of the aims of my study is to explore the interconnectedness of professional growth and professional knowledge gain, as is suggested by Lave (1996).

Crawford-Garrett et al., (2015), write:

“Involvement in the research process fosters a deep engagement with certain ideas and allows the teachers a space to develop these ideas fully. They are given the opportunity to test emerging theories about teaching and learning”.

According to Grayson & Suter (2015) the in-depth engagement with ideas gives teachers the opportunity to evaluate specific practices and validate their use in various environments. Crawford-Garrett et al., (2015) write that research involvement begins “when teachers use challenge and addresses it through focused, organized, and collective study”.

Throp (2016) believes that a teacher’s involvement in research affects his or her professional identity in the following way: “Teachers who are also researchers think of themselves as knowledge creators, in contrast to teachers who simply just receive knowledge”. It can therefore be assumed that teachers who are researchers view themselves as capable of generating knowledge about children and learning, and the practice of teaching. Henderson (2012: 4) argues that as a teacher begins to see herself or himself as a “knowledge creator, he or she becomes the one leading staff development at schools”. This enhances their identity as professionals. I believe that when a teacher becomes a researcher, a new kind of leadership arises from that teacher. This suggests that there is an important interplay between research and professional growth. Crawford-Garrett et al., (2015) believe that teachers have been,

and continue to be, expert researchers, and state: “Research is key to the development and understanding of education ensuring teachers as educational leaders.”

Hassanian et al., (2015) maintain that research (as a process of knowledge-building) inspires personal growth and development in individuals and in groups. Teachers actively share the knowledge that they have gained through research, and by doing this, they build a professional community and shape the minds within that community. They also bring their expertise to the classroom. This brings about changes in their thinking, in their approaches to their work, and in their practices. It also influences the construction of the identity of that teacher. In conclusion, Hassanian et al., (2015) state that who one is becoming (growth), shapes significantly and crucially what one knows (knowledge which is acquired through research).

2.4.1. The interconnectedness of research and practice

According to Sullivan (2017), “research produces new knowledge that teachers apply to improve what they do in their classrooms”. Through doing research teachers gather and share information and make decisions. This is a continuous process as we try to make sense of the changing world in which we live (Sullivan & Gu, 2017).

The NAEA (National Art Education Association) states that it is through “research” that we create knowledge to validate why art is necessary and important in our lives and in art education. Furthermore, when knowledge gained from art-based research is shared, it “enriches and expands visual arts education” (NAEA, 2016: 6).

According to Rolling, (2013:50) arts-based research is the most effective because researchers gather knowledge about art-related educational issues, culture, and communities of artists and art teachers. Visual art teachers use many sources of ideas, knowledge, and theories to ensure effective classroom practices (Marshall & Donahue, 2014). Gray, cited in Throp (2016), gives a very helpful definition of practice-led research:

“Firstly, it is research which is initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners; and secondly, it is a research strategy that is carried out

through practice, using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to practitioners”.

Teachers assess practical situations, although theoretical knowledge and insights play a part (Schön 1983, Dewey, 1987). Therefore, “practice” and “theory” are interconnected. This suggests that theory influences practice and practice influences theory. Practice and theory are reciprocal. Critical practice should generate theory and theory should inform practice (Gray 2016). Students involved in research-based inquiries develop more sophisticated levels of intellectual engagement.

In recent research it has been found that students benefit most from research, in terms of depth of learning and understanding, when they are actively involved in that research (Sullivan & Gu, 2017:49). An example of this is the success of Singapore’s education system, where teachers are deeply involved in research (Poon, 2011:19). Research may be teacher-focused or student-focused. A teacher-focused approach emphasises the transmission of research knowledge to students while a student-focused approach emphasises students constructing their own knowledge through active participation in class. It is suggested that learning by doing is an effective way for students to benefit from research (Marshall & Donahue, 2014:56).

2.5. Isolation as a barrier to professional development

According to Stone-Johnson (2015), isolation or “alienation is not a feeling of powerlessness as much as it is a state in which teachers neglect teaching practices”. Stone-Johnson (2015) states that the “lack of professional knowledge” in conjunction with feeling isolated damages not only the work of teachers but also the ultimate success of students. Isolation is a barrier that prevents professional growth (Hauserman & Cal 2012) and teaching is often referred to as a lonely profession, because teachers work in isolation. Most teachers spend the majority of their day in isolation from their colleagues. This isolation prevents teachers from collaborating with each other. There is a lack of communication. According to Hausman et al., (2010: 371) this “silence” could be related to fear. Teachers feel that by asking, they are exposing themselves as having poor teaching skills. When teachers stop sharing best practices or challenges with each other, they may never know the weaknesses or strengths of their own practices (Hauserman and Cal, 2012).

Hassanian et al., (2015) promote collaboration as opposed to isolation. Teachers need to network and engage with other teachers in order to grow professionally. It has been proven that teachers learn best from other teachers, as their interactions "provide for technical and psychological support as well as personal reinforcement". (Barth 2008:6). Bates & Morgan (2018) state that reflecting about learning independently and then collectively with others is one of the most powerful forms of growing, both personally and professionally.

The process of learning requires both knowledge and structure (Borko, 2004). Teacher learning, or professional development, is described by Bates and Morgan (2018) as "participation in socially organized activities." In most educational structures, teachers do not have opportunities to communicate with other professionals (Hauserman and Cal, 2012). Studies report that the isolation teachers feel in the classroom is overwhelming and is one of the reasons for teacher burnout (Kilgore & Griffin, 1998; Rosenberg, O'Shea, & O'Shea, 1998). The continuation of isolation along with the lack of opportunities to relate with other professionals ultimately force teachers into a restricted and unacceptable pattern of teaching (Hauserman & Cal, 2012). In conclusion Schulman (1999:17) found that creating a system of mentorship could break down the sense of isolation, and could encourage participation and support from colleagues.

2.6. Meaningful art-teaching practice

2.6.1. What is meaningful art-teaching practice?

What does it mean to teach art meaningfully and more specifically, to teach visual art for meaning? (Johnson, 2012:68).

As early as the 1970s, Lowenfeld (1970:9) referred to art education as a complex and crucial part of the education process. Turner-Bisset, (1999:46) writes the following: "A teacher with a strong teacher identity will know the value of meaningful knowledge construction and will do much more than just teach the subject". These teachers will intuitively know what to teach, so that learners are able to make meaningful connections with their worlds through art (Szekely & Buckman, 2012).

Children respond to visual art through symbols and images in a very personal way. They make connections with their environment and create new knowledge in an “unrestricted” way (Hausman et al, 2010: 371). Burrell (2005: 38) contributes: “Art is all around. It is integrated into our daily experiences and reflects our connection with our world and one another”. Slager (2016:54) strongly states that teachers who continually strive to broaden their knowledge of visual art education also broaden their understanding of the role of visual art in the curriculum and will therefore deliver art lessons that are rich in quality and meaning.

As stated in an earlier discussion, the visual art experience is process-orientated and is not a product-bound experience, and permits for a deeper level of consciousness (Hausman et al, 2010: 371). This “deeper level of consciousness” will be achieved if the teacher teaches for meaning and knows the value of meaningful knowledge construction. Sullivan & Gu (2017:47) agree that “visual art activities ground children in the forms and processes of their culture” and therefore visual art lessons should allow children to be able to make meaningful connections with their own worlds.

Eisner (2009: 8) describes the visual art experience as a “qualitative exploration of a variety of qualities”. Eisner (2002), Russell-Bowie (2009) and Davis (2008:3) agree that when children make art, they are involved in a cognitive process that allows language and art to be communicated in many ways. Art teachers are tasked to facilitate the development of knowledge, understanding and visual literacy, as well as skills in the making of art. Sandell (2006:33) concurs that “art teaching should be seen as grounded in meaning and inspiration”. Sandell (2009:287) further states that, “meaningful visual art teaching is balanced, interdisciplinary, and rich in content. It allows learners to use creative expression and critical responses”. Sandell (2009:287) elaborates further and writes that when children express themselves creatively, they produce unique ideas that can be developed into visual meaning. Through the process of critical response, learners create a personally significant artefact. Sandell (2006) agrees that if art lessons give learners opportunities to creatively express their ideas, artworks that are distinctive and personal will be delivered. If learners are guided through the process of being critically responsive, they will have the ability to make “informed judgements leading to sensitivity, understanding and appreciation of art”.

Szekely & Buckman (2012:18) respond to the interdisciplinary aspect of meaningful art teaching and state:

“What children learn is not only about art, but science, maths and life skills and all aspects of visual thinking, that includes planning, problem solving, interpretation and perception. Art activities stand alone in permitting students to regain a sense of wholeness”.

Bowie and Dowson (2005:7) state that formal knowledge in art teaching is a key factor determining the quality of art lessons. It can therefore be hypothesized that if a primary school generalist art teacher lacks formal art teacher education and content knowledge, this will translate into art lessons of superficial quality, deprived of content, critical thinking, knowledge and skills. Sullivan (2017) agrees that it is critically important that teachers have sufficient depth and breadth of subject knowledge in order to engage meaningfully with their learners in art lessons.

Sullivan (2017) declares that art education needs to explore more than one theory or model, and McKay (2013:54) contributes that teachers need an understanding of the “theoretical tools” to be able to use them more skilfully. Burton & Hafeli, (2012:56) believe that if teachers do not understand the theory that guides their practices they will not be able to reflect critically. More importantly, O’Donoghue (2015:50) states that if visual art teachers have no understanding of visual art content knowledge, they will not be able to offer children the opportunity to explore this knowledge themselves. This suggests that knowledge of art gained through research and formal in-service teacher education impacts positively on practice, and in this case, visual art education practice in particular.

2.7. Chapter summary

This chapter begins with a definition of professional growth and a detailed discussion on the importance and value of professional development. Thereafter, the knowledge bases of Shulman (1987) and Turner-Bisset (1999) are explored and four knowledge bases that are pertinent to this particular study are discussed.

Firstly, I include pedagogical content knowledge which is important because it includes the way a teacher understands the content to ensure quality teaching. Secondly, I

discuss content knowledge, because content knowledge guides the process of good, careful planning and effective facilitation. Thirdly, the knowledge of the learner is relevant to this study because having this knowledge means that teachers will be able to teach lessons that are meaningful and appropriate for their particular learners. Lastly, knowledge of self is discussed, because a deepened 'knowledge of self' enables teachers to attach a sense of personal identity (Turner-Bisset, 1999).

The value of research is discussed briefly as well as the interconnectedness between research and practice. The importance of meaningful art teaching is described in depth because the purpose of this study is the intention of the researcher to become a passionate and competent visual art teacher "because the work that she does has meaning for both herself and her students. She believes that what she is doing is meaningful, and has value" (Johnson, 2012:69).

I include a brief discussion on isolation, because as my study unfolds, it becomes clear how my lack of formal art education and the dilemma of my inappropriate survival strategies resulted in complete isolation and loneliness. The aim of the literature review is to highlight pertinent concepts which will be used to reflect deeply on the factors that influence a teachers' professional development and personal growth. In the next chapter I shall give more detailed discussions on the methodological and theoretical frameworks as well as different types of educational research that are relevant to this study.

CHAPTER 3

3.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the process and the methods needed to answer my research questions and sub-questions. I shall explore qualitative research because this study seeks to understand the factors that have influenced the professional development of an art teacher. It is therefore imperative to work through a methodology that embraces an interpretative, personal response. As I shall illustrate in this chapter, this methodology will enable a study which encompasses a reflective approach. This will make it possible for me to address the questions that underpin my study. These questions include the following:

1. What are the factors that have influenced my professional growth?
 - a. What is professional growth?
 - i. How has research impacted my professional growth?
 - b. What is meaningful art-teaching practice?
 - i. Why are the knowledge bases of teachers important when teaching visual art?

In order for me to be able to answer my research questions and sub-questions, this study will be grounded in a qualitative research paradigm. Qualitative research gives me the opportunity to explore the process of my professional development. This broad research methodology acknowledges the daily practices of the human being and it interprets the actions and behaviours of the participant (Walia 2015:124). Underpinning this study is the belief that we are socially constructed in response to the unique worlds in which we live. Meaning is derived from the value that the individual places on people, relationships, and events. This study seeks to understand the factors that have influenced the professional development of one art teacher over time. The challenge, then, is to identify and analyse the factors that have influenced my professional growth through a study of my own biography. This will involve a slow process as I seek a deep understanding of the factors that have influenced my professional growth over time. The importance of the qualitative choice for this study is that I am involved in the research process.

3.2. Qualitative research

3.2.1. Description of qualitative research

According to Silverman (2010) our social world is articulated through the construction of sequences. Silverman (2010) adds that qualitative methodologies offer the researcher the opportunity to explore the sequences of our social world.

Walia (2015:124) maintains that the human being makes personal choices, and that qualitative research aims to explore or interpret, in order to understand and possibly change the meanings that are given to particular experiences. According to Punch (2013), in qualitative research, researchers do not uncover scientific knowledge. Rather, they construct knowledge through interpretation.

There are many forms of qualitative research that may be used for educational purposes. I have selected to highlight and briefly discuss three of them below. The types that I have chosen relate particularly to this study, and include: teacher action research, narrative research and personal narrative research.

3.3. Teacher action research

3.3.1. Description of teacher action research

Yuan & Burns (2017:729) state that action research is about analysing existing practice and identifying elements of change on which the teacher can then act. Teacher action research is a practical approach to professional inquiry relating to education, and is therefore of particular relevance to teachers in their daily teaching (Yuan & Burns, 2017:729). Teacher action research is grounded in the working lives of teachers, as they experience them.

This research methodology does not offer the appropriate opportunity for me to answer my research questions. I need to know which factors influence my professional growth, and how my professional growth impacts on my teaching practice. I need to analyse my own practice and therefore I decided to explore narrative and personal narrative research as further possibilities.

3.4. Narrative research

3.4.1. Description of narrative research

Narrative inquiry, or narrative research, is a research methodology that is growing in acceptance and practice in nursing, medicine, law and especially organizational studies and teaching, (Felton & Stickley, 2018:62). Like other methodologies used by social science researchers, narrative inquiry asks questions about, and looks for, deeper understanding of particular aspects of life experiences (Felton & Stickley, 2018:62).

Constant & Roberts (2017:18) state that a narrative tells a short or extended story about something significant. It can also relate a life story. This is the reason that a narrative methodology best supported my particular research. In personal narrative research, the autobiography is termed a life story (Connelly & Clandinin, 1986; Chase, 2005; Merriman, 2009). It illustrates the emotions and insider views of personal experiences. Clandinin & Connelly (2000:20) describe narrative research as a way of understanding experience. Constant & Roberts (2017:18) agree that, if one wishes to understand the deepest and most universal of human experiences, one should value the narrative. Clandinin and Connelly (1989:4) suggest that narratives are a basic form of life. They state that people connect with each other using stories. Stories are described and told by the human being who has subjectively experienced them, to analyse, interpret and understand their meaning for the individual. For these reasons it became clear that some form of narrative research would be appropriate to enable me to explore my research question.

Narrative methodology is broad, and encompasses several approaches to research. The Reflective Topical Autobiography, a form of narrative research, has gained importance in educational research and practice. Reflective Topical Autobiography embraces reflection, and it provides an appropriate opportunity for me to answer my research question most effectively. Participating in this kind of reflective practice offers me a means by which I can identify my strengths and weaknesses and specific learning needs to maintain professional competence and continue the journey of life-long learning. Kennedy (2016:947) views reflection as a professional development strategy that provides professionals with “opportunities to explore, articulate, and represent their own ideas and knowledge”.

Reflection involves active, persistent and careful consideration. Many of the concepts and models of reflective practice have been developed from the work of Schön (1983), who promotes two dual processes to reflective practice.

- i. Reflection in action – thoughts, feelings and behaviours present whilst one is doing it;
- ii. Reflection on action – thinking about how one could have done things differently and how one will deal with similar situations in the future (Davies, 2012:10).

According to Davies (2012:12) there are several benefits to reflective practice. These include that it:

- increases learning from an experience or situation
- identifies personal and professional strengths and weaknesses
- results in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills
- facilitates practitioners to understand their own beliefs, attitudes and values
- encourages self-motivated and self-directed learning
- improves personal development and confidence (Davies, 2012:12).

3.5. Personal narrative research

3.5.1. Description of personal narrative

According to Hyland (2018:1) a story is a “narrative arrangement of a personal reality showing how people make their lives coherent and meaningful.” My autobiography starts from my childhood days and develops to the teacher I have become. My data will be drawn from this written story. The reflection on my data will become my topical autobiography where topics relevant to my research question will be reflected upon. The topics or themes will highlight the factors that have influenced my professional growth over time. My story is deeply personal and my data is based on personal memory and interpretation. According to (LePort et al., 2016:1) autobiographical memory is spontaneous, and includes sensory detail where two (time and place) or more avenues of memory are accessed to strengthen recall. Distinctive events are also more likely to be remembered. Therefore, using the personal narrative as a research

tool gives me the opportunity to identify distinct events that have influenced my professional growth as an art teacher. According to Hyland (2018) the aim of narrative research is to find meaning in the life of an ordinary human being. This is the most suited approach for an art teacher who is exploring the influences on her professional growth. This approach will enable me to return to incidents which may have had little significance when they occurred, and to understand them within the context of my professional development.

In narrative research, memory revolves around a particular event (Mc Adams & Guo, 2015).

This suggests that a participant has a specific and personal lens when it comes to what details will be remembered. This lens is influenced by one's personal, social and cultural paradigm. When a particular narrative frame is suggested at the outset, a participant is inclined to remember and reference the memory through that frame. This concept is applicable for this study. In order to explore the influences on my professional development, I will apply that narrative frame to my own process of remembering. This frame will influence what I am remembering, and how I am remembering it.

3.5.2. Limitation to personal narrative

O'Brien & Clark (2012: 275) suggests that the subjective role of the researcher can become a limitation because the researcher may enforce a personal meaning and understanding on a story that is not his or her own. Lamprell & Braithwaite (2019: 587) state that the personal narrative focuses so strongly on the individual that it does not take into account the collective experience. This may also be a limitation.

In this particular study, the research question itself may be influenced by the researcher, and throughout the process, the researcher's own understanding and interpretation of the world may guide the study (Monteagudo, 2014). Dodgson (2019) therefore suggests that reflexivity and awareness during the process is vitally important. The researcher should be aware of personal subjectivity.

3.6. The methodological and theoretical framework

3.6.1. Reflective topical Autobiography as a methodology

Reflective Topical Autobiography can be described as a deconstructing and reconstructing process. Beliefs, assumptions and knowledge can change after deep, intense reflection (Edwards, 2017). McLeod et al., (2015) believe that this methodology offers the knowledge to make change possible after intense reflection. Through my interpretation and understanding of the text, narrative autobiography will allow me to see old things anew, to break down old views, and will possibly bring about change through this experience. I shall be able to broaden and redefine my perceptions of how I grew professionally and personally. Using the Reflective Topical Autobiographical methodology, I shall explore significant phases or incidents (Roberts, 2019:201) in search of new meaning.

The Reflective Topical Autobiography as a methodology offers me a framework to interpret those incidents which I reflectively find are deeply significant in my professional development. I can leave out sections that are simply a part of my autobiography, but are not significant in my development as a teacher and the person I have become. Through reflection, and careful immersion in the story, I will be able to select people and events that have profoundly influenced my development as an art teacher.

3.6.2. A description of Reflective Topical Autobiography

This methodology provides an opportunity for interpreting the narrative in a thematic approach. Naidoo & Kirsch (2016) remind us that interpretation does not occur in a vacuum. I shall be influenced by personal values and inter-personal relationships in the process. These influences may help me to construct meaning in my own context and this is where interpretation will occur.

Roberts (2019:202) states that Reflective Topical Autobiography is deeply reflective and this contemplative methodology provides the opportunity for the researcher to examine the autobiography from a thematic view point. I shall use this methodology to explore and interpret incidents from my own professional life.

3.6.3. The goals of Reflective Topical Autobiography

My autobiography offers an opportunity to gain access to my personal world. It is an attempt at an account of one person's lived experience, and the meaning that is placed on this experience. The interpretation of that meaning may have a deep influence on my professional development. Reflective Topical Autobiography allows this personal approach to be worked in a reflexive way (McLeod et al., 2015). Edwards (2017) concurs that "Reflective Topical Autobiography calls for personal scrutiny and examination through reflection and one being compelled to address one's very essence through self-examination". The goals of this methodology align with the purpose of this study, and will help me to understand the process over time of my professional development as a teacher. Methodologically I will use this reflective approach to examine the influences that have contributed to my professional development.

Reflective Topical Autobiographical approaches stimulate personal growth and professional development (Charissi, 2019). During the process, I will be given the opportunity to re-tell or re-visit aspects of my story, with the possibility of new understandings emerging from the process. This process is suggested by Johnstone (1999) and Edwards (2017). The re-telling and the interpretation into meaning will be guided to a large extent by my values and my personality (McLeod et al., 2015).

While re-telling my story, readers may identify with feelings, thoughts, and events in their own lives through the material. The purpose is to offer interpretations of the lived experience that might resonate in some way with the lived experience of the reader (Johnstone, 1999; Zammit, 2008).

3.7. The Reflective Topical Autobiography process grounded in Heuristic Inquiry

3.7.1. A definition of Heuristic Inquiry

It was Moustakas (1961, 1972, 1975, and 1990) who organized a systematic form for investigating personal experiences and named it heuristic inquiry. According to Sela-Smith (2002, 2013) heuristic inquiry is a unique research method that is deeply rooted in tacit knowledge. Such research is inherently personal and it allows for participants to have their stories understood and their voices heard (Moustakas, 1990:11). "In

heuristic research the investigator must have had a direct, personal encounter with the occurrence being investigated. There must have been actual autobiographical connections” (Moustakas, 1990:14). Writing a narrative or autobiography is inherently a heuristic process (Hiles, 2001a:17, 2008) because the Reflective Topical Autobiography clearly aligns with the heuristic process as described by Casterline (2004).

In Reflective Topical Autobiography, data is provided within narratively reported incidents that are selected from an autobiography which spans a particular time. The meaning of these incidents is probed using the prescribed process of Reflective Topical Autobiography.

The process of Reflective Topical Autobiography is listed under the following concepts:

1. Choosing a topic
2. Immersion
3. Data collection
4. Incubation
5. Illumination
6. Contemplation
7. Writing the reflective topical autobiography

Using this methodology, I will document my own professional life story, and will then select incidents which have influenced my professional growth. These will provide the data which I will analyse through reflection, and will include my professional development over a period of time. I will deeply reflect on the influences of the events, people and the social world in which I moved, to explore how these have combined to influence my professional growth. I will then write a reflective topical autobiography to describe these influences. In keeping with academic research, I shall provide the findings and recommendations that emanate from this research.

I provide a table below to document the process of my methodology, showing how it can be translated through the lens of traditional research:

Reflective Topical Autobiography	Actions	Traditional Research
Step One: Choosing a topic	What has influenced my professional growth?	Deciding what I want to investigate
Step Two: Immersion	Write the autobiographical section of my professional life that will be explored.	Data collection: 1
Step Three: Data collection:	Select critical incidents that were important for my professional growth.	Data collection: 2
Step Four: Incubation: let critical incidents sink in and incubate	Explore what other writers have to say about professional development, art teaching, and teacher knowledge bases.	Work on my literature review and methodology chapter (Chapters 2 and 3)
Step Five: Illumination: search for new meaning	Reflect on critical incidents.	Data Analysis: 1
Step 6: Contemplation	Deepen reflection and reach new understanding of incidents.	Data Analysis: 2
Step Seven: Write the Reflective Topical Autobiography	Write my response to the new meaning that I have gained	Discussion of findings
No further actions	Formalise the findings that emerge from my Reflective Topical Autobiography.	Findings (Chapter 4)
No further actions	Formalise findings and write chapter 5.	Findings, recommendations and conclusion (Chapter 5)
No further actions	Write introduction, finalise thesis and submit.	Chapter 1

3.8. The research process using the Reflective Topical Autobiography methodology

3.8.1. Step one: Choosing the topic

The topic should be chosen before the methodology is determined. The topic and research question should guide the choice of methodology of the study. According to Johnstone (1999), the methodology and the research enquiry should be aligned with Reflective Topical Autobiography.

3.8.2. Step two: Immersion

I will write my actual autobiography to provide the data for the study. I will focus deeply and intensely on my own experiences, as suggested by Johnstone (1999:28). The information of my experiences will be documented in the form of an autobiography. Johnstone (1999:28) suggests that this process entails deep and intensive self-searching. According to Johnstone (1999) it is during this stage that the writer's personal experiences and emotions are emphasised and revealed. According to Djuraskovic and Arthur (2012:10) this stage is exhausting and intense.

3.8.3. Step three: Data collection

During this process, I shall extract critical and significant incidents from my autobiography that reveal significance for my professional development. There are very personal memories that are embedded in my mind, but if these memories are not contributive to my study, I shall not extract them from my story. I shall extract those events that I believe still influence my teaching today. These incidents will be deemed relevant to my research question, and it will be clear that they have contributed significantly to my personal and professional development, (Johnstone, 1999). Johnstone (1999:28) describes this as a rich description of the significant event itself including action and emotion. According to Johnstone (1999), this stage may include journals, visual artwork and photographs.

3.8.4. Step four: Incubation

During this process, I will engage with the theoretical aspects of my study. I will focus on what other authors have written about professional development, and will critically engage with the literature. According to Levine (2013:50) the researcher should attempt to clear the mind in order to reach new awareness and insights. During this stage I will withdraw from the study and focus on literature and scholarly articles that will enable me to address the questions which underpin my study (Johnstone, 1999:28). During the incubation stage, the researcher detaches from the topic. The researcher becomes removed from the intensity of the experience allowing intuition and tacit knowledge to develop (Casterline, 2004:4). The researcher has no interaction with the data, so that a deeper understanding and clarity can emerge (Djuraskovic & Arthur 2012:10). Levine (2006:50) states that new insights do not happen through intentional searching. Instead, they take place when we retreat from the intense search and immerse of the incubation stage.

3.8.5. Step five: Illumination

According to McLeod et al., (2015) the illumination period can be described as the phase where new insights and deeper understandings of the topic are reached. This phase is followed by a period of reflection (Johnstone, 1999:29). This is echoed in heuristic inquiry as a “new sense of direction” (Casterline, 2004:4). In my study I will use this phase to understand how the critical incidences that I have selected from my autobiography have influenced my professional and personal development and how this has impacted on my teaching of visual art. I shall reflect on the selected significant incidences in my autobiography, and attempt to gain a new understanding of the meanings in light of my current practice.

3.8.6. Step six: Contemplation

To contemplate means to think deeply and to grapple with new meaning to understand it. Johnstone (1999:29) describes this period as a phase of deep reflection and investigation.

During this process I shall deeply reflect on the extracts that I believe are important, and I will write down the new understanding of the incidents, and how their meaning has influenced my professional growth. During this phase in my study I shall analyse the new meaning and insights I have reached to come to a new understanding of how my professional and personal development has been influenced over time. This new understanding will pave the way for the writing of my Reflective Topical Autobiography.

3.8.7. Step seven: Writing the Reflective Topical Autobiography

In my study I shall write my Reflective Topical Autobiography documenting the new understanding of the research topic I have gained and represent them as my findings. As I write I hope to understand how certain events and people have been influential in my development as a teacher, and in the person I was and am becoming. I shall follow the instructions of Johnstone (1999:29) which include the following: “The researcher should write visually so that emotion is reflected. The researcher should guard against being too theoretical and impersonal. The researcher should use different modes of expression including poetry, paintings and photographs.” I shall make recommendations that emerge from the findings.

3.9. Data collection method

3.9.1. Immersion

During this stage I will write my actual autobiography. I will document my life story, trying to remember as much as I can. I will document place, time and events as accurately as I can. I will dig very deeply into my personal and professional life and try to document my emotions as vividly as possible. My story will focus on the techniques I used to survive in my profession each day because I had no formal training in art and my lessons were deprived of content and knowledge. I will document failed art lessons and write about my frustration. I will include my relationship with my husband and my emotional response to his illness. I will write about significant events during my undergraduate and post graduate studies. My story before the ACE (Advanced Certificate in Education) undergraduate studies will echo my deepest emotions. I will explore relationships with parents, learners, colleagues, students and family members and their influence on my life. My story after my Advanced Certificate in Education graduation will highlight very specific events in my professional life.

3.9.2. Data Collection

During this stage, I will extract critical incidents from my autobiography. These incidents will be deemed relevant to my research question, and it will be clear that they have contributed significantly to my personal and professional development. (Johnstone, 1999). Johnstone (1999:28) describes this as a rich description of the significant event itself including action and emotion. According to Johnstone (1999), this stage may include journals, visual artwork and photographs.

3.9.3. Incubation

Although I will not be collecting data physically by writing during this process, I shall work on my literature review during this phase. I shall be preparing for my study by reading research that is present in the field of professional development and because professional development affects the way that a teacher teaches and reasons, I shall explore teacher knowledge bases and meaningful teaching practices. During this phase I will be removed from the life story and will focus on the 'incubation process'. This phase of the research methodology is a more "passive engagement with the knowledge and a withdrawal from the intensive engagement" (Moustakas, 1990 in Sangham 2015).

3.9.4. Illumination

According to Hiles, (2001 in Sangham, 2015) this phase is defined as “a breakthrough process, developing meaning that is the result of the engagement of the previous stages”. I shall revisit the extracts that I have selected, and spend time reflecting on them during this phase. I shall endeavour to analyse and write about them. I will then be able to retrospectively draw out the meaning that they have had in my life, and understand how they have contributed to the process of my professional growth. I shall use a process of deep reflection to understand how these incidences have brought about change in my personal or professional life.

3.10. Theoretical Framework

Social Constructionism provides a theoretical lens through which to explore the professional life of a generalist teacher of art as she investigates her own professional growth (Gergen, 1985:266). Gergen (1985:265) defines Social Constructionism as “a perspective which believes that human life exists as it does due to social and interpersonal influences”. This framework is particularly suited to my research because teachers are social beings, and live social lives. Social Constructionism rejects the notion of a fixed reality and supports the fact that human beings create knowledge through their personal interpretations of the subjectively lived experiences (Gergen, 2008:2). They are largely influenced by personal responses to culture, relationships and society. This sociological theory of inquiry proposes that knowledge is created by the mind in response to social interactions (Andrews, 2012). It is the development and implementation of shared purposeful meanings that arise between people (Andrews, 2012).

In a social constructionist paradigm, people are considered to have no stable personality (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 2010). As Burr (1995:12) writes, personality is a socially constructed idea. Gergen (1991:21) agrees that there are as many personalities as there are cultures, contexts and ways of communicating. The way people talk about themselves and their worlds determines the nature of their experiences. According to Burr, (1995) and Gergen, (2010), Social Constructionism is relative in emphasising how contextual, language, and interpersonal factors combine to determine the kinds of human beings people will become and how their views of their world will develop. In Social Constructionism all knowledge is considered

temporary and personalities may change over time. With the human capacity for growth and change, the world, as it is socially constructed, also grows and changes.

Social Constructionism suggests that the mind needs to make sense and explain the world in which it exists. It has the capacity to connect information, where there are gaps. It is now safe to suggest that human beings not only reflect the world they live in, but that they create it (Schwandt: 2003). Social Constructionism also accepts the fact that there is no objective reality. It is concerned with how knowledge is constructed and created. Social Constructionism places great emphasis on everyday interactions between people and how they use language to construct their reality (Andrews, 2012:1). Constructionists view knowledge and truth as created, and not discovered by the mind (Schwandt, 2003). Gergen (2008:14) writes that the individual is surrounded by personal history, society and culture. Each one of us experiences our world differently; therefore, a subjective and personal interpretation creates a subjective and personal meaning. This means that an interpretation can be altered as the meaning changes (Gergen, 2010; McNamee & Hosking, 2012).

Gergen (2010) acknowledges the ability of the human mind to construct a reality from the interactions of the world. In this study, I will draw from my own personal story (history), and will describe the people and the events of my lived world. I will write about the reality of my personal interactions. The meaning will help me identify the factors that have contributed to my professional development. Schön, (2017) states that meaning-making is only possible through reflection. In this particular thesis, it is not simply the documenting of events and relationships that are important. My interpretation, understanding, and the meaning of these events after deep, intense reflection, make them relevant and important, and will bring about growth and change.

3.11. Ethical considerations

3.11.1. Qualitative research ethics

Although methodologies and structures are very important in any research study, as deeply important are the people. This is why the development of research ethics is so essential (Bloor & Wood, 2006). Goddard and Melville (2006) explain that the aim of research ethics is to avoid harm, be it physical or psychological. Although I shall not

be required to seek permission from participants, because my data is grounded in a reflective self- study, I shall change any names that may be used in my autobiography.

“The ethics of qualitative research have an intricate moral base” (Ryen, in Silverman, 2011:420). Ryen also believes that there are three ethical concerns that are most important in qualitative research: consent, confidentiality and trust. The four ethical principles that should be followed in qualitative research as suggested by Gray (2009:73) include the following: no harm should be done, informed consent should be obtained from all participants, their privacy should be respected, and the researcher should be completely honest with the reader. Gray (2009) also believes that the researcher should protect those people described in the data from being recognized by those who have knowledge of the process.

Butler-Kismet (2010) warns against the ethical dilemmas of using photographs and visual material in research. Photographs that appear in this thesis will be used, where possible, with permission. I will also ensure that learners give permission for their work to appear in this paper. Where events and participants are described without using names, I will ensure that those people are not recognised. This is in accordance with Ryen, in Silverman, (2011) who believes that confidentiality is vital and stresses that we protect the identity of the people whom we use in our work.

3.11.2. Trustworthiness and validity

In qualitative research, it is important that the interpretation is transparent, and grounded in the data, so that the reader may confirm the understanding that the researcher has recorded (Flick, 2014). Seale (2001) suggests that researchers have an ‘audit trail’ which allows readers to have access to the data. Confirmability is thus also achieved. My autobiography will therefore be included as an addendum and as an ‘audit trail’. Seale (2001) suggests that sound research should always be open to human judgement.

Silverman (2007:145) encourages qualitative studies to be “methodologically inventive, empirically sound, and theoretically-alive”. At the same time, they should be practically relevant and valid. The development of validity is an important aspect (Lub, 2015:1) of my study. I have undertaken to ensure that these requirements have been

met. Furthermore, the methodology and research tools, the analysis of the data, and the conclusions that are drawn should aim to answer the initial research questions.

Two integral parts of any research study are trustworthiness and validity (Lub, 2015). The type and role of the theoretical framework is important for validity within any study because it is associated with the reflexivity of the researcher Malterud, (2001). Reflexivity is the process of examining both oneself as researcher, and the research relationship. Reflexive researchers have no expectation that the "truth" is simply "out there" waiting to be discovered by asking the right questions. They believe that all meanings are interactively and culturally constructed, (Franz: 2003). This is in keeping with Social Constructionism, which is the theoretical framework used in this particular study. The reflexive researcher is aware of the way in which her own background has influenced her view and the purpose of the research. The researcher is also aware of which findings are most important and of the way in which she frames her conclusion (Malterud, 2001; Bloor & Wood, 2006). As discussed in this chapter, Social Constructionism is used as the theoretical framework for this paper which strengthens the validity and trustworthiness of the study.

3.12. Chapter summary

In this chapter I have discussed the methodological approach used in this paper. The Reflective Topographical method of Autobiographical Research has been explored in detail. The process of this methodology has been explained and how it pertains to this particular study has been clarified. For a deeper clarity of the process of the Reflective Topical Autobiography, I have included a table to demonstrate how Reflective Topical Autobiography can be translated through the lens of traditional research.

I have included a discussion on trustworthiness, validity and reflexivity. These are all aspects which strengthen the purpose and goal of this particular study. I have broadly discussed qualitative research and explored Social Constructionism as a theoretical framework. Narrative research, but more specifically the personal narrative, has also been included, because this study uses autobiographical writing as a method of presenting the data to identify the factors that have influenced the professional development of an art teacher. I have included a description of the ethical issues to be considered when conducting qualitative research and have also established my intention to be honest throughout the research process.

In the next chapter, I shall be analysing my data and reflecting deeply and intentionally on significant incidents that have impacted on my personal and professional development.

CHAPTER 4

4.1. Introduction

This chapter includes the contemplation and the illumination phases of the Reflective Topical Autobiography process.

4.2. Data Analysis

I shall reflect on significant extracts from my autobiography and search for the meaning of these incidents and their influence on my professional development. These extracts are selected specifically to trace the progress of my professional development during my under- and post-graduate studies. The contexts and contents of these extracts alone will not influence my professional growth but also the way in which I respond to these contexts, my interpretation of them, and the meaning that I ascribe to this interpretation that will possibly influence my professional growth (Johnson, 2012:386). This new meaning gained by reflection, is echoed in heuristic inquiry as “the new sense of direction” (Casterline, 2004:4). Each extract will have a topic followed by a reflective discussion.

A tabular presentation of the development process, using a metaphorical explanation of the development of the butterfly is given. It is also noted that this metaphor is not carried throughout the thesis but used intentionally in this chapter to strengthen and deepen the intention and purpose of the study.

The complete comprehensive autobiography will be attached as an addendum. This prepares me for writing my Reflective Topical Autobiography, or in traditional research, reporting the findings, which is the final stage of this methodology.

4.2.1. Exploring my personal and professional life

My teaching career started in 1987 after I graduated from college. As a young teacher with only two years' experience, I felt anxious and uncertain about the profession. I experienced major challenges in my professional as well as my personal life. I give a detailed description in the extract below.

In 1989 I got married. The first decade of my marriage was very happy years and I was content. As the years went by I faced some major

challenges in my marriage which had a negative impact on my teaching career and a major effect on my life. The problem had progressed so rapidly that my life became dysfunctional and unmanageable. I started to feel disjointed and disconnected from life, from myself. My vigor for my profession dwindled. I lost track of my spirit. My irrational responses to this situation called for much needed help, both spiritually and emotionally. I developed a special school 'personality' which was a distortion of me. I built it up, unconsciously at first but later it became deliberate. The school 'personality' had to hide my true emotions. I smiled but it never reached my heart. I laughed but it never came from my soul. I had to appear enthusiastic and dynamic. Eventually this caught up with me and I was confused about what to change and how to change it. I hung on till the holidays at the end of each term. Life was a survival game. A daily grind of fear and hard work to make it through the day. Teaching became a "run-of-the-mill". I had a job and was earning a salary. That was all that mattered.

(Autobiography: 1) (page 92 of my autobiography)

I knew I had to change and renew my vigor for teaching, but at this stage of my life, I did not have the energy to try. There was little support for the teaching of visual art at school. I had no art room. My art class consisted of forty learners and very few resources. I took my learners outdoors to draw. Learners often came to art class with no art resources. This worsened my task. I became more frustrated and despondent.

My energy waned as the days went by with a "personal problem" contributing to the considerable pain in my life. My survival skills included deceiving myself by thinking I could mask the pain I felt. The root of this shortcoming was my inability to be true to myself. I should have spoken about my fears and the daily challenges I had to endure. Instead, I buried my pain by living with deception. I deceived myself into thinking that meaningful teaching and learning entailed having a job and earning a salary. This deceptive thinking had a negative effect on my life. These painful feelings are a deep part of me and resulted in the fact that my teaching career reached a plateau. I lost the purpose of lesson preparation. Although I spent many hours in our communal library trying to prepare lessons, I could do very little or no planning at all. I realise it was a means of escape from the mayhem in my life. As a result of this, my lessons were mediocre, deprived of meaning and content. I relied on the experience which Comber

(2016:409) describes as pedagogical content knowledge, although at that stage I had very little experience to draw from. Pedagogical content knowledge also includes knowing how to teach the content in ways that are understandable and meaningful to the learners, (Comber, 2016:409). With so little experience, I became even more frustrated and despondent.

During those dreadful days, the anxiety over what was happening in my family was certainly the most important thing in my life. I knew that there was a world outside where people lived together in order and peace. My world had no order, no peace and no purpose. I was swamped and drowned in circumstances that left no room for thinking of anything else. My life felt like a long drawn-out crisis, out of which there was no escape. I felt insecure, lonely and often insensitive to the realities of life. In my fear and confusion, I became sad, lethargic and depressed. I needed to take action to feel better. I had no energy and growing professionally was not part of my thinking at that time. I prayed for relief.

By 1998, I had three children, and a career that became more of a challenge than a profession. I failed dismally. I was not the tolerant, caring mother I needed to be. I was not the dedicated teacher that I once believed I would be.

My children needed care and love. I tried to give them the love they needed. I tried to nurture and support their feelings. I too, needed love, care and support but I had no one to turn to. My husband gave me very little support at the time, due to his own personal struggles. I felt that I was failing as a mother on all levels.

Attending church services and being active in the church gave me the spiritual support I needed. I spent many sessions with my psychologist and psychiatrist who both tried to help by listening to my story and prescribing medication. This gave me the emotional support I needed. This situation brought me to a point of desperation. Upon reflection, I realise that I did not consciously think about my own teaching in a meaningful way. I did no reflection on my teaching practice. I had no conscious intention of improving. I was not concerned about growing as a teacher. My teaching was incidental and unintentional. The intentional teaching of higher order thinking skills of which Zohar and Schwartz (2005) speak, had not crossed my mind yet, as can be clearly seen in this extract. Zohar and Schwartz (2005) believe that teachers should design

activities to make learners think. My belief that I lacked creativity resulted in poor planning and poor discipline. I had also given no thought to the value of visual art education, and had very poor content knowledge in this discipline. Punzalan (2018) agrees that it is critically important that teachers have sufficient depth and breadth of subject knowledge in order to teach meaningful art lessons. I had no knowledge of art education and could not engage meaningfully with my learners. At this stage of my life, I did not consider acquiring content knowledge in visual art. Survival was much more important to me. I was not being true to my calling, and here again I was failing as a teacher of art on every level. This made me feel unfulfilled, desperate and extremely demotivated.

4.2.2. Exploring my own practice

With the emotional and spiritual support, I tried to become a better teacher. I started by observing my learners' responses to my lessons and by gauging the effectiveness of my teaching. I realised that the way my learners responded to my teaching and my lessons was the way to understand how successful my teaching was, "because their response and reactions are often unguarded and spontaneous," (Johnson, 2012: 372). The learning encounter is one of the most personal and critical of all human encounters, because it entails so much that is significant. I document one of these encounters below.

It is 12:40 p.m. on a Tuesday afternoon. A number of grade seven learners enter the classroom. They are noisy and continue to talk as they take up their seats. I find it extremely difficult to control them. They keep quiet after I shout at the top of my voice. I find that many of the learners do not have their books or any art resources to work with. They do not even have a decent pencil to work with. I feel despondent. I pick up some eager faces ready to do some art, and this gives me a little courage to carry on with the art lesson. I have not written down my art lesson and am not sure where to start. The noise starts all over as I rush out of the class to ask my colleague for A4 paper.

(Autobiography: 2) (page 108 of my autobiography)

This extract looks at a teacher with a limited content knowledge of art. Newton and Newton (2001) describe content knowledge as enabling the teacher to plan and

present effective lessons. According to Newton (2001), a teacher who has sound content knowledge offers true understanding of the subject matter.

This extract also highlights the importance of the knowledge bases of teachers, and is a significant example of my own lack of content and pedagogical content knowledge. I have come to realise that the knowledge bases of which Shulman (1987) speaks are an important component of how a teacher views herself and her role in the classroom. Kowalchuk (1993:20) also writes that effective teaching in visual art is largely dependent on the depth and organisation of the teachers' art and pedagogical knowledge. Kowalchuk (1993:20) stresses that meaningful teacher education helps teachers to share their knowledge about art and art processes in ways that learners are able to understand.

The learners assumed that they would not be engaging in meaningful art, that the lesson would be unstructured due to a lack of thorough preparation, and therefore they came into the art class as noisily as they did. My lessons were not always structured.

According to Sinner (2008) the art class should not be a space in which children are given the materials and may do as they please. Sinner (2008) also believes that it is a disciplined, thoughtful process. It is evident from the extract that my art class lacked discipline, appropriate stimulation and rich visual resources. Instead of motivating the learners, the way that I worked with them encouraged boredom. According to Eisner (2000) and Vulliamy (2004) subject matter is seldom 'suggested' by the curriculum, therefore teachers should have a strong content and pedagogical knowledge of visual art. I lacked both of these.

When learners respond positively, and when they become actively engaged in their own knowledge construction, it is a strong contributory influence on the teaching practice of that teacher. The opposite is also true. A reflective teacher "may be able to use the negative response from learners to positively change her practice and thereby actively reconstruct her practice in a new way", (Johnson, 2012: 374). This point strongly suggests that an art teacher should value the positive as well as the negative responses of learners in order to reflect on her teaching practice.

In the above extract, it is evident that the negative response from the learners meant that I needed to look critically at my teaching practice and change my attitude to my work in order to improve. I felt helpless and knew that I was failing the learners and myself. This is one of the factors that influenced my intention to grow in my profession. I needed to adopt a new approach to my teaching.

4.2.3. Looking back

It was the influence of Katy that brought about the change of attitude to my work. Not only did Katy inspire and motivate me, but she was a true friend. Her contribution to my personal life is immeasurable. She has been with me through the many challenges of my life. It was through her that I started to think about the quality of my teaching, and more particularly, my art teaching. It is as a result of this slowly-dawning awareness that I started my journey of intentional professional development some years later. I document an extract from my autobiography below. This extract strengthens my theoretical framework (social constructionism). (Gergen, 1985) defines social constructionism as a perspective which believes that human life exists as it does as a result of social and interpersonal influences. This sociological theory suggests that knowledge is created by the mind in response to social interactions (Andrews, 2012). It was the influence of Katy that brought about the renewed interest in my work and the awareness that I needed to change.

Mrs ¹Katy Sauls becomes my substitute for the term while I was off on accouchement leave in 1998. She is middle-aged with a humorous nature. She has a passion for art. She always displays her learners' artwork. "Why don't you ever display your learners' work?" She asks. "I don't think my children's work is good enough." I answer despondently. "I can't teach art. I can't even draw, I am not creative enough," I answer. "I will help you." She says.

(Autobiography: 3) (page 94 of my autobiography)

This extract reflects an insecure art teacher, with no self-confidence and no training in art education. This was the first time that I became aware of the significance of creativity and of the fact that I had never explored my own. "Creativity is an important

¹ not her real name

part of being human”, (Canatella, 2004). With Katy’s help my self-confidence grew. She enjoyed observing learners doing art and would always give them positive and honest feedback. She would enter art competitions (which I document at a later stage) and eisteddfods and do exceptionally well. This inspired and motivated me and gave me the self-assurance I sorely lacked. Palmer (1988:122) writes:

“Passion for the subject propels that subject, not the teacher, into the centre of the learning circle – and when a great thing is in their midst, students have direct access to the energy of learning and of life.”

I started enjoying my art lessons more and observed with satisfaction and relief how the learners were engaging in the learning experience. I suddenly realised that I enjoyed my lessons more because I had somebody to turn to, not only as a colleague, but also as a true and loyal friend. She gave me the attention, and the recognition I was not getting at home. At this stage in my life, my situation at home had not improved, but worsened. I appreciated the fact that Katy was not interested in the detail of my unhappy life. Instead she was the beacon of light in my dark world. She often quoted the following: ‘Don’t be afraid to shine, the world needs you’. Her humorous nature made me laugh and forget about my pain. She also became a beacon of hope to me. Slowly my purpose for teaching was re-awakened. I realised how strongly she influenced my life because my children would often ask to visit her. They enjoyed the peace and warmth of her home, which was lacking in their own at the time.

Her superficial knowledge of art and art education was enough at the time to please the principal, and that was all that mattered. If the principal was happy, we were happy. We started planning lessons together and it helped a great deal. She gave me tips on how to manage difficult learners, and how to encourage my learners to engage constructively during visual art lessons. I got advice on mixing paint, using a paint brush correctly and her favourite was working with pastels. It dawned on me that, although Katy was not formally trained, the tips she gave me then were similar to those I learnt when I started my formal art training some years later. She must have educated herself. These tips were invaluable. My learners started settling down and engaging constructively. They came to my class during interval and after school to complete their artwork. I saw the result of my changed attitude and this motivated me to continue to improve. I realised that I was alone in the Intermediate and Senior Phase, because

Katy was asked to teach in the Foundation Phase. Although she still helped me a lot, I did not want to burden her any longer, so I decided to become a member of a teacher's library. With a baby and two toddlers it was impossible to visit the library as often as I wanted to. This made me realise that if I just had the full support at home, my conscious intention of growing as a teacher would materialise sooner because I started thinking about my teaching in a more meaningful way. My teaching was no longer incidental and unintentional. This gave me a satisfaction that I had not felt in years. Little did I know that positive changes were about to happen in my personal life. I document this positive change below.

4.2.4. From despair to hope

It is early morning, my husband sobs bitterly. I immediately have a feeling of empathy towards him. Anger and frustration disappear as I hold him tightly. He wants professional help and looks at me as if I am his life line. My hands shake uncontrollably as I make a telephone call to confirm an appointment. We are lucky, his doctor has an opening and he is admitted to hospital for three weeks.

(Autobiography: 4) (page 97 of my autobiography)

Although the above extract highlights one of the many unhappy times of my life, it was a time of growth for me. It was the beginning of my journey to becoming whole. After my husband was discharged from hospital he was introduced to a support group. This support group offered him a new way of living and has changed our lives for the better. This was a real blessing. In this support group people share their stories of hope. I learnt about this illness and how it affects the entire family. I understood why my life had become so unmanageable. I learnt to deal with my past by changing my attitude towards it.

Upon reflection, I realise that our journey of recovery was the beginning of my journey of professional and personal growth. I began to believe that I was a person worthy of respect, love and dignity. I gained a sense of purpose to my journey through life. Before, I was afraid to live life for myself. I acquired a resource deep within myself to guide me. I realised that I was not alone on my journey. In faith and with courage, I am able to meet the future with confidence.

I had more time for my children and more time for meaningful preparation as I regained an interest in my work. My life was not perfect. There were still daily challenges but I had more energy to deal with life on life's terms. The significance of this change was the opportunity I was given to further my studies. With the loving support from my husband and the support from Katy I enrolled for the ACE (Advanced Certificate in Education) course in 2009.

4.2.5. Growing professionally

After twenty-two years of teaching, I was back in the classroom. I was very nervous but also excited to go to lectures on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings. I met people from all over the Western Cape. We shared our experiences with each other and this made the course even more meaningful. Most of the students were experienced teachers and there was a sense of responsibility, maturity and accountability among us. This attitude was appreciated by our lecturers. We bonded with each other and often spent our free time together. We shared our joys and our sorrows. I was with people who understood my dilemma and shared my sentiments. This was very valuable to me and I treasured it. I asked many questions because I wanted to change my situation at school and most importantly, I wanted to grow. We did a variety of subjects, from the very academic to the enjoyable and relaxing from Human Development, Culture and Society and Research Methods to the 2010 World Cup Dance.

(Autobiography :5) (page 100 of my autobiography)

I enrolled for this course in Arts and Culture simply because there was space in this Department-funded course. The ACE course was an advanced course in education offered to teachers who have a three year teaching diploma. Initially I took the course because it was free, but within weeks, I became influenced by the commitment and dedication of the other students and thought seriously about improving my professional life and growing professionally. It was then that I realised that I should take this opportunity to also improve my qualifications. I was exposed to new learning and thinking. It was my involvement in the activities offered in the art department that contributed significantly to my professional growth. I now had an opportunity to explore my own creativity under the supervision of a very passionate lecturer. She appreciated

the contribution of each student. I never felt intimidated. Each learning experience deepened my knowledge of visual art.

The above extract looks at a community of teachers who began to develop the professional side of their lives. Malin (2011:20-21) writes that meeting regularly to talk about work with each other is the most effective professional growth that people experience. Teachers often find themselves isolated in the classroom, and often have a need for support from colleagues. In this community, we were able to grow through sharing new thinking and skills with each other. We offered each other such support. We shared beliefs, emotions and values about teaching. We were united in a common purpose. Malin (2011:20-21) calls this common purpose a “collective identity.”

It was in this different community that change began to take place in this safe supportive group. We looked both inward and outward and to could learn from our mistakes., as described by Hodgen & Askew (2007:473). This was a life- changing experience for me. This new way of life meant that I had to make many adjustments to my current lifestyle. I had less time to socialize and often my family had to do with seeing very little of me especially over week-ends. The part-time course was on Fridays and Saturday mornings. Together as a group of practising teachers, we had a chance to speak about our own teaching, our learners, curriculum ideas, and our challenges and to get other’s perspectives. We learnt to express ourselves and our experiences and observations and to get feedback about that, and this all contributed to our professional growth. We became more interested in taking risks, and more determined to continue to grow and learn as teachers.

4.2.6. The art department

It was the quotations on the walls in the art department that inspired me. I stood in awe as I looked at the quality of artwork produced by students. I also wanted to mount my learner’s artwork for all to see. I knew, that if I continued to grow professionally, my dream would come true one day. When I entered the art department I felt as if I was on another planet. The ambience of the building touched my inner being. I wanted to grow and become the best art teacher I could be.

(Autobiography: 6) (page 102 of my autobiography)

As this new knowledge began to influence my practice, I grew professionally. I became more aware of the way in which I was teaching art, and of the importance of thorough and meaningful lesson preparation. Fitzmaurice (2008:343) believes that a teacher should have a desire to create a space for learning and encourage student voice. Students should be encouraged to be creative as thinkers, and to develop their critical capacities, because this better prepares them to cope with a changing world (Fitzmaurice, 2008:343). I agree with Fitzmaurice, because I was given that voice during lectures and encouraged to think critically. I wanted my learners to experience the same.

4.2.7. Growing and learning

*I became the co-producer of a drama production during my undergraduate studies. Our drama group wrote and performed a play under the strict supervision of our drama lecturer. This was our final Arts and Culture assessment for the Advanced Certificate in Education. I played the part of a tortoise in our production called "A Hearty Party."
(Autobiography: 7) (page 100 of my autobiography)*

This extract looks at a group of teachers diligently preparing for a drama production. I realise in hindsight it was my inferiority complex and low sense of self that hampered my personal growth. The opinions of others had greater value than my own. I thought my opinion had no value, and people would not even listen to me. During the preparation for this performance, I discovered that I had a valuable contribution to make. I also discovered hidden management and leadership qualities. The theme for our production was "Ubuntu", which means "we exist because of each other". We had to celebrate our differences. The animals were thoughtfully selected. Each animal depicted a personality in humanity. I was the tortoise. I walked across the stage wearing brown tights, brown mittens and a brown balaclava. My "shell" was made from wire and hessian tied to a frame. I painted the hessian to resemble the shell of a tortoise. Every time I spoke, the audience burst into laughter. Upon reflection, this significant incident depicts my slow but steady process of professional development. It makes me realise that although the process of development seems slow, I have no choice but to continue because of the positive feeling when I discovered that I too have qualities that others can benefit from. I will not hesitate in future to avail myself and share my skills with others. I passed the Arts and Culture course with a distinction and

graduated in April 2011. This success, coupled with my new understanding of the value of constantly improving my own knowledge base, led me to enroll the following year for the B Ed Honours course with specialisation in Visual Art.

I was accepted into the B Ed Honours Programme where my knowledge and my understanding of art teaching was deepened. The course was didactics-based. I had to plan art lessons, with assessments and rubrics using CAPS.

In the research component of the course, I wrote a twelve-page proposal and did an oral presentation. My proposal topic focused on generalist teachers who teach art in primary schools. I read many articles on the subject. I read these articles over and over again to make sure that I fully understood their content. Upon reflection, I became aware that as my involvement in research deepened, my understanding of art and art related issues increased. I graduated in April 2013.

My colleagues saw me as a small voice, insecure and shy, but as I grew in confidence I started doing devotions in the staffroom and I led assemblies. My personal appearance began to change, but the biggest change was the impact of my professional growth and research on my teaching practice. As my confidence in art teaching grew, I saw myself as a knowledge creator. I taught new knowledge during art lessons. I had gained more content knowledge and this impacted positively on the delivery of my art lessons. My involvement in research also impacted positively on my teaching as I furthered my studies.

My confidence in creating my own artwork grew. I had a very limited visual art background, as documented earlier in this chapter, and came into the art studio with hesitation and apprehension. Anxiety about creating my own artwork inhibited my progress. As my confidence grew and my understanding deepened I brought my own identity to the learning experience. I started enjoying producing artwork of my own. I was slowly developing into the teacher I had envisaged, and I was becoming confident and knowledgeable. I explored art elements and design principles. I carefully blended colours to create tone and texture. It was challenging at first, but I gained enough confidence and enjoyed every minute of the exercise.

4.2.8. Teaching art

Rinaldi (2005:73) states that teachers are learners and “knowers” when they engage in the process of research and professional growth. I will reflect on an extract taken from my autobiography that looks at my new found knowledge of art education and art teaching. Teaching visual art with a deepened knowledge was the most gratifying experience for me. I will include the artwork of learners displaying their creativity while exploring art elements and using pencils and pastels. The scraperboard technique is explored by grade seven learners. This gratifying experience I document below.

My grade four learners are completing their landscape activity for final assessment. They have to use their own material because the school does not have money to purchase resources. What fascinates me the most is the fact that they are so excited about this. I am going to display their work for all to see. Some learners feel that they cannot draw, and that others would laugh at their artwork. I have to reassure them, that no one has the right to judge or ridicule them. In my class, they have the freedom to be. This is how my lecturer made me feel in my art class. I felt free to be me. I was insecure and reluctant, until I was on the other side of the bridge, a bit stronger and much more confident than before. She was not impatient with me when I took ages to start drawing. She reprimanded me when I copied someone else's work. Today I understand why she did this. I had to discover the artist within me. Only then would I be discovering the real me. This makes perfect sense today. I moderate some of my childrens' work and put it up in my class. When others walk in, they stop and look at it. It's not Picasso or Van Gogh, it is the work of young artists in the process of discovering themselves. When I look at their work, combined with my deepened knowledge of art teaching, I see much more than before. It is as if I knew what my learners were thinking when they did their paintings. After entering their marks, I call the learners and ask them to talk about their work. They have to imagine that our classroom is an art gallery, and that I am a visitor wanting to know what inspired them. Some learners find it very easy to tell me, while others struggle a bit. I discovered that the learners who have a problem expressing themselves verbally, have more detail in their drawings, than the learner who is verbally stronger. This is an amazing discovery. These learners use the art activities to bring out their deepest emotion. I

know that I have to continue to be the bridge for them to cross. As I look at their work from a distance, I see areas that need some attention. In most of their work, the use of the brush needs attention. The learners should focus on neatening the edges of their work and varying their brush strokes. They should include more overlapping and explore more with colour and texture. Again, this is what my lecturer told me, when she looked at my work. My own practice has richly benefited from research and professional development, and my ability to translate that research and growth into practical teaching and learning has grown tremendously.

(Autobiography: 8) (page 119 of my autobiography)

This account describes how my involvement in research influenced my practice. This extract describes the way in which I slowly began to grow in confidence, as my content knowledge improved. I document my lack of creativity earlier in my work, but with careful thought about the value of art and art education I began to explore my own creativity. I was now confident enough to display my learners' work. My teaching became purposeful and intentional. My lessons are more structured and meaningful to eliminate poor discipline. I tried to stimulate my learners by using rich visual stimuli and resources to eradicate boredom. I was acquiring knowledge to help me determine appropriate methods and techniques that would enhance my visual art teaching experiences.

This is evident in the quality of artwork my learners produce. They are more confident to explore their own creativity. I include the work of my grade four, six and grade seven learners to show the how my content knowledge influenced the quality of the work my learners produced. The learners are constantly being encouraged to explore their own creativity because art is a deeply personal experience (Louwenfeld & Brittain, 1987). Art elements and design principles are explored in the artwork below.

I give a reason why these artworks are so important to me. It is not only about the quality of the work, it is more importantly about the learning experience for me. It is a very significant factor that has influenced my professional growth and impacted immensely on the way I was teaching art. As I note below, the learners are well-behaved because they know what to do and how they should do it.

Evidence of the quality of artwork produced by learners:

Grade 4: Exploring art elements using pastels



In this set of lessons, the learners were intentionally exploring colour and the use of pastels. One can see how the colour has been chosen with purpose, and how related and complementary colours have been applied. This was an important learning experience for me, because while they were working, the learners were absorbed and well-behaved. There was no need to ask them to behave, because they were completely involved in their own creativity. They understand that primary colours, secondary, tertiary, complementary (opposite colours), and related (analogous colours) are the basic constructs of colour theory.

Grade 6: Exploring art elements using pencils



In this group of drawings, one can observe the careful application of the art element 'tone'. One can see how carefully the learners have observed their drawing objects, and their interpretations are very personal. Wachowiak and Clements (2001) and Gibson (2003) believe that children should start doing observational drawings to develop perception. Once again, this lesson was significant for me, because it made me realise that when children are absorbed in conscious learning activities, they are able to work quietly without being disciplined, and are able to produce meaningful and unique works. These drawings were made by children who were eleven and twelve years old.

Grade 7: Exploring the scraperboard technique



The main aim of scraperboard is contrast and balance, and one can see evidence of both of those design principles in these artworks. These are engravings in black colour that has been applied over white wax. As the reader is able to observe, the learners have worked consciously to achieve the outcomes of this lesson.

As my lecturer was patient with me, watching as I crossed the bridge of insecurity, until I was confident to trust my own intuitive responses, I became patient with my own learners.

The emphasis on quality art teaching is taken from the views of both Eisner (2002) and Bowie (2009) who strongly agree that when children engage in art activities they engage in a cognitive process allowing language and thought to be expressed through a variety of representations. Both Eisner (2002) and Bowie (2009) believe that children should be provided with opportunities to think for themselves and to articulate their own thoughts creatively. Although Dewey (2009) rejected the notion of repetition and proposed real-world experience, I try to propose real-world experiences in my lessons to encourage my learners to articulate their own experiences of their worlds through art.

This extract above strongly highlights that some learners who are not verbally strong have more detail in their drawing. This suggests that although they do not have the verbal ability they are creative and have the confidence to express themselves visually. They are able to express their deepest emotions with the stroke of a paint brush. I began to realise the deep educational value of art. It is heart-wrenching for me to see young artists in the process of discovering themselves. My art lessons are not flawless, but the biggest difference is that my learners are constructing their own knowledge about their lives and the world around them. They make meaning of their world through art activities.

As I assess my learners work, I realise the effect of my new-found knowledge and how my learners are applying their new-found knowledge to their work. There are many areas that need to be improved, including painting techniques and the exploration of art elements and design principles. This is highlighted in the extract above. My learners emulate artistic styles of artists without even knowing it. I see the brush strokes of Van Gogh and shapes used in the work of Picasso. I realise I need to spend more time on the history of art in art education. My learners need to compare their work to other artists, and discover similarities and differences. They might not be able to debate, but I should just create an awareness that differences and similarities exist in artwork.

Upon reflection, I realise how simple things like varying brush strokes, neatening the edges, overlapping, exploring with design principles and art elements make such a huge difference to an artwork.

On page 109 of my autobiography I document how I tried to follow the CAPS (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement) document to ensure quality visual art teaching. The CAPS document guided me as to what I should teach, when I should teach it and how I should teach.

4.2.9. Quality teaching and learning

It is Monday morning, I drag myself out of bed to prepare lunch for my husband and daughter. As I look through the kitchen window, I see the most beautiful bird perched on the vibracrete wall. Its feathers are the varying shades of blue. As I move to have a closer look, it flies away.

I wanted to look at this bird through the eyes of an art teacher, exploring tone, colour, shape and line. My world has become more meaningful since my understanding of art teaching and learning deepened. I remember an art lesson in particular during my Honours course. We had to draw an Egyptian scene. We looked at books and video clips of Egyptians. We paid particular attention to the biblical story of Moses in the bulrushes. I remember the outcome of that particular lesson was the use of repetition. We used pastels, exploring colour, shape and texture. The lecturer prepared us very well, so that when we had to draw the scene, I found it easy, because I understood what I had to do. This was how I wanted my lessons to be, intentional and purposeful.

(Autobiography :9) (page 112 of my autobiography)

This extract describes how my lecturer could plan an art lesson with a clearly defined outcome. She had a mental picture of the type of lesson and the sequence of activities that would work. This was what I envisaged and each art lesson to be well-structured, stimulating and rich in subject-matter. I will structure my lessons with specific routines that relate to the type of material or technique they are going to use within that particular lesson. With a deeper understanding of visual art content knowledge and pedagogy I can integrate content knowledge into their lessons more effectively and give them more focused feedback.

My focus is on quality of teaching and learning. I want each art lesson to be meaningful and allow my learners to have memorable learning experiences.

Visual art lessons for the term (according to the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement) focus on domestic and wild animals in their natural environment. Upon further reflection regarding the above extract and the content to be covered for the term, I realise that I need to be flexible and find interesting ways of teaching the content. At this stage I rely heavily on the CAPS document because I do not have enough experience to draw from. I need to create opportunities for learners to observe and discuss visual stimuli in photographs, artworks and real objects to identify and name art elements. They need to look at animals in their natural environment, and draw what they see. I need to bring pictures of wild and domestic animals to school. Discussions about the movement, environment as well as the habitat of animals need

to take place. This discussion could also be integrated with Natural Sciences. I realise that my lesson would be more effective if I have video clips of different animals in nature, where the learners could observe the movement of these animals and also have a close look at the environment and see a realistic image of the animal.

I realised that thorough careful planning together with an enriched content knowledge of art and art education, beneficial and meaningful art lessons would be the result.

The more I grew, I realised, the more there was to learn. Dadds (2014:9) states that professional development is defined as the growth of teaching skills. It is a systematic learning process throughout one's career. Avalos (2011:10) agrees with Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, (2017) but also states that it is a complex process that requires the cognitive and emotional involvement of teachers. These views resonate well with purpose of my study.

During my Honours course I was exposed to new learning about school management. I shared my knowledge generously with our school management team. I was then asked to coordinate the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) at school. This system includes all domains of teaching. I had to measure and score my colleagues against criteria proposed by the department. I needed a sound background of the process. I analysed the documents sent by the Department of Education for perusal. This had a phenomenal effect on my professional and personal development. The discussion below outlines why this task impacted my development so significantly.

Through scrutinizing the assessment standards against which I had to measure teachers, I became aware of the expectations of the department, regarding the performance of educators. I measured myself first, and realised that I needed to improve in certain domains of teaching. More importantly, although I wanted to become a good art teacher, and had become consciously aware of my art teaching, I needed to pay attention to the other subjects I was teaching. I needed to develop in totality. I became aware of my own short-comings in all domains of teaching, from planning a lesson to coaching a sports team. I realised that my term planning was inadequate. I had to record learners' tasks more regularly and focus on different assessment strategies, to give learners more opportunities to explore their skills. Growing in these areas would also have a positive impact on my teaching of art.

I became aware that I had neglected my choir and my under-10 netball team and that I had to become more involved in extra and co-curricular activities. Having extra art classes after school would enrich the art programme at our school, because I had realised that the time allocated to art lessons was insufficient.

I needed to attend coaching clinics to provide my netball players with the correct netball techniques. Upon reflection I realize that if I had not had this experience I would not have known the intensity of the IQMS process and would not have realised the many facets that makes up our teaching profession. It is a profession that explores the development of the whole child. I realise that I have an integral part to play in that development. I need to continue to grow to be able to make a meaningful contribution to that development and an indelible mark contributing positively to the life of each learner entrusted into my care.

I had to write a report on the process and submit it to the District office for scrutiny. This made me aware of the importance of meeting deadlines and producing work of quality in a short space of time. I worked under tremendous pressure, but I enjoyed every moment of it because I had the full support of my principal and the school management team. I had a substitute teacher in my class while I meticulously completed the administration. As I reflect on the significance of this incident, it occurs to me that my principal trusted me with the entire process. This impacted strongly on my self-worth and on the person I was becoming. The fact that I had access to the confidential information of each educator meant that my colleagues trusted me. This is another significant factor that has great impact on my personal growth.

4.2.10. Personal development

I explore a further side of my development. I was not only growing as a teacher, where my content knowledge was being extended and my critical thinking skills were being stretched, but I was also growing as a human being. I can make decisions on my own and trust my intuition. From a sad, lethargic, isolated being, I gradually grew in self-worth. I can express myself strongly in a calm, mature way. I applied for promotion posts at school and although I was unsuccessful, it did not affect my work nor my attitude in any way. The significance of this changed attitude is the way my colleagues interact with me at school. Earlier in this chapter I write how my colleagues saw me as

a small voice, insecure and shy, but I have noticed a remarkable change in their attitude. I have gained respect. I am becoming the person I was meant to be.

My hunger for learning and growing brought me into contact with people who were deeply and passionately involved in teacher education. I document one of these experiences below:

I enter the Lion Corner restaurant, there is a buzz of excitement. Everybody has so much to say. I am amazed by the ambience of the room. An unfamiliar face greets me with such a warm smile, as if we have met before. She hugs and holds me for a while. This moment is invaluable. I am definitely in the right place, at the right time. I feel a sense of belonging and deep gratitude. Little did I know that she was the keynote speaker for the evening.

A woman after my heart. I sit captivated as Joyce² tells her story. She shares no tips on teaching, but she gives me more than I could bargain for. 'Never underestimate the value of your teaching.' 'Trust your intuitive responses.' These are such profound words spoken by such a unique person. I have never met her, but as she introduces herself to me, I feel an inner connection with her. To me, she is vitality personified. The rich, descriptive accounts of her life tell of caring, sharing and trust. She trusted her learners, and they trusted her. She shares things that money cannot buy. She shares herself, her time and her personal space. She not only taught art in a phenomenal way, but taught her students life's lessons. She influenced their lives phenomenally.

(Autobiography: 10) (page 116 of my autobiography)

Upon deep and intense reflection, I internalise these profound words spoken by a person with a strong presence in the field of art education. Listening to her speak intensifies my awareness of my task as a teacher, especially a teacher of art.

² Not her real name

The awareness of who, what and how I was teaching when I was teaching had a deepened meaning for me as I spoke to experienced art teachers and student teachers at these gatherings. I felt supported and emotionally connected in this safe space. Although I was not consciously aware of it, my knowledge base, as described in the work of Turner-Bissett (1999), was being extended and deepened at these talks while my pedagogical knowledge was being shaped in practice. I was developing my knowledge bases and deepening my perception of meaningful teaching. It was strongly influenced by the active community of practice that I enjoyed at these talks. I did not focus only on attending talks concerning art, but also listened to keynote speakers share their expertise in mathematics and science. These talks motivated me further to become what I envisaged. A teacher who shares herself, her time and her personal space with her learners.

I have an opportunity to speak to Joyce³. I share my feeling of inadequacy as a teacher of art. She answers warmly, “You are a teacher, and that matters.” I realise that I am still able to touch the lives of my learners in a meaningful way, by continuing to grow as a teacher and a person. I was reminded of my identity as a teacher. Who am I? Why am I? What part of me do I along bring to each learning experience? With what emotion do I teach?

As I drive home, I reflect on my journey thus far. It has been an Incredible one. People, time, accounts and emotions are the key elements, adding so much meaning and depth to my journey of professional and personal growth. I am indeed grateful for the many people that have influenced my life in such a phenomenal way.

I document another significant account of professional growth below.

4.2.11. Professional Development

I write about an account in the Art Centre where students work was exhibited. I also note the impact this had on my personal and professional development.

I admired and appreciated the artwork displayed in the Art Centre. My artwork had once been displayed for all to see. I knew how the students felt. I was proud of what I

³ Not her real name

had achieved that year during the Honours course. I respected my supervisor, for her appreciation of the students investing in education. She acknowledged that they gave of themselves and their time, to learn and grow. One of the students shared that it was in art classes that he learned the most. This really inspired me.

It has been a few hours ago, since I left the Mowbray Art Centre, but I still feel the ambience of the room in the fibre of my being. The room was filled with students, lecturers, family and friends. I felt honoured to be part of this gathering. Stephen⁴, the guest speaker, captivates me when he speaks.

“Displaying artwork, is like laying your soul bare” he says.

He continues, “You are willing to uproot your fears, hopes, challenges and dreams and display them for all to see. You are willing to share your deepest emotions through the stroke of a paint brush, or the line of a pencil. Each art activity has intent and purpose.”

(Autobiography: 11) (page 121 of my autobiography)

The above extract strongly emphasis the purpose and intent of teaching art. As stated before in previous extracts, art is deeply personal, intentional and purposeful. Through art, interpretations and meaning of one’s life experiences is displayed for all to see. (Ochshorn, 2016 cited in Punzalan 2018). I contemplate and reflect deeply as I drive home. Once again, I have this indescribable feeling of gratitude for having been exposed to so much meaningful learning that would benefit and enrich my practice immensely. I realise that ‘uprooting’ or ‘digging up’ ones’ fears, hopes, challenges and dreams is a deeply reflective process that requires courage. In my opinion it does not mean discarding of, it means reflecting on to take appropriate action. Each time I leave the art building I feel rejuvenated with a better perspective of my teaching practice and my professional growth.

I agree with Dadds (2014:9) that professional development is defined as the development of teaching skills. In the extract above it becomes clear that “if teachers continue to grow professionally they would be able to help learners develop both

⁴ Not his real name

cognitively and emotionally”, Avalos (2011:10) and Hammond, Hyler & Gardener (2017). These views resonate well with extract above.

The extract above inspires Katy and I to participate in an art competition arranged by the Department of Communication. We designed two posters for the official 2010 Fifa World Cup and won third prize.

After Katy’s house burnt down due to an electrical fault, she discovered that the photos and certificates we received in the competition were destroyed in the blaze. This did not really matter, because I would always remember this success, and carry it as a moment when I had evidence of true development and professional growth.

In conclusion, I realise that my journey of professional growth has no destination. There will always be opportunities for growth if one has the intention to develop. I will to keep in touch with the people who have already influenced my life thus far, so that I can draw from their wealth of experience and knowledge. Today I know the influence of knowledge and experience. These elements have grounded my perception of teaching and learning.

4.2.12. A significant moment of self-discovery

In my autobiography I write about another moment when I had evidence of true development and professional growth. I delivered a power point presentation at the ESRRRC (Education Students’ Regional Research Conference). UWC (University of the Western Cape) Education Faculty hosted the event.

The day has arrived to do my power point presentation at the ESRRRC. I need to find the venue at The University of the Western Cape, so arriving early becomes top priority. I am extremely nervous and disappointed in myself because my supervisor did not have an opportunity to scrutinize my slides. She received the presentation too late and did not have time to read through them because of prior commitments. This I fully understood and I was prepared to carry the consequences of procrastinating. I enter the venue and I am immediately overwhelmed by the buzz. The students are having serious last minute discussions and setting up for their presentations. I see no familiar faces and instinctively isolate myself.

After the first presentation a feeling of inadequacy outweighs my preparedness. The presenters are able to answer questions confidently. They are focused and the knowledge they have about their research amazes me. My palms become sweaty and I struggle to stay focused. It is my turn to present and I apprehensively walk to the podium. I introduce myself and start by sharing my topic and continue by explaining the significance and purpose of my study. I give an overview of the literature review and my methodology which is a RTA (Reflective Topical Autobiography) which is deeply reflective and contemplative and compare it to traditional research for clarity. As the presentation continues I become calmer and feel an emotional connection with my supervisor. She gave me the confidence and believed in me and the work I was doing. At the time of the presentation I was documenting my autobiography which was incidents from my professional life which impacted on my professional and personal growth. So my data at that stage was not conclusive. I spoke about the ethics, validity and reliability of my study. This was the last slide. My preparation paid off and I took up my seat feeling satisfied and relieved. Fortunately, not many questions were asked. I do recall keeping my eyes fixed on my slides and not making eye contact with the audience. I feared the expressions I might find that would be a distraction causing me to lose focus. I instinctively knew I needed to work harder at refining my work. This was a significant moment of true self-discovery and professional development.

(Autobiography: 12) (page 122 of my Autobiography)

Upon reflection, the above extract marks the highlight of my journey of personal and most importantly, professional development. It had a very positive impact on my journey of self-discovery and development.

Procrastination will never be the thief of time for me. I will attempt to prioritise and complete my work timeously. I will stay in touch with my supervisor. In preparation for my presentation I had to prepare a short abstract, which helped me gain an understanding of my work. It also helped me focus on the purpose and intention of my study. I realised that an intense reflection was core. I had to dig very deep and give an account of significant incidents of my life. I had to describe very painful accounts and

also happier moments. This extract made me to look at my work more critically and I had to make sure I was answering my research questions. The insightful and meaningful critique from the floor after my presentation carries significance. I wrote down all the questions that I should attempt to answer that would strengthen my study. I looked at my methodology in particular. I revisited the process of a Reflective Topical Autobiography methodology and made sure that I understood it well. Reflecting upon my actual presentation, I realise the immense impact this had on my personal development as well as my professional growth. I had never presented at a students' conference before. This was my debut presentation. In fact, I doubted the self-confidence I had to take the risk. I never knew I would be able to present my work in the midst of fellow researchers. Although I did not work on my thesis at the time, I gained a clear understanding of my study while preparing for this event and I can now add my new found knowledge to my work.

Little did I know years ago that I would one day be able to speak about research and the progress of my study with such passion and honesty. This feeling overwhelms me. I discovered a person with self-belief, intention and tenacity. I hold the memory of this moment in my heart forever.

I presented a poster on Research Day. With a better understanding of my methodology I could now compare the Reflective Topical Autobiography methodology visually to traditional research. Research Day is a celebration of excellence in research at CPUT. I felt honoured to be part of all the festivities of the day. I left the celebration, knowing that I had made a contribution to research at CPUT. I was in the process of analysing my data at the time, and I felt proud and humbled that my personal research was being taken seriously.

I also attended the 2014 symposium for art teachers. ATASA (Art Teachers' Association of South Africa) hosted the event. A significant contribution to my development was networking with teachers in my teaching area. The workshops were very valuable and would definitely enhance my practice. I attended workshops organized by ATASA. My teaching has benefited greatly from these workshops. A hands-on experience in art-making was sure to make my task so much easier. The presenters are experts in the field. This makes the learning experience more valuable and meaningful. With my useful knowledge of research together with a better

understanding of the value of art in art education, I can continue to develop into the best teacher I could become. I also now have the skills to cope with all the challenges of teaching that face me daily.

4.3. Chapter summary

In this chapter I show how reflection has changed me as a person and as a teacher, using significant extracts from my autobiography. I document how professional growth has changed the way that I have seen my practice up to now. Because this is a reflective piece of work, it is imperative to show how reflection has also changed my thinking.

After reflecting on the entire research process, I realise that this study can be compared to the metamorphosis of a butterfly. It is a process of transformation and development. After investigating the stages of butterfly development I learn the following about my own development: I am consuming knowledge that impacts my practice and this results in a surge of creativity and inspiration. My teaching career has excitement and energy that I could not before imagine. As I embrace and engage completely in the process of my professional development, I grow and find more satisfaction in the entire process. I note in tabular form a metaphorical explanation of my development. I intentionally use the following stages of the development of the butterfly: The caterpillar stage, the chrysalis stage and the butterfly stage. I do not carry this metaphor throughout my study, but note it as a final, intense reflection of the entire process, and write about the new meaning I have gained. This new meaning is documented below.

The metaphorical explanation of my professional and personal growth:

<p>Phase one: The egg</p>	<p>Before the ACE undergraduate course I feel trapped inside a shell, where I lay, dormant. I deliver poor quality art lessons and have a low sense of self. New life starts when I realise that I have to grow. The mask I wear can be compared to the shell of the egg. This shell could easily crack and expose my vulnerability. I have no support at home therefore I feel vulnerable and insecure.</p>
<p>Phase two: The larva/ caterpillar</p>	<p>My post graduate studies is the stage where intense development takes place. I apply for promotion posts and I am shortlisted. I go for interviews and act as the Departmental Head. I become involved in research and this has a positive impact on my practice. I meet a person who inspires me and renews my interest in my work. My lessons become more beneficial as I grow in confidence. I start shedding my insecurities as a poorly trained art teacher.</p>

<p>Phase three: The pupa</p>	<p>This stage can be compared to my struggle to complete my masters' studies. This painful experience can be compared to the struggle to emerge from the "cocoon".</p> <p>I need to reflect deeply and intensely on significant incidents on my journey that impacts on my personal and professional development.</p> <p>I need the help from an institution of higher learning and the continued support of my family and most importantly the support of my supervisor to make it through this stage in my development.</p>
<p>Phase four: The butterfly</p>	<p>This phase can be compared to the many changes I had to make in my life after intense contemplation and reflection. I emerge as a confident art teacher, who teaches art meaningfully. What I envisage for my future is the following:</p> <p>To develop strong wings like the butterfly to fly and soar to greater heights, my doctoral degree. I envisage a purpose-driven, self-motivated art teacher with a good sense of self and maturity to deal with the challenges that art education and art teaching offers.</p>

The extracts used will be highlighted in the complete autobiography attached as addendum 1, should the reader wish to refer to it for validity.

A personal comment is included in this chapter where the researcher gives a very brief explanation of the metaphor used to describe the process of her development.

CHAPTER 5

5.1. Introduction

This chapter represents the final phase of the Reflective Topical Autobiographical methodology and answers my research question: What are the factors that have influenced my professional growth? This final phase underpins my research design, and the aim of this study, which is to explore the factors that have influenced my professional growth.

My research question will therefore be fundamental to this discussion. I will use the analysis of the previous chapter to support my final reflection on the significant factors that have contributed to my personal and professional growth over the years of my teaching career. This reflection will take the form of a final Reflective Topical Autobiography. This will be my response to the new meaning I have gained after analysing the data. I will write the final Reflective Topical Autobiography using the insights I have gained to document my journey. I will bear in mind the considerations of Johnstone (1999) which are the following: “to offer rich descriptions and reflect emotions and to avoid too much theory” This final autobiography will look at all the factors as a whole, not isolated incidents.

This discussion will progress into findings and recommendations. The findings will have headings that have emerged from my data analysis. The discussion will be backed up with relevant literature. I shall note the challenges and limitations of this study and make recommendations to other generalist art teachers who are tasked with teaching art. The findings and discussions are summarized and concluding remarks are noted in the last section of this chapter. Finally, I will conclude with a personal reflection on the process of this study. I will note how this research process has added meaning and value to my practice and to my personal life.

5.2. Final Reflective Autobiography

5.2.1. New insights gained from data analysis

As a primary school generalist teacher of art, I was not fully aware of the true value of art in education, because I had no formal training in art and did not understand its significance for meaningful thinking. At this stage of my career I was not fully aware of

my identity as an art teacher. After twenty-two years of teaching, I felt uninspired. This lack of inspiration had a detrimental effect on my attitude towards my work. Initially I enrolled for an ACE (Advanced Certificate in Education) course in Arts and Culture, simply because there was space in this funded course, and I realised that I should take this opportunity to improve my qualifications.

My personal knowledge base was extended and deepened when I commenced the ACE (Advanced Certificate in Education) undergraduate studies. This course changed my thinking about visual art teaching. I realised that art-making was not only about creating beautiful art work. Each art activity had intent and purpose. I developed a reflective approach towards my teaching and started questioning my identity as a teacher of art. Who was I? Why was I? What part of me do I bring along to each learning experience. It was then that I decided to embark on my journey of development that was both purposeful and intentional. This influenced my attitude towards my work. I understood that formal art training was essential to teach art meaningfully and realised how generalist teachers who teach visual art could influence learners' future attitudes to the discipline.

Fitzmaurice (2008:343) strongly states that creative, critical thinking is essential for survival in a changing world. If I had not deepened my teacher knowledge base, I would not have been able to encourage learners to think independently and creatively and to develop the necessary skills to interact with their worlds in meaningful ways. When I realised this, I knew that to be optimally effective as a teacher of art I would have to explore my own creative critical thought processes to be able to prepare my learners for the future. I strongly agree with Johnson (2012: 375) that as teachers develop both professionally and personally, teacher identity is being shaped and changes with time and experience.

Lowenveld & Brittain (1987) express art as a personal and creative activity where children are given the freedom to make their own interpretations of their worlds, but the teacher should ensure that these interpretations carry meaning. Through art, children learn to reflect, create, learn new skills and express themselves. If I had not been exposed to new knowledge that strengthened my teaching skills during my undergraduate studies, my lessons would still have been deprived of content and meaning. During my Visual Art B Ed Honours course which was more didactics based,

my knowledge and the perception of the benefits of formal art training carried a far deeper meaning for me.

It was during the Honours course that I was initially exposed to research. Johnson (2012:378) believes:

“Research should create the backbone of a teachers’ professional development, not only because it keeps her practice current, but also because it increases her critical thinking skills, and encourages personal knowledge growth.”

The data in the previous chapter highlights how my learners’ responses to art changed as my own knowledge was being shaped. My learners grew in confidence because I became more confident. I was exposed to new learning and thinking and my practical and content knowledge grew. As the new knowledge began to influence my practice I grew professionally. I became more aware of the way in which I was teaching art, and of the value of art in education and of the impact of my teaching of art. My lesson planning became more intentional and meaningful. My confidence grew as my teaching improved and this influenced my personal growth as well as my personal appearance. I became more aware of my appearance. Colour combinations and patterned fabrics were considered when I planned my outfits. The people around me noticed the positive change in my physical appearance. This boosted my self-esteem even more and contributed significantly to my personal growth. My personal interactions with the learners reached new heights. They started sharing very personal concerns about their daily lives. Slowly I started feeling whole inside.

5.2.2. Pedagogical content knowledge

Turner-Bisset (1999) and Shulman (1987) both agree that pedagogical content knowledge and all other forms of teacher knowledge contribute to a large extent to the teaching process as a whole. Johnson (2012:75) writes that pedagogical content knowledge enables teachers to know and understand their own teaching abilities in the process of teaching and learning.

After researching the teacher knowledge bases of which Turner-Bisset (1999) and Shulman (1987) speak, and reflecting deeply on my practice, I have come to the conclusion that a teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge, in my case, means

knowing how to teach visual art to particular children in a particular school. It includes knowing how to teach visual art content that is understandable and meaningful to learners. Effective lesson preparation and meaningful delivery of art lessons was a shortcoming in my teaching as an art teacher because I did not know how to teach and what to teach my learners. This is evident in the discussion in chapter four where I note that my classes lacked discipline, appropriate stimulation and rich visual resources. My art lessons encouraged boredom instead of promoting creativity.

Batley and Frank (2008:130) state that a teacher who has grown professionally will intuitively know how to impart visual art knowledge to learners. My decision to grow professionally was based on the realisation of what I did not know about art and visual art teaching.

5.2.3. The value of research involvement

Butler-Kisber (2010:943) states that our research identities change with time and experience. Butler-Kisber (2010:943) further states that although the idea of having a research identity surprises novices, we are naturally interpretive beings. This view of Butler-Kisber (2010:943) suggests that because we are not aware of being naturally interpretive, we do research without knowing it and construct knowledge through interpretation. This type of interpretation is a form of qualitative research that can also be used for educational purposes (Merriam, 2009).

My involvement with research lead to a presentation at a local student conference and a poster presentation. I was actively participating in the process of my research and not distanced from it which made my experience of the research process, as a form of action research, very personal. Even though teachers seldom benefit from impersonal traditional research (Johnson, 2012:375), my practice benefited enormously from this reflective approach.

I cite from extract 4.2.7 that teachers are learners and 'knowers' when they engage in the process of research and professional growth. As I read current literature in the field of art and art education, I gained global insights about art teaching and art education, and this added value to my current practice. I could reflect on my practice and make the changes where necessary. My involvement in research added lasting value to my professional and personal growth. Rinaldi (2005) correctly states that when teachers

become involved in research, their professional identity is enhanced and a new kind of leadership arises from that teacher.

Henderson (2012:4) concurs with Rinaldi that teachers who have become involved with research becomes the ones taking the lead with staff development at school. I started doing devotions in the staffroom and leading assemblies for the learners.

5.2.4. Changed attitudes from learners, staff and principal

As the previous discussion highlights the value of research, I now discuss the change in my situation at school as a result of my professional growth. As I grew professionally and changed into the person I should be, I noticed a changed attitude from my colleagues and principal. My colleagues treated me with more respect, and I felt that my opinion was valued. I was given more administrative duties by the principal, and became the co-ordinator of the IQMS (Integrated Quality Management System) programme at school.

Cited from extract 4.2.4 the change from within and without came about in a community of practice where teachers offered each other support. In this group where teachers began to develop the professional side of their lives, we looked both inward and outward and learned from each other. We took a personal inventory of our teaching, listing our strengths and weaknesses and realised that we needed to grow as professionals to address our weaknesses. We realised that we not only needed to grow, but that we wanted to grow to enrich the lives of our learners by offering them opportunities to construct their own knowledge in the same way as we were developing our own. I became aware of my teaching, *when* I was teaching, and of my identity in the classroom. This awareness had a positive influence on my learners and contributed to their changed attitude.

As my confidence in creating my own artwork grew, my learners' attitude towards their work changed. Not only did they enjoy art, but they became more confident in exploring their own creativity. In extract 4.2.7 I note how my teaching benefited from research, and how I was able to translate my professional growth into practical teaching and learning. My lessons were more beneficial and my learners' confidence grew.

I write about a moment of true development and growth. The memory of winning a prize in an art competition is one of the most significant highlights of my journey because it meant that I had grown in confidence as an art teacher and that my art activities had become meaningful and intentional. This incident contributed significantly to the changed attitude from my colleagues and my principal. Their changed attitude contributed considerably to my personal development and enhanced my sense of self and the awareness of my identity.

5.2.5. A growing awareness of my own identity as an educator

“As the teacher’s knowledge base increases, her perception of herself as a teacher also grows” (Johnson 2012:375). The awareness of who, what and how I was teaching when I was teaching, had a special meaning for me. As I grew professionally, my knowledge base was being extended and deepened and my pedagogical knowledge was being shaped in the classroom. This emerges strongly from my data. I document in chapter four how failed art lessons transformed into meaningful lessons that were rich in content.

My study forced me to become aware of myself in many ways. I became aware of myself as an educator and as a person. I became aware of the teacher I was becoming. My professional development influenced my personal growth. I changed from within and without. I became aware of my thoughts and my actions and this made an enormous difference in the art class. A new attitude and a responsibility enveloped me as I became aware of the processes of teaching and learning. These processes included the gaining of the knowledge bases of which Turner-Bisset (1999) writes. As my self-awareness grew, I found an increase in self-esteem and a feeling of satisfaction. I knew that I was growing personally and professionally and thus fulfilling the purpose of my study.

A strong knowledge of self, one of the knowledge bases of teachers, indicates that meaningful teaching is more than covering the curriculum (Turner-Bisset, 1999:46). This strongly suggests that meaning is the most important aspect of teaching. Without it, lessons are “stale” and “lifeless” (Johnson, 2012: 375).

I cite from extract 4.2.7 that teaching visual art with a deepened knowledge was the most gratifying experience for me. I viewed my role in the art class differently. With my

broader knowledge of art education, I understood the value of good art teaching. This made it possible for me to use visual art experiences to enrich my learners' lived experiences. As noted earlier in this chapter, increased knowledge of art and art education changes a teacher's identity over time. Her teaching becomes intentional and purposeful.

5.2.6. Developing a reflective practice

Turner-Bisset (1999) strongly states that teachers who have a deep knowledge of themselves reflect on their practices at a higher level. They are able to develop better ways of teaching and planning. I cite from extract 4.2.2 where the extract looks at negative learner-responses as a result of poor planning. Initially, my lessons were unstructured and learners always assumed that their lessons would be uninspiring and boring, hence their negative attitude toward visual art. If I had used the reflective stance in the work of Johnson (2012: 374), I would have used those negative responses from the learners to positively adjust my practice. I was not ready to take that step. I needed to develop professionally to understand the true value of art and art education. My lack of subject knowledge is one of the main factors that inspired me to grow professionally. Newton (2001) emphasises the view that teachers with sound content knowledge offer true understanding of the subject matter. This extract highlights my own lack of content and pedagogical content knowledge. My professional life lacked vigor at that point in time. I was happy to have a job and earn a salary. It did not matter whether my lessons were successful or not. I was not thinking about my teaching when I was teaching.

This need to grow professionally came about as a result of the awareness of the reflective process and after reading the work of Battey & Frank (2008:130) who strongly concur that when the knowledge base of teachers is broadened and deepened, it influences the practice and processes of those teachers. This reflective process helped me to reflect as I was teaching. I became aware of visual and auditory cues but most importantly I became aware of the subject content I was teaching. I started thinking about why subject content and subject knowledge were important and why it mattered. It mattered because if children could not connect to content in any particular way, the teaching experience would be meaningless and little or no learning would take place at all.

It can therefore be assumed that the willingness to reflect and to grow professionally was the right mental attitude towards a process of continuous improvement. Professional growth is therefore the result of intentionality.

Ramsey, Franklin & Ramsey (2000:39) state that reflection encourages teachers to question their actions. Reflection also provides valuable insights into how they can get the best from their own personal and professional development (Ramsey, Franklin & Ramsey, 2000:39).

To make changes in teaching practice, teachers need on-going professional development that is interactive (Bates & Morgan, 2018). Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, (2017) states that as a teacher develops professionally, she should integrate the new knowledge into her own practice. My practice has benefited enormously by integrating the new knowledge into my own practice. As I grew professionally the delivery of my lessons changed from “stale” and “lifeless” to rich and meaningful visual art experiences. On reflection, I began to deliver art lessons that were beneficial to my learners. My learners looked forward to art lessons. They enjoyed the activities and benefited by the new structure of lesson delivery and discipline. They could explore their own creativity in a meaningful way because I possessed new knowledge to share with them. They produced artwork that had meaning for them in their own lives and became skillful at mixing paints, determining consistencies and using art materials.

My learners could work together in a group without arguing. They respected each other's artwork and gave constructive criticism. I realised the immense value of having a passion for visual art teaching combined with thorough and meaningful planning. The immeasurable value of having sound knowledge of content and teaching methods became a reality. I realised that the learners respected the art discipline because I understood the value of art and art education. I realised that I possessed the ability to develop and encourage creativity. I could inspire and motivate learners to do and to give their best. My learners became critical and reflective thinkers. They showed this by the quality of artwork they produced. They always wanted to improve on what they did. I started believing in my ability as a teacher but most importantly as a teacher of art. I started trusting my intuitive feelings. This was the breakthrough in my career.

5.2.7. Support from family

The fact that my husband made big changes in his life and supported me both emotionally and financially contributed immensely to my personal and professional life. This change impacted on all areas of my life. I could focus on my work because I knew I had all the support I needed to make a success of my studies as well as my career. This assurance made it possible to pursue my own professional and personal dreams. My professional life had its own challenges, but I managed to survive and persevere. I could share my fears and insecurities with my husband, and he would give me the support I needed. This carries a deep significance for me because before I did not have the support I longed for.

I cite from extract 4.2.4 that although I had experienced so much unhappiness in my life, the significant change my husband made in his life was the start of my own journey of recovery and growth. The significance of this change was the opportunity I was given to grow. I seized this opportunity and started my journey of becoming whole.

Together we are trying to heal from our past. My children are now part of a functional family. Their support has been phenomenal. My children supported me by accepting the that I had an obligation towards my studies. They became independent and self-reliant in the process. This was an opportunity for them to really actively participate in the own academic development and also to assess their own abilities. They were satisfied with what they had achieved on their own. This meant so much to me.

The significance of this change is the opportunity I was given to further my studies. If my husband had not made this big change in his life, I would not have had the opportunity to further my studies. He took over my role of supporting our children with their schoolwork and attending their sport and cultural activities. He had the time and to do this and was thankful that he could make this positive contribution to their development. My teaching would otherwise have remained mediocre and I would not have enjoyed the immense benefits of this change.

Lowenveld & Brittain (1987) state that children develop into creative thinkers when they actively participate in visual art activities. They would not have been able to develop the skills that visual art education offers if I had not intentionally embarked on a process of professional growth. I would have continued delivering art lessons deprived of

content and meaning and I would have remained on a plateau in my teaching career. I would not have become the person I was to become. Although I have come to the final stages of my study, my personal and professional journey continues. I will continue to be aware of my teaching, while I am teaching, and will continue to grow my knowledge bases as a teacher, more particularly, a teacher of art. I cannot forget the impact of this opportunity on my life as a teacher. It carries significant meaning for me.

I cite from extract 4.2.3 how I regained an interest in my work because of the contribution of a very special person in my life. Her support in both my personal and professional life is of lasting value. It was through her that I became aware that I needed to change. Her inspiration motivated me because she believed in me and drove me beyond my limits to reach my full potential. She had the capacity to drive me to action in a kind and loving way. Her unique way of accepting me not just as a colleague but as a confidante strengthens the kind of relationship we have. She has the skill to make everything seem to easy and effortless. She taught me that life was about taking risks and embarking on new adventures. It was through her that my journey of professional development commenced. It is to her that I turn to for motivation and inspiration when I feel 'stale' and 'lifeless'. Her passion and humility continue to encourage me.

5.2.8. Support from Institution of Higher Learning

I write how the Department of Research graciously granted me two extra days to complete my proposal, after my home was burgled. My supervisor gave me the freedom of using her office. These incidents show the human-ness of the academic staff of the institution. It displays consideration and sympathy. My supervisor stood beside me every step of the way. My study benefited greatly by her extensive knowledge of the research methodology, which was not familiar in the field of research. Her sound knowledge of art teaching and art education are valued contributions to my work. She had co-authored many of the creative arts textbooks currently used in our schools today. I value her rigorous, honest feedback and encouragement.

In my autobiography, I document how the lecturers inspired me. Their extensive knowledge and expertise motivated me. They gave me all the support I needed. I attended seminars and conferences organised by the social sciences department of

the university. These opportunities deepened my insight to my study and added immense value and a profound meaning to the research process.

I write about a moment of significant self-discovery 4.2.12 when I presented my work at a student conference. I recall moments of apprehension and worry, prior to my oral proposal presentation, but I was surrounded by supportive fellow students and well-informed lecturers who made this one of the most unforgettable experiences of my journey. My supervisor did not have an opportunity to peruse my slides because I had procrastinated. I did not know whether the information was of an appropriate academic standard. I had to trust my intuition and realised that if I did not believe in myself, no one would. This experience was one of those incidents on my journey that forced me to have the confidence and self-trust I sought. I had to push myself beyond the limits that I had become so used to. After the presentation I felt relieved and satisfied. The feedback was positive and constructive and this was very important to me.

5.3. Summary of findings

I include a short summary of the factors that have influenced my professional growth in a table below: The findings clearly show the interconnectedness of professional growth and personal growth.

A summary of the factors that have influenced my development:

Professional Growth	Personal Growth
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Knowledge bases: I learned that teacher knowledge bases are a critical element in the teaching and learning process. It is the backbone of all teaching and learning experiences. These knowledge bases grounds teachers' understanding of their teaching practice. They become aware of whom, what and how they are teaching.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Support from family and friends: The support from family and friends has been the determining factor of my success thus far. Without their unwavering support throughout the process, I would not have been able to progress in the manner in which I have. I am eternally grateful to them.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> My involvement in research: My involvement in research contributed positively to my teaching practice. It brought about an awareness of issues that were current and I was exposed to relevant literature in the field of art education. This new found knowledge contributed enormously to the success of my art lessons.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> A growing awareness of my own identity: As I grew as a teacher, I became more aware of the work and the processes that underpin the responsibility and accountability of being a teacher. Teaching became more than just a job where I was earning a salary. This study emphasises the awareness of a teacher of art in particular.</p>

Professional Growth	Personal Growth
<p>□ Developing a reflective practice: I was able to break old unproductive patterns of teaching and transform into a reflective teacher. I became more knowledgeable and could make a positive contribution to teaching and learning at school and in the classroom. My practice was grounded in deep commitment and passion.</p>	<p>● Changed attitudes from learners, non-teaching staff and teachers: As I grew professionally, I noticed a changed behaviour from all who I interacted with at school. I gained respect and trust from my colleagues and from my principal. The learners began exploring their own creativity as they grew in confidence. My self-confidence grew and this began to influence the person I was becoming. My personal appearance began to change as I grew in confidence.</p>
<p>□ Support from an institution of higher learning: The support from the university deepened my understanding of the research process. I was guided and supported throughout the entire process. I attended workshops and seminars arranged by the institution and this contributed to the progress with my study.</p>	

5.4. Challenges and limitations of the study

This study had challenges as well as limitations. The biggest challenge of this study was a time limitation. I found it difficult to focus on my study while I was actively involved in the teaching and learning process. A personal challenge cited from extract 4.2.1 was about healing from my past. I had to focus on my recovery as well as progress with my work.

I deliberately decided not take study leave, because my data was drawn from my teaching experiences. My data required me to vividly document incidences in my professional and personal life that influenced my professional development. These incidences would progress into findings. My work and study were interconnected. Another challenge was my limited exposure to the world of research and my limited knowledge of writing a research paper. I had to attend seminars and workshops to broaden my understanding and my knowledge of the research process. I willed myself to present my work locally at student conferences and write abstracts which needed academic writing skills, although I knew my academic writing skills had not been fully developed yet. I had grown in confidence to take the risk. These risks were beneficial to my professional and personal growth.

There was very little current literature on Reflective Topical Autobiography methodology and I relied mostly on the expertise of my supervisor, who had completed her doctoral studies using the same methodology. I valued her knowledge and insight. The biggest limitation of this study is that it concerns itself with the factors that have influenced the professional development of only one art teacher (Johnson 2012: 379). This study explores the professional growth and the factors that have influenced her growth over time. We are given the opportunity to understand these factors and how they impacted on her growth. The reader notes her life story and all her insecurities and challenges and her development of teacher content knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge (Shulman, 1987; Turner-Bisset 1999). This may offer an insight into the way in which she grows and develops in her profession.

I believe that the contribution of this study will increase the awareness of the value of professional growth and the influences that impacts an art teachers' development. If we can become more aware of the factors which influence our professional and personal growth, we will be able to be comprehensive in our roles as teachers and in our teaching. Johnson (2012:380) states that we will foster the knowledge development of our learners. We will create opportunities to allow them to make meaning of the world around them and create their own knowledge in the process. This will have lasting value them.

5.5. Recommendations

Only teachers who have had formal training should teach this discipline because visual art teaching has a method and knowledge content that is specific (Johnson 2012: 375). Primary school *generalist* teachers of art are not fully aware of the true value of art in education. They deprive learners of developing all the skills that this discipline offers. They have no formal training in art and do not understand its significance for meaningful and creative thinking. Having a sound knowledge base is imperative for teachers of visual art because it allows them to make careful, well-thought-out choices confidently (Eisner, 1999; Wochawiak & Clements, 2001; Mc Ardle & Piscitelli; Schiralli, 2002).

I suggest that generalist teachers of art should develop a sound teacher knowledge base to ensure meaningful teaching of art. They should become involved in research

to enrich their practice and develop a reflective practice to encourage them to question their actions. Life-long learning should be key in quality teaching and learning.

5.6. Conclusion

5.6.1. The answer to my research question:

What influences my development?

I realised that before embarking on my professional journey, I had to ask myself what I hoped to gain from this process. I had to be honest and decide if it was for the purpose of my profession. This would determine my level of commitment. I realised that I needed to grow in my profession and commit myself wholeheartedly. As my journey unfolded I realised there were significant factors that played a vital role in my development. The following discussion highlights these significant factors.

- **The need to grow professionally**

As a generalist teacher with no formal training or experience of art teaching I needed to grow professionally if I wanted to be effective in the classroom. I needed to plan structured lessons that were not deprived of content and knowledge. I realised that art teaching was not just about making beautiful pictures. It carried a much deeper meaning and I had to explore it.

- **The need to become involved in research**

The following statement is taken from a section of this chapter but I need to emphasise the fact that even though teachers seldom benefit from impersonal research (Johnson, 2012: 375), my practice benefited enormously from the personal narrative approach. I could apply what I learned and accurately assess its impact. The more I became involved in research the more my practice benefitted.

- **The need to teach art meaningfully**

As I learned about the many facets of visual art teaching and the knowledge bases of teachers, I realised that if art is not taught meaningfully it loses its value. I had also learned that visual art and visual art education have great value and that art education is a necessity in the holistic development of children. Children learn to engage and make meaning of the world around them.

□ **The need to become a reflective teacher**

I discovered that reflective practice is key to continuous development. Reflective practice has helped me to critically examine my teaching on a regular basis. It has helped me to deepen my knowledge, expand my repertoire of skills and to incorporate new discoveries into my practice. I read more, I question and implement new methods of teaching.

□ **Support from family, higher institutions of learning and colleagues**

I have come to realise the immense impact the support from family and friends had on my journey of exploration and discovery. The support from my family was invaluable. My husband supported me both emotionally and financially. My children understood that my sacrifices would benefit the whole family.

Some of my colleagues were interested in my progress and often asked about it. I would gladly share my progress with them. It was because of a colleague that I intentionally decided to grow and develop professionally.

Lecturers shared current insights about research and their invaluable contributions shaped my thinking. My supervisor supported, motivated and encouraged me every step of the way. She believed in my work.

5.7. Personal comment

This study has added tremendous value to my professional and personal growth. It has strengthened my understanding of teaching and learning and of the significance of personal and professional growth. Research involvement has expanded my understanding of the core purpose of teaching and learning. Today, I approach my work with renewed interest and passion. I strongly believe that my new knowledge of teaching and learning has contributed considerably to the way in which my learners approach the art class today. As my study progressed, I valued the contribution of art and art education to the process of teaching and learning. I learned how meaningful art teaching could change the lives of my learners significantly. I have witnessed the transformation in their work and I have seen them grow in self-worth, knowledge and confidence.

I realise that improvement and a positive transformation does not happen by accident. I had become intentional about my approach to my work and realised that I had to

serve the needs of my learners. I tried new methods of teaching and learning and tried to accurately assess their impacts. I realised that I had to engage in on-going reflection if I wanted to grow and be effective in the classroom.

This study has transformed me from a mediocre teacher of art to a passionate art teacher who is purpose-driven and confident. The new knowledge I have gained, together with a reflective approach to my work outweighs my inadequacies of the past.

My awareness of art and art teaching grew and I have developed a new attitude and a stronger sense of accountability toward my work as an art teacher and most importantly, towards my learners. I realised the immense *power* I have as a teacher and as a teacher of art in particular. I could use this power as a tool of torture or as an instrument of inspiration. I would want to impact my learners in a positive way and inspire them to develop their creativity. I also want to motivate them, as individuals, to reach their personal goals, as I have been given the opportunity to do. I would want my learners to remember me as a teacher who cared about them and who propelled them further than they would have gone on their own. This statement strongly emphasises the effect this study has had on the process of my development. It carries a deep personal meaning that I will embrace throughout my teaching career.

5.8. Chapter summary

In this chapter I highlight the research question and place it at the centre of each theme that emerged from my data analysis. The themes that have emerged include the following:

- The importance of teacher knowledge bases
- The value of research involvement
- The awareness of teacher identity
- Developing a reflective practice
- Changed attitude from learners, staff (teaching and non-teaching) and my principal
- Support from family and friends and the support from an institution of higher learning.

The themes were reflected upon and the new meaning gained was written as a Reflective Topical Autobiography. A detailed discussion of the influence of these factors on my professional growth is noted. As the discussions unfolds it becomes clear that professional development influences personal development. The two are intertwined.

The findings or themes are supported with references to my data and deep emotional responses. Relevant literature underpins these findings. A summary of the findings (themes) is tabled. I briefly discuss the challenges and limitations of the study and make recommendations that arise from the findings. A personal comment of the process of the study is noted and concludes this final chapter.

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ADDENDUM

My Autobiography

IMMERSION

Growing up.....

I grew up in a very small community in the southern suburbs. My childhood home was a place where I felt safe and loved. It was nothing lavish. We loved our two-bedroom home. Our small living room would be filled with laughter over weekends when friends or family visited to play card games. The smell of freshly baked scones would welcome our guests. My younger sister and I would make tea for our aunts and serve scones with strawberry jam and fresh-cream, while the older men enjoyed a glass of brandy and shared stories. My cousins would rush to our room, for a seat on the top bunk and we would spend hours sharing jokes and just enjoying each other's company.

As the third eldest of four, I was very shy unlike my siblings. Although my childhood days were carefree, devoid of abuse, poverty or neglect, I developed a low sense of self. I often explored this emotion by overthinking, hoping I would get answers. Despite my low self-esteem, I was hardworking and diligent and always tried my best at school. My parents encouraged and supported me and that mattered.

My dad served as an evangelist in our home congregation where we attended Sunday school every Sunday. The aroma of roast meat and baked vegetables filled our home on Sundays as we sat down to enjoy Sunday lunch. My mom would make a special treat for afternoon tea.

I really enjoyed singing. It was in the choir that I felt confident and could express my emotions freely. Singing in the choir helped me build confidence in my own abilities and I felt good. My low self-esteem had a negative impact on my life. I always thought I was not good enough and started to believe my inadequacy. As a result of this, I seldom allowed people to enter my personal space. I had a few friends at school and valued true friendship.

1987

I qualified as a teacher in 1987. I accepted a temporary post at a High School for one year. I was appointed permanently at a school in the Northern suburbs and I am still presently teaching there. I started my teaching career with vigour and enthusiasm. I always made sure that my administrative work was done neatly and accurately so that people would not judge me. The person that had a great influence on my early teaching years was ⁵Mrs. Martin. She was always immaculately dressed. She was one of the pioneers with many years of experience. She generously shared her knowledge and expertise with me. She never had any discipline problems and was respected by all at school. Mrs. Martin, "Children, you do not have a choice, I am instructing you to behave!" I wanted to emulate her.

I taught various subjects including art and shared the learning area with an art specialist. I felt intimidated because my major was class music and I had no formal training in art.⁶ Mr. Mortley. made me feel inadequate and I seldom asked his advice about teaching, especially the teaching of art.

Mr. Mortley, "Art is a discipline, you have to respect it." I had no idea what this meant, until much later in my career. The importance of improving my teaching was not important and was not part of my thinking at the time.

1989

In 1989 I got married. The first decade of my marriage were very happy years and I was content. As the years went by I faced some major challenges in my marriage which had a negative impact on my teaching career and a major effect on my life. The problem had progressed so rapidly that my life became dysfunctional and unmanageable. I started to feel disjointed and disconnected from life, from myself. My vigour for my profession dwindled. I lost track of my spirit. My irrational responses to this situation called for much needed help, both spiritually and emotionally. I developed a special school 'personality' which was a distortion of me. I built it up; unconsciously at first but later it became deliberate. The school 'personality' had to hide my true emotions. I smiled but it never reached my heart. I laughed but it never came from my soul. I had to appear enthusiastic and dynamic. Eventually this caught

⁵ Not her real name

⁶ Not his real name

up with me and I was confused about what to change and how to change it. I hung on till the holidays at the end of each term. Life was a survival game. A daily grind of fear and hard work to make it through the day. Teaching became a “run-of-the-mill”. I had a job and was earning a salary. That was all that mattered. (Autobiography: 1)

After a decade of teaching, my career reached a plateau. I lost the purpose of lesson planning and sometimes did very little or no planning at all. I relied on my memory and experience. This translated into poor lessons being delivered which were deprived of content. It did not matter to me whether my lessons were meaningful or not. I was forced to teach visual arts because of the need at the school. I was frustrated and despondent. This affected the way I approached my art lessons, both in the planning and the facilitation.

“Miss, when we are going to draw?”

“Miss, can we draw anything?”

“Just keep yourselves busy”, I answer.

My learners were busy doing art, that was all that mattered. I had artwork to show. At this stage of my teaching career, I had no idea of the importance of art in education.

I did not monitor the progress of my pupils learning, nor was I ensuring that the learning activities were effectively fostering the learning outcomes I had intended. I knew I had to sustain my pupils’ involvement in a learning experience throughout a lesson. This did not happen. I was failing my students and it did not matter because I had no idea what I was doing at the time. At this stage I taught grade five. My classes were big and I had to organise and manage the learning activities effectively. This was extremely difficult. I did not have the energy nor the vigour to do so.

Time and time again I felt frustrated and unappreciated not only by pupils, but by colleagues and parents. Was nobody seeing my efforts at all? My teaching became a roller-coaster ride with many emotional highs and lows and good times alternating with difficult times.

“Thank – you, teacher for the positive influence you had on ⁷Kay’s intellectual and emotional development. She always spoke highly of you. Although she experienced stress in some educator’s classes, she felt safe in your class. We are grateful for your experience, patience, kindness and strictness that benefitted our daughter.” This was a note written by a very grateful parent who thanked me for the work I was doing. It was an emotional highlight for me.

1991-1999

On the 10th of February 1991, I gave birth to a bonny baby boy. I was on accouchement leave and my days were spent mothering. This was one of the most memorable times of my life. I missed my pupils but I appreciated the fact that I did not have to plan lessons, mark books, do assessments or report to parents at the end of the term. The only disadvantage was my salary. I only got paid one third of the usual amount. This did not matter to me because I managed to cope.

After three months I returned to school, refreshed and revitalised. I was asked to teach grade three. This was a daunting task as I had no Foundation Phase teaching experience. Once again I relied on skills and experience and survived the year. What helped me make it through the year was my willingness to learn. I had to adjust my teaching in terms of lesson planning and teaching styles. I found this experience very enriching and rewarding. I seemed to have a better relationship with my learners because I had a child of my own. I bonded better with my learners and began to be more tolerant than before. The motherly instinct had set in. I perceived my career from a different perspective. My learners became more special to me and I taught from the heart, despite the challenges at school. In 1994 I gave birth to another son and four years later in 1998, my daughter was born. I returned to a grade 4 class and I had to teach art.

Mrs ⁸Katy Sauls becomes my substitute for the term while I was off on accouchement leave in 1998. She is middle-aged with a humorous nature. She has a passion for art. She always displays her learners’ artwork. Why don’t you ever display your learners work?” She asks. “I don’t think my children’s work is good enough.” I answer

⁷ Not her real name

⁸ Not her real name

despondently. "I can't teach art. I can't even draw, I am not creative enough," I answer. "I will help you" she says.

(Autobiography: 3)

It was Katy that taught me how teachers should care, not only about what happens in the classroom, but about students' lives in general. Teachers' are dedicated about bettering students' lives and demonstrate their understanding through tenderness, patience and gentleness. Children value teachers who are kind, gentle and encouraging. Caring teachers truly believe that children have the right to a caring and competent teacher. Teachers actually pay attention to and understand what students say. Constructive social interactions between teachers and learners increase students' self-esteem.

⁹John, a learner with serious domestic, social and academic challenges asks me if he could spend a weekend with me. "Certainly", I answer without hesitation.

Why would John ask me, and not his own class teacher? He was always the topic of discussion in the staffroom. I would leave the staffroom immediately and enjoy the privacy of my own classroom instead. I develop a motherly tenderness towards him. I would give him something to eat occasionally and just listen to what he had to say.

"Juffrou is lief vir my, juffrou gee om vir my." I hug him tightly and find it very difficult to stop my tears.

I spent that following Saturday shopping for John. I bought him some decent clothes for church. I remember that particular Sunday morning. I made my family some porridge and added cinnamon and butter for some extra flavour. My children enjoyed this treat and laughed when John said "Juffrou, dit smaak so lekker soos koek."

I feel a lump in my throat when I see him standing next to my daughter in the children's choir and singing. He looked so radiant and happy. I thank God for granting me the opportunity to make a small difference in John's life, even if it was just a brief feeling of belonging, acceptance and happiness. John has since left our school and

⁹ Not his real name

has moved out of the area. I am sure the memory of the weekend will stay with him forever.

There were also lowlights. I share in the grief of my pupils who lose loved ones. I become a source of comfort and strength when a learner loses the battle against cancer. A tumour on the brain ends a young life. Life makes no sense to my young learners. I feel empty and lacking as I try to comfort a learner who loses both parents and a sister in a car accident. These tragedies drain me emotionally. I listen to and encourage learners who feel they are being unfairly treated by fellow colleagues. I ensure confidentiality. I have to assure them of my loyalty towards them. I listen to blow by blow accounts of violent incidents in the homes of my learners. I try to comfort learners who share that their parents are getting divorced. I cannot understand why children have to experience such sadness and pain. They are being robbed of just being given the opportunity to be children.

2000-2008

This was a period of deep grief. In a tragedy on 21 March 2000, my brother in-law committed suicide. This tragic incident affected my life in more ways that I could imagine. It was one loss of a loved one following another. My eldest brother passed away during a diabetic seizure on 23rd December 2003. My dad passed away exactly two weeks after he had his left leg amputated on 15th February 2008. I could identify with the pain my pupils felt when they lost loved ones. These losses had a tremendous negative impact on my teaching. I isolated myself. Colleagues tried to encourage me, and helped me get through my administrative work. I really appreciated this. My learners were very sympathetic and wrote lots of encouraging notes.

2009

When I discovered my husband had a problem with alcohol, I was devastated. I did not know how to cope. I had no energy for my work. I used up all my energy trying to cope from day to day. I had three children, and a career that needed my undivided attention. I was failing at both. I was not that tolerant, caring mother I needed to be. I was not that dedicated teacher I wanted to be. These were difficult times in my life. I would take work home on Fridays, and spent the entire afternoon in Bellville

library. I would sit in the reference department, where there was very little disturbance and complete my marking and planning for the week. This was the only time I could focus on my work. I lost the purpose for living. I landed up at in Kenilworth Clinic and spent three weeks on a psychiatric programme. I requested no visitors during visiting hours. My family and friends respected this request. I would stay in my room until visiting hours were over. The fact that I did not get any visitors did not matter to me. I wanted to be alone.

While in the clinic, I was worried about my children at home. My mom would phone to reassure me that my children were fine. I felt guilty for being in the clinic but I was glad to be away from home. My husband would visit me and I resented his visits. I wished he would stay away and work on his problem.

In one of the sessions I learnt that I had become affected by my husband's drinking and that I needed to recover. To me, this was an understatement. After all, my husband was the one causing all the unhappiness. I have since joined a programme of recovery and have come to understand that alcoholism is a family illness, and that a changed attitude towards the illness was needed to aid recovery. I could not enter this new world of recovery with my old attitudes towards the alcoholic. I had to detach from the problem and not from the person. This was very difficult and seemed impossible to do. Working the programme of recovery was taking one day at a time. I started by making little changes in my life. I had to focus on myself and not so much on my loved one. For nineteen years everything revolved around my husband and his drinking. It was difficult to shift the focus. I followed the steps of recovery one day at a time, and slowly saw the changes in my life. I became more confident because I realised that I did not cause the ILLNESS, neither could I cure or control it. I needed to take my hands off and rely on a power greater than myself to restore me to sanity.

It is early morning, my husband sobs bitterly. I immediately have a feeling of empathy towards him. Anger and frustration disappear as I hold him in my arms. He wants professional help and looks at me as if I am his life line. My hands shake uncontrollably as I make a telephone call to confirm an appointment. We are lucky, his doctor has an opening and he is admitted to hospital for three weeks.

Autobiography: 4

When my husband was discharged from hospital, he made a change in his life. As we worked the programme of recovery one day at a time we realised that we could apply the steps of the programme to our daily living. My life has become richer and more meaningful since. I thank the God of my understanding for a new beginninga new life of endless possibilities and blessing.

I mentioned earlier that I did not allow people to enter my personal space. As I matured in the programme I realised that I needed people. I believed Sydney Smith when he writes, "Life is to be fortified by many friendships. To love and be loved is the greatest happiness of existence."

Friends and friendships became important to me as I grew personally. I wanted to live not exist. I valued friends and friendships. People came into my life and left again. Each person leaving an indelible mark on my life. Every friendship had a special part to play in my life as a teacher as well as a person.

I have developed this philosophy of life: Accept the things you cannot change, but change the things you can and ask God to give you the wisdom to know the difference. Ask God for the courage to change. This SERENITY PRAYER became my source of strength as I went about my daily duties.

I needed courage to make changes in my personal life as well as my professional life. I was certain that as GOD has guided my path thus far, he will guide me into the future. HE has given me the courage to change *reactions* to *responses*. I am now able to respond with calmness to challenging and unexpected events in my life. I accept my weakness as limitations and strive to change them into strengths. A loving mother, an understanding wife and a better teacher is what I envisage for the future. I strive to fulfil the many roles in my life with more passion, enthusiasm and purpose.

¹⁰Mr. Marcus had a beautiful, baritone voice. He sang in the male choir at church and often asked me to play certain hymns for him.

"You play with so much emotion, it moves me." He says.

I accept the compliment and answer, Thank you, sir.

¹⁰ Not his real name

He would listen while I trained my choir and sing along with the children. Mr. Marcus believed I could accompany our school choir. We produced a musical, "The Smallest Angel." Although I was extremely nervous and had to do with very little sleep for three nights, I enjoyed the experience and was thankful that our hard work had paid off. The event was a huge success. Mr. Marcus started a staff choir and we performed at musical evenings. Not only did he encourage me, he also supported me in any ways.

"Things will not remain the same, a miracle will happen."

The miracle happened. My husband made changes in his life. I treasure this gift of sobriety every day of my life. This transformation has changed my entire life. I decided to further my studies and my husband has been my pillar of strength throughout by supporting me financially and emotionally.

2009-2012

After twenty-two years of teaching I knew I had to start changing the way I was teaching to meet the demands of the new curriculum. Many educators found this change difficult because they felt that the old way of teaching was the best way. There were new methods of assessments and the curriculum was based on outcomes and assessment standards. First we had critical outcomes, with learning outcomes and assessment standards.

We also had learning programmes with work schedules and lesson plans. We were trained, but the teachers at our school felt that the practical problems we were facing at school were not being addressed at these training sessions. We had to solve our own problems. Not enough workshops were arranged and schools had to cluster and plan together. I had become aware of the expressed frustrations of generalist teachers.

In 2009 I heard about the ACE (Advanced Certificate in Education) course being offered. I enrolled for the Arts and Culture specialisation course. I knew I had to change the way I was teaching and regarded this as the ideal opportunity to deepen my understanding and broaden my knowledge of the subject. I felt I did not have enough content knowledge of the learning area to teach it effectively and to share subject knowledge with other colleagues. Being the co-ordinator of Arts and Culture

at the time, prompted me more to grow professionally. This new subject (Arts and Culture) used terminology that was *foreign* to me. I had to empower myself and then in turn, empower my colleagues. When I qualified twenty- two years ago, I qualified as a music specialist. Music, Art, Physical Education were separate, specialist subjects.

After twenty-two years of teaching, I was back in the classroom. I was very nervous but also excited to go to lectures on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings. I met people from all over the Western Cape. We shared our experiences with each other and this made the course even more meaningful. Most of the students were experienced teachers and there was a sense of responsibility, maturity and accountability among us. This attitude was appreciated by our lecturers. We bonded with each other and often spent our free time together. We shared our joys and our sorrows. I was with people who understood my dilemma and shared my sentiments. This was very valuable to me and I treasured it. I asked many questions because I wanted to change my situation at school and most importantly, I wanted to grow. We did a variety of subjects, from the very academic to enjoyable and relaxing. From Human Development, Culture and Society and Research Methods to the 2010 World Cup dance.

Autobiography: 5

Being back in the ‘classroom’ was daunting but yet very inspiring. I looked forward to lectures and eagerly participated in all activities. Each lecturer, with a unique character and teaching style made a very deep impression on me. I marvelled at the passion, expertise and content knowledge which emulated from these lecturers. This is where the seed of self-improvement was sown. I wanted to emulate the lecturers. I wanted this seed to germinate, because I became aware of the many benefits attached. Not only would my colleagues benefit, but most importantly, the learners. And that mattered. Passion, expertise, knowledge carried a new meaning. These were the qualities I sought after more and more, as I ventured on my journey of exploration, discovery and development. Not only was I acquiring knowledge about my career, I was also growing as a person. Personal qualities surfaced.

I became the co-producer of a drama production during my undergraduate studies. Our drama group wrote a play and we choreographed it. It was our final Arts and

Culture assessment for ACE. I played the part of a tortoise in our production called "A hearty party."

Autobiography: 7

The theme of our play was "Ubuntu". Ubuntu, which is part of the Zulu phrase "Ubuntu, ngumuntu ngabantu" simply means that a person is a person through other people. We chose this theme because we realised that we existed because of each other. We needed to express compassion, dignity and empathy towards each other. We wanted to celebrate our different cultures, characters and personalities. The characters in the play were carefully chosen to depict different human characteristics, like pride, resilience, bravery, curiosity and deviousness. There were peacocks, hyenas, a tortoise, a lion and meerkats. We practised during school holidays and made special arrangements to meet and rehearse between lectures. The preparation and hard work paid off.

I thoroughly enjoyed the music lessons. We presented music lessons to our peers. I taught a song called, "My Old Banjo". We learnt so much from each other. Our very young, immaculate lecturer was always well-prepared and made us work very hard during music sessions. We did the 2010 World Cup dance during dance sessions. The exposure to new learning was invigorating and inspiring. My career was brought back to life. My teaching was fresh, vigorous and energetic. Most importantly, learning became more meaningful and the learners benefited.

It was in the Art Department opposite the Barkley Davis Hall where I was exposed to true visual art teaching and learning. A very calm, resourceful lecturer presented meaningful art lessons. The fear I felt towards visual art slowly disappeared as I grew in confidence during art sessions. Her thoughtful planning translated into beneficial and meaningful art lessons. Her lessons were well structured and showed clear evidence of a thorough knowledge and years of experience which she generously shared with her students. Her passion and devotion was clearly visible and I benefited phenomenally. We were exposed to the true value of art, and found new meaning in our daily lives. I could not wait to teach these lessons at school. Slowly my confidence grew. I started exploring confidently with different media during lessons to produce a meaningful piece of art. Our lecturer saw each encounter as an opportunity of

making sense of our real world through art. Our artwork had carried meaning for us and that mattered. We could speak about our art experiences in an informed and knowledgeable way. We did not depend on others' opinions of our work. She made us aware of focal points, contrast, pattern and proportion and use art elements like colour, tone, texture, line and shape in art. We produced 2D and 3D artwork using recyclable materials. I graduated with an ACE qualification and enrolled the very next year for Honours programme.

It was the quotations on the walls in the art department that inspired me. I stood in awe as I looked at the quality of artwork produced by students. I also wanted to mount my learner's artwork for all to see. I knew, that if I continued to grow professionally, my dream would come true one day. When I entered the art department I felt as if I was on another planet. The ambience of the building touched my inner being. I wanted to grow and become the best art teacher I could be.

Autobiography: 6

A renewed love for teaching was awakened in me. I must admit, I was a bit anxious about the Honours course but I grew in confidence and competence as I continued to grow professionally. I remember my lecturer saying to me one afternoon:

"Marlize, this is your best artwork." It was a painting using African colours and patterns. I used shades and tones of brown, yellow, orange and reds. I used undertones and explored with texture, shape, line, pattern and proportion. I used black to outline my artwork. The new knowledge I acquired was clearly evident in my work. That was important to me. I felt proud.

2013

Master's Programme

I am presently in a Master's programme doing research on professional development in art education. It was my lecturer who inspired me. I remember asking her if she thought I was Masters "material." She answered:

"I think you should do it; you understand." What did I understand? What should I understand? I had no idea, until I started attending Masters' orientation programmes. I understood what academic resilience meant. I understood that I had

to push myself beyond limits. I had to read extensively and developed the skill of academic writing. I had to prepare for setbacks. I had to balance my life and develop a healthy life style. Today, as I write my story I feel a deep gratitude towards my family who supported me thus far, always encouraging me especially when I felt like giving up and most importantly to my supervisor who walked beside every step of the way.

30 April 2013 ... *A Reflection of motherhood*

¹¹Mrs. Deyers, a middle-aged teacher, at the Educare Centre situated next to my school becomes a beacon of hope when I share my frustration about life's challenges. She taught both my sons and impacted their lives positively. I always admired the professional way in which she conducted herself. She was firm, yet loving and motherly towards the children. I always enjoyed attending parent informative meetings because she seemed to know what young parents needed to know. I knew my sons were in good hands.

I loved dropping my boys off at the Educare Centre. This made me feel so fulfilled as a mother. I always made sure my boys had healthy packed lunches and were prepared for the day. They enjoyed the activities and outings at the Educare Centre and I would always get very detailed reports from them. They were very sad when they had to go to primary school. Our school is adjacent to the Educare Centre and I would watch them through the wired-fence while they played outside. They were very happy boys.

They have grown since. My eldest son completed a Hospitality course at The International Hotel School in Milnerton. He is currently working at the Taj Hotel in Cape Town as a Food and Beverages supervisor. I am very proud of him. He is a very confident young man with a strong sense of purpose. He was the chairman of the Christian society when he was at high school. He played hockey and rugby at school. When he was five years old, he told me he wanted to be a chef.

My second eldest son, on the other hand, is more like me. An introvert, very shy and withdrawn, yet an adorable child. He failed matric. I thought he would never survive

¹¹ Not her real name

this ordeal because of his low self-esteem. We gave him all the support and encouragement he needed. He only failed English by three percent. He sat for the March supplementary examinations and was very positive that he would pass. My husband persuaded him to do an electrical course because he had no direction and was very uncertain about the future. He did an electrical assessment exam was very positive about the outcome.

My youngest child and only daughter is purpose driven, yet shy and withdrawn. She always achieves good results at school. One of her outstanding achievements include: becoming the head prefect in grade seven. She mastered the silver flute as well as the piano. Despite all her accolades, she remains humble.

Recollections of May 2013

I recall very clearly how I felt at the beginning of the year when our deputy principal told me that I should stop studying and focus on my son. “After all, he failed matric and he needs your support. You should stop focusing on your studies and help your son. I don’t know how you are going to manage this year, with your Master studies and all,” she said. I felt humiliated and discouraged. I continued anyway.

What a big contrast to the “bear hug” from my supervisor, just before I received my Honours degree. She expressed her appreciation of what I had achieved. It is because of her that I am in a Masters’ Programme today. I am eternally grateful to her. Her humility about her Doctoral achievement and many other achievements in her life and her passion for Art and education in general inspires me. I am indeed blessed to have her in my life. Whenever I relive “that moment” I think of her encouragement and support that has been remarkable thus far. She is a woman of wisdom and understanding of people. She understands them so well because she cares so sincerely. I am indeed honoured to have her at my side along this journey.

6 May 2013

My journey as a teacher has been very exciting and very terrifying at times. It is exciting and rewarding when learners understand and are able to master the activities and terrifying when you’ve tried everything you can and children still don’t

understand. I often speak to colleagues and share my teaching experiences with them, both the good and bad ones.

I was asked to mentor two grade four educators this year. This request came unexpectedly. I accepted the opportunity to grow and to share my experiences and strength with others. The experience has been very rewarding thus far. My colleagues are very willing to take advice. They are much older and I really appreciate the respect they have for me. I read up on mentorship and found that it was not as simple as it seems to be.

One really has to understand the process in order to be an effective mentor. I have learnt that even a mentor can learn from mentees. I have learnt so much from my colleagues. We are a great team. We have grown closer as colleagues and friends and sometimes share very confidential information with each other. This is how far we have grown. They are always interested in my studies and will always encourage me. This encourages me a lot. All I hear is, "I don't know how you cope."

My principal deregistered from a Master's programme at Stellenbosch University. She said she could not cope and her marriage was suffering. She has an autistic son, a daughter who is a final year medical student and a husband who is a professor in geography assessment at Stellenbosch University.

15 May 2013

I felt urged to ask four learners what they thought about my teaching in general. I wanted to see if my teaching was meaningful or not. I wanted to know what my learners enjoyed and what they did not like. This is what they wrote.

A grade seven learner writes: Quote: *"I find arts and culture fun since last year. Creative, fun and I liked dancing and music the most. I think I would have enjoyed it more if I was in another class or did more movement activity instead of writing. Exams were easy most of the time but I would hesitate most of the time. Sometimes the teacher went out of bounds with her shouting but I blame the children. I liked the things we did in class although some of them took a week to finish. Arts and Culture, I have also been good at and I have always told my father I don't like art but I am good at it and he said, "It doesn't matter the teacher or the children, do your best."*

Another grade seven learner writes: Quote: *I find Arts and Culture fun and awesome since last year. It's creative and I explore a lot in arts and culture. Dancing, music and drama is very nice especially when we do acting and when we have to write a song and do a dance. Arts and culture is one of my favourite subjects and exam is very easy and I would sometimes moan. Sometimes the teacher would lose her temper but I don't blame her for it, it's the children that I blame because they do not know how to control themselves. She teaches very good and far as I'm concerned she teaches arts and culture the best. Mrs Arendse is the best arts and culture teacher.*

A grade four learner writes: Quote: *"I think my teacher is the best teacher, she teaches very well and she gives us five subjects and she teaches other classes too. I think my teacher teaches geography the best. She also teaches creative arts very well and she is good at art. My teacher is good at her job and serious about her job. She is a grade four teacher and she teaches grade seven as well. My teacher is developing pneumonia and, but she will get well soon and then she will be able to teach us again. I think she is the best teacher ever and we love her very much. She is very good at her job and does not want to lose it. I think Mrs. Arendse teaches creative arts the best because she gives us fun things to do and gives us tasks and projects, and says that we should bring it in on time, and if we bring it in on time she gives more marks. She is the best teacher I ever had.*

Another grade four learner writes. This learner has difficulty writing. I took parts out of his story that I could make sense of. He is very creative and loves doing art. Quote: *"Miss, when we do Maths, can you let us try the method we know best. I think that when we want to ask miss something, we should write a letter. Miss, you should put the art things on the wall. When it is the last few minutes of the school day, we should read a story and when a child talks, you should not give him a second chance."*

As I read the stories of my learners, I knew I had to reflect on the way I was teaching art. Not one of my learners responded to my teaching of art in an informed way. They spoke about the discipline in the class and what I could improve on in class. They referred to other subjects and how well I taught it. I feel very disappointed.

I expected them to say that they enjoyed art lessons and that they learned so much in art. Shulman (1987) states, "The teaching of artistic concepts to students is shaped by the teacher's understandings and interpretations of art content, art teaching, and general classroom procedures. "This quote by Shulman makes so much sense to me now".

I need to read up more on Shulman, Turner- Bisset and others. I would like to refer to class notes on the seven roles of the teacher. The two roles that have the most significance to me at this stage are: Scholar, researcher and lifelong learner as well as Learning Area Specialist. I feel I need to grow in these two roles so that I could make a difference in my teaching. I need to fulfill the "spiritual calling of teaching" as referred to by Parker Palmer.

I want to show my learners examples of my own artwork or finished pieces. I want my learners to work with clay, build 3D models, paint and use many different techniques when engaging in art activities. My art lessons were providing students with opportunities for expressions not readily available in other subjects. My learners were completing worksheets related to art techniques and skills and because these work sheets had to be moderated I ensured the students wrote neat and legibly and their spelling was correct. My tests were easy because I wanted to give the impression that I was a good arts and culture teacher.

The only have artwork I have to show is the work I did during my B Ed Honours course. I was very disappointed when one of my art pieces got lost. One of the art students had misplaced it. It was a still life composition. We had to use tones of warm and cool colours and show overlapping in the artwork. I spent hours on it, and tried very hard to meet the criteria for the assessment.

I felt so proud of what I had achieved, although my artwork was nothing in comparison to the work done by the other students in my class. My lecturer always said, "Do not compare yourself to others." I have not mastered that yet. I compare myself to others all the time.

It is 12:40 p.m. on a Tuesday afternoon. A number of grade seven students enter the classroom. They are noisy and continue to talk as they take up their seats. I find it extremely difficult to control them. They keep quiet after I shout at the top of my voice. I find that many of the students do not have their books or any art resources to work with. They do not even have a decent pencil to work with. I feel despondent. I pick up some eager and enthusiastic faces ready to do some art, and this gives me some courage to carry on with the art lesson. I have not written down my art lesson and am not sure where to start. The noise starts all over as I rush out of the class to ask my colleague for A4 paper.

Autobiography: 2

When I return, I find some students dancing and singing. They cannot understand why I am so angry because according to them they are busy with arts and culture. I remind them that I do not do music or dance with them; instead, visual art and drama. They still cannot understand why I am so angry. By this time twenty minutes had passed of the first period, with only ten minutes left. I recap on the previous lesson on art elements, where we discussed colour and did an activity.

Today's lesson is on tone. The learners are asked to draw any picture and explore with tone using a pencil. Some learners start immediately while other learners are hesitant. I soon discover that the hesitant learners did not know what to draw and need more guidance from me. I allow them to trace a picture and add tone afterward. As the learners continue to draw, some tracing from books and others drawing from memory, I realise that my problem would have been solved if I had been better prepared and had examples of tonal work to show my learners. Again I feel disappointed. I have failed my students. I do not have the content knowledge as well as the general pedagogical knowledge Shulman speaks about. How should I tackle this problem?

The bell rings and the learners leave my classroom. One learner asks, "Must we complete it for homework?" I answer, "Yes." At the end of this lesson I felt that if I structured my lessons more, the more successful the learners would be and the better I would feel. A few learners bring in their books the next day.

8 October 2013

I will be attending a creative arts toolkit workshop later in October 2013. This workshop will focus on the toolkit that was sent to creative arts teachers in 2012 just after the CAPS training we had. This kit contains CDs, books and posters about teaching creative arts. I am looking forward to this workshop because I know that it will strengthen my understanding of art teaching. As my understanding of art teaching increases through training, my approach to my art lessons both in teaching and facilitating will improve. After the sessions, the creative arts teachers have to give feedback to other creative art teachers at school, as well as creative arts curriculum advisers. Follow- up training sessions will also be arranged by the department of education. I feel this is a much needed session for creative arts teachers.

20 October 2013

I applied for a bursary in June this year, but did not receive any correspondence from the bursary fund yet. This makes me think that my application was unsuccessful. Although I had high hopes, I have to accept the situation as it is.

During the first term of this year, I applied for an acting deputy post at our school. I was not successful and felt that I had been treated unfairly. I called for a meeting with the school management team and expressed my dissatisfaction. I felt that I was qualified enough and deserved a chance to prove myself. The school management team listened to my grievance, but could not do anything about the situation.

At the beginning of the second term, I was approached to act in the same post that I had been unsuccessful with, because the person that had been nominated was appointed in a post at the Metropole East Education District, in an advisory capacity. I refused the offer, and made it very clear that I would not be regarded as being second best. If I was not good enough in the first place, I would not be good enough at all. My colleagues did not agree with my decision. I was prepared to face the consequences of my actions.

I was short-listed at a high school and was invited for an interview. I felt very confident after the interview and shared this with my supervisor and some of my colleagues at school. My family was very proud and expressed their excitement.

I do believe that I applied for these posts because I felt I had the qualifications and the experience needed to fill the post. I recall very vividly reading up the descriptors of all the posts I applied for and including them in my letters of application. This skill I acquired through doing research. When you have to find articles that are significant to your study, you begin to read with purpose.

I also applied for the post of an acting departmental head at our school. I was successful and will be acting for the first term of 2014. After each interview, I feel a bit more confident. I feel the growth both inward and outward. I do want to thank my supervisor who is at my side every mile of the way, completing one testimonial after the other. I would just let her know that I needed a reference and she would draft it for me.

It is twenty-past eight, Sunday morning 15th September 2013. I find it very strange for somebody to be knocking at my door, and asking to use my toilet. The person is a young man, neatly dressed and a very good friend of my son's. After using the toilet, he asks me the following, "Is Kent¹² home?" I answer, "No, he went to church already." The young man leaves my home.

I had been working on my proposal the previous evening, because it needed to be submitted the very next day. I painstakingly made the necessary changes to my proposal after a very intense proposal workshop we had. I felt proud of what I had achieved, with the help of my supervisor. I leave for church. On my way to church, this incident bothers me because this boy has a very bad reputation in the community. He burgles people's homes that he is familiar with. He has a drug addiction, but he was so freshly shaven and neatly dressed, that I assumed he had really changed his life.

My assumption was wrong. He had burgled our home while we were at church. He stole many valuable goods, including my laptop, flash drives and external hard drive. What was I to do? Early the following morning I contacted the university and explained my situation. The professor in charge of the research faculty graciously extended the date by two days. How was I to complete nine months' work in two

¹² Not his real name

days? How was I to complete Annual National Assessment reports, mark scripts, prepare schedules and reports, redo an entire proposal and still attend a talk at Lion Corner. By the end of that week I am exhausted, but I have the need to attend the talk at Lion Corner (a restaurant in Lower Observatory), because the talks are insightful, relevant and topical. That night the talk was about making a difference, as a teacher. It came as a shock, when the organiser, my supervisor, shared my story with the crowd and added that she would like to honour me for achieving what I had. This would not have come about if she had not opened her heart and made a difference in my life. I am eternally thankful to her.

My supervisor allowed me to use her office as long as I wanted to. I worked in the art building for three days. I completed my proposal by piecing together emails I had sent to her. While working in the art building long after everyone had gone, incidents flashed through my mind. I relived those moments when I sat in lectures and did practical work. I relived moments when I felt so unsure of what I was doing, but then, that gentle tone, "Marlize, pin up your work, and look at it from a distance. Then you will know what to do." This really helped me. The cherry on the cake, was the night I was locked in the art building, and had to force the main door open. By forcing the door open, I activated the alarm and the security guard came to my rescue. Luckily, he knew I was a student at the university.

The research council conditionally accepted my proposal, for which I am indeed thankful. I needed to make a few minor changes, but I feel that I received a good report under the circumstances, and so does my supervisor. I felt that my success in completing my proposal was the knowledge I had gained through research. This new knowledge, and knowing what I wanted to research, made my task so much easier.

I was asked to coordinate the Integrated Quality Management System at school. This entails observing lessons and giving advice to colleagues regarding all domains of teaching. From general class administration to extra and co-curricular activities, as well as advice on professional and personal development. It was brought to my attention that many of the younger teachers on the staff really appreciate my inspiring talks with them, urging them to better their qualifications and to continue growing professionally. I must admit that the advice I give is accepted and carried out. This humbles me.

During the second term of this year, I had a student teacher from South America. This vibrant young woman crept into the hearts of all my learners. Her specialist field was mathematics, but she also helped with a few visual art lessons. She really enjoyed the painting lessons. She was fascinated when I told her that I was still studying part-time. I learned a lot from her. She was particularly caring, and made each child feel special. She would reward the learners with sweets that she brought all the way from South America. The learners really appreciated this.

21 October 2013

It is Monday morning, I drag myself out of bed to prepare lunch for my husband and daughter. As I look through the kitchen window, I see the most beautiful bird perched on the vibracrete wall. Its feathers are the most varying shades of blue. Before I could have a closer look, it flies away. I wanted to look at this bird through the eyes of an art teacher, exploring tone, colour, shape and line. My world has become more meaningful since my understanding of art teaching and learning deepened I remember an art lesson, during my Honours course. We had to draw an Egyptian scene. We looked at books and video clips of Egyptians. We paid particular attention to the biblical story of Moses in the bulrushes. I remember the outcome of that particular lesson was the use of repetition. We used pastels, exploring colour, shape and texture. The lecturer prepared us very well, so that when we had to draw the scene, I found it easy, because I understood what I had to do. This was how I wanted my lessons to be, intentional and purposeful.

(Autobiography: 9)

I am looking forward to the Teacher Talk on Thursday **24th October 2013**. The speaker for the evening is Joyce, an outstanding presence in the art education world. I am looking forward to speaking to her personally.

Today, one of my colleagues collapsed at school and was taken home. We heard that she had spent the weekend in hospital with hypertension and a heart condition. She came to school although she was not well. She wanted to hand in her assessment tasks. This incident made me think long and hard about my attitude towards my work. I am as dedicated as my fellow colleague? I can honestly say that I am

committed, but not at the expense of my health. I would have made an alternate arrangement beforehand. I do not judge her, but somehow I understand why she came to school today. She is a governing body educator and loses a day's salary, should she stay absent. I pray that she recuperates fully before she comes back to school.

Katy and I took part in an art competition arranged by the Department of Communication. We designed a poster for the official 2010 Fifa World Cup. We presented two posters and won third prize. This was an overwhelming experience.

In September 2013 Katy's house burnt down, due to an electrical fault. The smell of smoke hovered in the air for days. I helped her salvage valuable documents from the debris. She discovered that the photos and certificates we received in the competition were destroyed in the blaze. This did not really matter, because I would always remember this success, and carry it as a moment when I had evidence of true development and professional growth.

23 October 2013

During a staff meeting, my principal asked me to take charge of the assembly for the week. I was surprised at my reaction to this request. I agreed without any hesitation. I felt so proud of myself. This is a major stride in my personal growth. I would never have agreed to such a request, a few years ago. I always wondered what others thought about me. I always thought that I would never meet their expectations. Today, I realise it is not about others. It is about me and my commitment to my calling. I realise that I play such an important role in the lives of young children, and that every child matters. This awareness is deepened by attending teacher talks, conferences and many other occasions where I am able to listen to academics deliver their work.

On the 30th August 2013, I attended a presentation by doctoral students who had completed their thesis and graduated in April, this year. I was amazed at the knowledge, and the confidence that radiated from them. I longed to be able to do presentations with such confidence. This really inspired me as something that I would want to achieve some day. I compare myself to these wonderful people, and feel so small and insignificant, yet I feel I want to emulate them. I want to be smart, eloquent

and knowledgeable. I know, that if I continue on this journey of growth and development, I will achieve my goal, some day. I am eternally grateful and honoured to have a supervisor who constantly reminds me of the 'learning' that happens while you are growing. "It is about the learning that impacts your approach to your task," she says. Husserl writes, "We are what we learn." This is a question I ask myself. What have I learned? What have I become through this process of learning? I cannot answer these questions now, because I am still in the process of learning and growing into the person I would want to become. Husserl also writes "Experience is knowledge." My understanding of this is that without experience there can be no knowledge. An experience can take on any form. It could be a teaching or learning experience in the classroom, or outside the classroom. It also means that any experience can be a teachable moment or acquisition of new knowledge.

I am learning many things on this journey. It is a journey of exploration and discovery. Sometimes I feel despondent, and then there are times when I feel elated. I admit that I feel more elated than despondent. I think this is a good thing. I feel very sad when my supervisor reprimands me, and I have to change things. It is not about having to change; it is about disappointing her. I have learned that change does not necessarily mean failure. It is an opportunity to clarify. This understanding has really helped me with many challenges, especially in the art class. Because I was not trained, I often have to learn by trial and error. The changes that happen in the art class, are changes in planning and teaching. I also have to change my discipline strategy all the time.

A range of topics were covered. One of the doctoral students, Oliver Koster¹³, said something very significant. He said, "To live, is living backwards, a painful state is to live in the future." This made absolutely no sense to me at first. As I reflected on this statement, it made sense. When we live backwards or relive, experiences, it makes more sense than when the experience actually takes place.

I was totally captivated with two theses that were very significant to my study. The core of this study was learning in, through and with art. The focus was, meaningful art, not as much quality art. I felt I could jump right out of my skin when I heard this

¹³ Not his real name

because I always thought that every art piece should be a masterpiece. I now know that if the artwork has meaning, it has greater value. I also know now that every child is able to make beautiful art if guided properly. I could not guide my students in the past, because I had no experience of art. I have learned so much during my under and postgraduate studies. This experience played vital role in the way I started planning and teaching my lessons. I integrated my art lessons across the curriculum. I would never have gained this knowledge if I did not attend these presentations. I felt a sincere gratitude to the university for inviting me to attend this prestigious event. Although I felt small and insignificant on the one hand, I also felt important to be among such profound people. I felt I belonged, because I felt a true sense of humility. This was such a humbling experience. I will never forget how I felt that day.

I love poetry. My supervisor read a poem she had written, describing her doctoral journey. I had total admiration for this outstanding rendition. I was moved as I felt the emotion in the room. There was a hush of silence as we hung on to every word being said. I felt so proud of what she had achieved. Most importantly, is the recognition I get from her, for every meagre sign of growth.

24 October 2013

I feel happy and very pleased because the assembly went off very well. The learners sat quietly and listened attentively to the Christmas story. Even the older ones listened. One could *hear a pin drop* as I spoke. As I stood in front of the whole school, it felt as if I had an albatross flying around in my stomach. It was definitely not butterflies. As the narration of the story unfolded, I felt calmer and relaxed. I immersed myself completely. I really felt a rapport with the audience. My learners who participated in the story outdid themselves.

My colleagues commented on the décor and props. Some of the newer colleagues could not believe that it was my debut performance. They commended me on the confident way in which I told the story, and on the creativity of the nativity scene and the colour scheme. I remember what my art lecturer always said. Less is more. They said that the message brought about a powerful awareness of Jesus's birth. They were put into the mood for cooking, baking and shopping and "*decking the halls with holly.*" That was the purpose of the story. I had achieved my goal. As I write, I hear

the laughter of children in the playground. I hear them repeating the lines that I used in my story. I laugh quietly. TODAY IS VERY SPECIAL FOR ME!!!!!!

I feel an inner fulfilment and a true satisfaction. I know that I will only grow from strength to strength if I continue to step forward and accept challenges. If this is how it makes me feel, I need to continue and accept the many challenges, still to come my way. This is a wonderful feeling. I am going to ask the learners draw the parts of the story that they liked most. They will have to combine all the art elements learned during the year. I will focus on meaningful art and not so much on perfection. I will try to encourage more learners to make art, so that they are able to make a connection with their world, and live meaningful lives through the making of art. I recall the feeling when my lecturer told me that my last piece of artwork was the best piece I had ever made. I had gained so much confidence, and was no longer dependent on others to help me decide what to do. I could decide for myself, and that mattered. I was beginning to make a connection with my world, and this is what I want my learners to experience. My world feels so much richer and fuller. This is an amazing feeling to have.

I decide to wear a very colourful blouse, to complement the story and the setting of the assembly. As I prepared myself I recalled how I admired the doctoral students who presented their theses. They were all so well-groomed. "If you look good, you feel good and you do good." I hear the confident voice of the grade nine grade head of The Settlers High School. He has an excellent rapport with his learners. The Settlers High School learners are known to always be neatly-dressed and well-behaved. "If you look good, you do good." I looked good, felt good and did well. This worked for me today.

25 October 2013

I enter the Lion Corner restaurant, there is a buzz of excitement. Everybody has so much to say. I am amazed by the ambience of the room. An unfamiliar face greets me with such a warm smile, as if we have met before. She hugs and holds me for a while. This moment is invaluable. I am definitely in the right place, at the right time. I feel a sense

of belonging and deep gratitude. Little did I know that she was the keynote speaker for the evening.

A woman after my heart. I sit captivated as she tells her story. She shares no tips on teaching, but she gives me more than I could bargain for. 'Never underestimate the value of your teaching.' 'Trust your intuitive responses.' These are such profound words spoken by such a unique person. I have never met her, but as she introduces herself to me, I feel an inner connection with her. To me, she is vitality personified. The rich, descriptive accounts of her life, tells of caring, sharing and trust. She trusts her learners, and they could trust her. She shares things that money cannot buy. She shares herself, she shares her time, she shares her personal space. She not only taught art in a phenomenal way, but taught her students life's lessons. She must have influenced their lives in a big way.

Autobiography: 10

“We teachers, are the bridges allowing our learners to cross. Once they are over, we crumble with song, and watch them build bridges for others.” These words penetrate my soul, because I experienced this personally.

Roman¹⁴ is an immigrant from Zimbabwe. His mother tongue is Tshona. He could barely read or write English when he arrived at our school this year. He could speak English minimally. I spent hours teaching him the basics of literacy, going right back to sounds and sound combinations taught in grade one. It seemed like a futile effort until he asked me if he could read something from a book. I used this opportunity to do my final assessment in English. He stands at my table, smiles and starts reading from one of the class readers. He reads and occasionally glances at me, observing my reaction. I am amazed. It is the confidence with which he reads that touches me deeply. His pronunciation is not perfect, nor is he as fluent as he should be, but it is the confidence that touches me deeply. I get a lump in my throat as he walks back to his seat. “We definitely do build bridges for our learners to cross, and crumble in song when they reach the other side.”

¹⁴ Not his real name

I was privileged to speak to Joyce for a moment just before I left. I shared that I feel I have lost out so much, by not being able to touch children's lives through meaningful art. She says, "It's not too late." I share the same sentiment with my supervisor. She says, "You are a teacher, and that matters."

As I drive home, I think long and hard about my journey thus far. It has been a remarkable one. People, time, accounts and emotions are the key elements, and this adds so much meaning and depth to my personal and professional journey. I am indeed grateful for the many people who influenced my life in such a phenomenal way.

31 October 2013

Today, I realise that my journey of professional growth has no destination. There will always be opportunities for me to develop. I will have to keep in touch with the people who have already influenced my life thus far, so that I can grow stronger and stronger, drawing from their wealth of experience and knowledge. Today I know the power of knowledge and experience. I would want these elements, which have grounded my perception of teaching, to be my guardian angels, guiding me on my unending journey of new challenges and opportunities.

As I reflect on my life, I realise that nothing changes, if nothing changes. I had to change so many things in my life. It all started with an attitude of change. I mentioned earlier on in my story that change does not mean failure. It means clarity and I would want to add another powerful word, growth. Growth from within and without.

9 November 2013

There is a buzz of activity at school. It's pre-progression, prestige evening, choir practices, exams, fundraising events, budget meetings and many more. The year is drawing to a close and there is still *SO MUCH* to do. The learners are not as focused as I would want them to be. They wrote History yesterday, but it was evident that they did not prepare themselves for the exams. I gave them a breakdown of the work, and even went through it with them.

I feel sad and disappointed, but I have something that will cheer me up today. I will be attending an art exhibition. I read something so powerful in the advertisement for this exhibition, it reads as follows:

When you discover the artist within you, you discover that part of your being that makes you most human. When you combine that with excellent teaching, you can change the world.

I have found that art TEACHER within me, not a profound one, but an art teacher who is able to bring forth the potential in learners, and guiding them, so that they are also able to discover the part of their being that makes them most human. When I watch my learners at work, doing art activities, I am in awe of the manner with which they do their work, with intent and purpose. This makes me want to break out in song.

My grade four learners are completing their landscape activity for final assessment. They have to use their own material because the school does not have money to purchase resources. What fascinates most, is the fact that they are so excited about this. I am going to display their work for all to see. Some learners feel that they cannot draw, and that others would laugh at their artwork. I had to reassure them, that no one has the right to judge or ridicule them. In my class, they have the freedom to be. This is how my lecturer made me feel in my art class. I felt free to be me. Insecure and reluctant, until I was on the other side of the bridge, a bit stronger and much more confident as before. She was not impatient with me when I took ages to start drawing. She did reprimand me when I copied someone else's work. Today I understand why she did this. I had to discover the artist within me, and not someone else. Only then would I be discovering the real me. This makes perfect sense today.

I have moderated some of my children's work already and put it up in my class. When others walk in, they stop and look at it. It's not Picasso or Van Gogh, it is the work of young artists in the process of discovering themselves. When I look at their work, combined with my deepened knowledge of art teaching, I see much more than before. It is as if I knew what my learners were thinking when they did their paintings. After entering their marks, I call the learners and ask them to talk about their work. They have to imagine that our classroom is an art gallery, and that I am a visitor wanting to know what inspired them. Some learners find it very easy to tell me, while others

struggle a bit. I have discovered that the learners who have a problem expressing themselves verbally, have more detail in their drawings, than the learner who is verbally stronger. This is an amazing discovery. These learners use the art activities to bring out their deepest emotion. I know, I have to continue to be the bridge for them to cross.

As I look at their work from a distance, I see areas that need some attention. In most of their work, the use of the brush needs attention. Neatening the edges and varying the brush strokes, more overlapping, exploring with colour and texture. Again, this is what my lecturer told me, when she looked at my work. My own practice has richly benefited from my research and professional development, and my ability to translate that research and growth into practical teaching and learning has grown tremendously.

Autobiography: 8

I am indeed thankful for that very first step. I have travelled so far already. What an adrenaline-charged journey of discovery!!!!

3:32 pm 9 November 2013

I fetch a friend to help my daughter with English revision. He teaches at a high school in the area where I teach. He will be submitting his master thesis on educational psychology in February 2014. What I admire and appreciate about him is his passion for education. He teaches in a sub-economic area, and often has to raise funds himself if he wants his students to participate in any competition or festival. Drama was his major subject during his undergraduate studies. We share a passion for the arts. He has this philosophy, that every child matters, and that it is the teacher's duty to develop each child in totality. Vibrant, youthful and passionate best describe his attitude towards life. He is quite a few years my junior, but I have learnt so much from him. Life has often offered him lemons, but he was able to make lemonade. In other words, he remains positive and thankful. For this, he is eternally grateful. When he explained this figurative expression to me, it made sense. He was mugged and involved in an accident in which his car was written off. He was robbed as he left a clothing shop after spending quite a large sum of money on new clothes. When he told me about it, he added, "I was protected by God's grace, and that is what matters

to me most, things could have been worse.” He teaches English as well, and loves using figurative expressions. Another of his favourites, “Learn to dance in the rain. Don’t wait for the storm to pass.” As I reflect on a lifetime of teaching, I recall moments when I, too made lemonade and danced in the rain. This reaction to my circumstances did not come automatically. I stumbled, and fell, on my journey, but each time I stood up, I was a little stronger than before. I thank ¹⁵Andrew, for being such an inspiration to me, together with all the angels God put on my journey of discovery.

It has been a few hours since I left the Mowbray Art Centre, but I still feel the ambience of the room in the fibre of my being. The room was filled with students, lecturers, family and friends. I felt honoured to be part of this gathering. Stephen¹⁶, the guest speaker, raised something. He said that, displaying artwork, is like laying your soul bare. My interpretation of this is, that you are willing to uproot your fears, hopes, challenges and dreams and display them for all to see. You are willing to share your deepest emotions through the stroke of a paint brush, or the line of a pencil. Each art activity has intent and purpose. (Autobiography: 11)

Through art, people also display their interpretation and meaning of their world. I thought about this, as I drove home. Once again, I have this indescribable feeling, each time I leave the art building. This is where I have had many life changing experiences in the past.

I admired the artwork. My artwork had once been displayed for all to see. I knew how the students felt. I was proud of what I had achieved that year during the Honours course. I admired my supervisor, for her appreciation of the students investing in education. They gave of themselves and their time, to learn and grow. One of the students shared that, it was in art classes, that he learned the most. This really inspired me. I would want my learners to learn the most in my art class.

¹⁵ Not his real name

¹⁶ Not his real name

I was reminded of my identity as a teacher. Who am I? Why am I? What part of me do I along bring to each learning experience? With what emotion do I teach? I am once again thankful, for this awareness.

The organiser arranged for some scrumptious eats under a shady tree at the entrance of the art building. I watched people interact with each other, enjoying each other's company. As I left the gathering, I saw an elderly lady in a wheelchair. I got a lump in my throat. She had come to experience the beauty of art, despite her disability. How noble.

May 2014

The report of the subject advisor, really made me feel positive about myself and boosted my self- esteem. One of the members of the governing body asked me to write a storyline for our concert.

2 December 2014

The day has arrived to do my PowerPoint presentation at the ESRRC. I need to find the venue at The University of the Western Cape, so arriving early becomes top priority. I am extremely nervous and disappointed in myself because my supervisor did not have an opportunity to scrutinize my slides. She received the presentation too late and did not have time to read through them because of prior commitments. This I fully understood and I was prepared to carry the consequences of procrastinating. I enter the venue and I am immediately overwhelmed by the buzz. The students are having serious last minute discussions and setting up for their presentations. I see no familiar faces and instinctively isolate myself.

After the first presentation a feeling of inadequacy outweighs my preparedness. The presenters are able to answer questions confidently. They are focused and the knowledge they have about their research amazes me. My palms become sweaty and I struggle to stay focused. It is my turn to present and I apprehensively walk to the podium. I introduce myself and start by sharing my topic and continue by explaining the significance and purpose of my study. I give an overview of the literature review and my methodology which is a RTA (Reflective Topical Autobiography) which is deeply reflective and contemplative and compare it to traditional research for clarity. As the presentation continues I become calmer and

feel a deep emotional connection with my supervisor. She gave me the confidence and believed in me and the work I was doing. At the time of the presentation I was documenting my autobiography which was incidents from my professional life which impacted on my professional and personal growth. So my data at that stage was not conclusive. I spoke about the ethics, validity and reliability of my study. This was the last slide. My preparation paid off and I took up my seat feeling satisfied and relieved. Fortunately, not many questions were asked. I do recall keeping my eyes fixed on my slides and not making eye contact with the audience. I feared the expressions I might find that would be a distraction causing me to lose focus. I instinctively knew I needed to work harder at refining my work. This was a significant moment of true self-discovery and professional development.

(Autobiography: 12)

I presented a poster at Research Day. All of this had a very positive impact on my professional development. Although I did not work on my thesis at the time, I gained a understanding of my study while preparing for these events and I can now add my new found knowledge to my work.

2015

I had a conversation with my principal regarding a post at our school for which I applied. I had not been shortlisted and I wanted to know the reason for this. She could not tell me at the time because the process was still underway.

On the very last day of school, my principal announced the name of the person appointed in the post. I was happy for my colleague and wished her well in her new post.

2017

On 25 December 2016 I suffered a stroke and was incapacitated for nine months. This health set-back had major implications. My daughter matriculated and started her tertiary studies at Stellenbosch University... a moment that I had looked forward to my entire life...although I could not be part of the celebration at school... I shared the joy from my hospital bed.

“Mrs Arendse, your daughter was photographed at school today..., holding her matric results. Congratulations”. The nurse on duty that morning shows me the newspaper article and I feel comforted.

I could not continue my studies. I was hospitalised for three months and continued physiotherapy out of hospital. I struggled to gain momentum and also lost interest in my work. This setback was indeed a ‘blessing in disguise’. I had time to reflect on my personal as well as my professional development. I had developed the skills to cope with this major setback in my health. I grew personally and resurfaced much stronger than before.

It was my husband that encouraged me to continue. His gentle persuasion and persistence resulted in submission of my thesis in 2020. Although my studies took much longer than I had initially anticipated, I am extremely thankful that I could complete it. I believe my study will be a source of inspiration to many.