

**How do I use my living and lived experience
to influence creative economic independence in others?**

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Declaration

I Yvonne (Bonnie) Kaplan, declare that this research project for the Degree of Masters of Technology Fashion, has not been submitted previously for a degree at the Durban University of Technology, or any other Institution or University, and that it is my own work in execution, and all the material contained herein is acknowledged.

Signed

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Supervisor: Mrs F. Kadwa

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Date

Co-Supervisor: Professor J Conolly

Signed

Date

Dedication

This work is dedicated to
My two children Sara and Joel
and my brother Larry

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my children first. Sara and Joel, you have accepted so graciously the times I have neglected you because my focus has been on my study. Thank you for your encouragement and patience. The only times you have shown impatience is when you told me to get back to work if I lost focus.

Joan Conolly, you supported me with your capacity for enormous knowing, strength and wisdom. That knowing is about self-study being a very painful journey. You saw me through some of the darkest times over these four years until I found a new and better me at the end.

My supervisor, Farida Kadwa, thank you for your dedication, time, encouragement and belief in my study, it has been a wonderful experience being supervised by you.

Thank you to the librarians at the DUT who have helped me with much more than just sourcing some of my references. Sara Bibi Mitha and Avenal Finlayson, you have shown interest, patience and caring. Thank you deeply.

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Finally thanks to Mike Maxwell for his discussions and encouragement for me to complete my study. For assisting me with technical applications in my dissertation, thank you.

Abstract

Due to the high levels of unemployment in Durban South Africa, the New Venture Creation (NVC) groups I coached/mentored were seeking to become self-employed, to find social and economic independence. I have observed that many of the people in my NVC groups seemed to lack, self-confidence and self-esteem in the start-up process of their business. These lacunae pose a problem, as they are all necessary if one wants to create a viable, sustainable and profitable business. The reason that I coach these emerging entrepreneurs is to assist in building their self-confidence and self-esteem so that they have the courage to “go for it”.

The problem I have sought to address in this research is: How do I influence emerging entrepreneurs to become sufficiently self-confident to be able to design, establish and sustain their own employment and employment for others? I work on the assumption that most people have the capacity to be self-employed.

I have used autoethnography with action research to describe the interventions that I initiated, report on their implementation, as well as the evolution of new perceptions and understandings that developed as a result. By using my own and the participants visual data with still images and video with visual narrative I demonstrate the evidence of my living theory and self-study to influence creative economic independence in others and reflect critically on what has been done and achieved, and critically assess the way forward.

I verbally explained the ethical issue of obtaining consent to use names and photographs in my study to the participants. My explanation was followed by obtaining written consent from the five key participants and others in the pictorial data.

List of acronyms and common abbreviations

| | |
|-------|---|
| ADD | Art & Design Development |
| BMEP | Basic Business Management and Entrepreneur Programme |
| CTFL | Clothing Textile Footwear and Leather |
| CFE | Centre for Fashion Entrepreneurship |
| DACT | Department of Arts Culture and Tourism |
| DFW | Durban Fashion Week |
| DUT | Durban University of Technology |
| FE | Fashion Entrepreneurs |
| FEP | Fashion Entrepreneur Programme |
| FETA | Furniture Education Training Authority |
| FP&M | Furniture, Pulp and Manufacturing |
| HSRC | Human Sciences Research Council |
| ITU | Industry Training Unit |
| KZNFC | KwaZulu-Natal Fashion Council |
| KZN | KwaZulu-Natal |
| NVC | New Venture Creation |
| SEDA | Small Enterprise Development Agency |
| SETA | South Africa introduced Sector Education Training Authorities |
| SMME | Small Medium Micro Enterprise |
| UKZN | University of KwaZulu-Natal |
| WIL | Work Integrated Learning |

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Chapter 1

I think the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was also about making the private public. I think that only if we attempt this pouring of personal feeling and thinking into the public domain, will the new public become possible. We cannot tell what kind of public it will be, but we do need to release more and more personal detail into our public home to bring about a more real human environment: More real because it is more honest, more trusting, and more expressive (Ndebele 2011)¹.

In my dissertation, I show how a childhood concern of mine was the beginning of a series of my lived experiences (Whitehead 1989, 1998, 2000, 2005a, 2005b) which led to the actions I took to influence creative economic independence in others. I believe that the stories I record in my dissertation make a contribution to the “honest, more real, more trusting and more expressive public” which Ndebele (2011) refers to.

What is the context of my study and dissertation?

Before the first democratic elections in 1994, the clothing and textile industry in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) was isolated from international trade by economic sanctions. This meant that the clothing and textile industry in KZN and the rest of South Africa focused almost exclusively on the domestic market. According to Laljit (2006:5) the formal clothing industry in South Africa was once a “hub of activity”. The clothing industry provided jobs for more than 170 000 employees in KZN (Laljit 2006) (Steenkamp 2005). After South Africa became a democracy in 1994, economic sanctions were lifted, markets were opened to international trade, South Africa joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the country re-joined the global market (Laljit 2006).

As a result of the country joining the global market, the clothing and textile industry were faced with international competition “created by the importation of low cost clothing particularly from Asia” (Steenkamp 2005:16). Many local clothing and textile

¹ Dr. Ndebele was awarded an honorary doctorate at DUT in 2011. This is an extract from the graduation programme.

manufacturers switched to become importers of apparel and closed their manufacturing operations in KZN. As a result, the clothing and textile industry in KZN experienced massive job losses (Steenkamp 2005). Bisseker (2009), in the Financial Mail of 24 April 2009, records that there was a 60% decline due to job losses in clothing and textile industry and warned that from 2009 for the next three years a further 20 000 jobs would be shed in the clothing and textile industry. In 2013 according to Naran (2013) and Regchand and Moolla (2013) more than 14 000 garment and textile manufacturing workers from KZN were expected to lose their jobs. Naran (2013:3) said “local garment manufacturers were unable to compete with cheap imports from countries such as Bangladesh, India, China and Mauritius”.

Currently in 2013, the clothing and textile industry in KZN is divided into the formal and informal sector. The formal sector consists of those companies which are registered with the National Bargaining Council for the Clothing Industry. The informal sector is made up of unregistered and emerging businesses. These businesses are predominantly known as Small Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMME's) (Laljit 2006). Kunene (2008:3) in her doctoral thesis on Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise argues that SMME development forms an important element of the South African government's “active strategy to ensure mobility between the first and second economies”. I concur with Kunene (2008) that SMME's are the life blood, the solution and the way forward for social and economic transformation in South Africa CSI Handbook (10th Edition: 244), estimates that as many as half of all working South Africans are employed by SMME's and they are responsible for up to 80% of all formal jobs created in recent years.

According to Munns (2011:7), there are “presently six to eight million economically active people who are unemployed in South Africa”. Munns (2011:7) describes how each year more than 400 000 people leave schools and universities to join the “ever growing line of men and women who are retrenched or unemployed”. One of the concluding statements by Davies and Thurlow in the Human Sciences Research Council's (HSRC) March report states “unemployment is one of South Africa's most pressing social challenges” (2009:25). Economist Mike Schussler (2012:3) is quoted in the Berea Mail on the 21 September, saying that “South Africa's unemployment rate could be compared to that of the United States during the Great Depression” (approx. 1929-1939). Schussler (2012) is also quoted disputing Stats SA's

unemployment figure of 24.9 %, arguing that the rate is closer to 40%. High unemployment levels in Durban, South Africa, cause many people to seek social and economic independence through self-employment.

Statistics show that there is no better way to provide a broad basis for rapid economic growth than to dramatically increase the number of active entrepreneurs in a society (Pretorius and Van Vuuren 2003 cited in Kunene; Van Vuuren 2007 cited in Kunene; Timmons 1999:4 cited in Kunene; Themba *et al.* 1999:103 cited in Kunene; Watson, Hogarth-Scott and Wilson 1998:218 cited in Kunene; Umsombomvu 2004:iv cited in Kunene 2008).

What was the question I asked which informed my study?

I realised early in 2007 that the work I was doing managing the New Venture Creation (NVC) projects was very important for social and economic transformation of the new democracy in South Africa. I realised that for me to discover if I was truly contributing to social and economic transformation of South Africa, I would need to examine my practice as the project manager and coach for the NVC programmes. I began my study by asking a question which was: How do I use my lived and living experience to influence creative economic independence in others?

What is the aim of my dissertation?

The aim of my study was to improve my role as a coach/mentor to the emerging entrepreneurs in my NVC coaching group and to ensure that they developed all the required skills that inform an entrepreneurial mindset in order to become confident business people who have viable and profitable businesses. In my dissertation, I also aim to provide scholarly insights about the establishment of some small businesses in KZN.

What have I included in my dissertation?

I limited my dissertation to five selected key participants in the KZN region. I created a diagram to represent my reflections, to clarify what I had included in my dissertation.

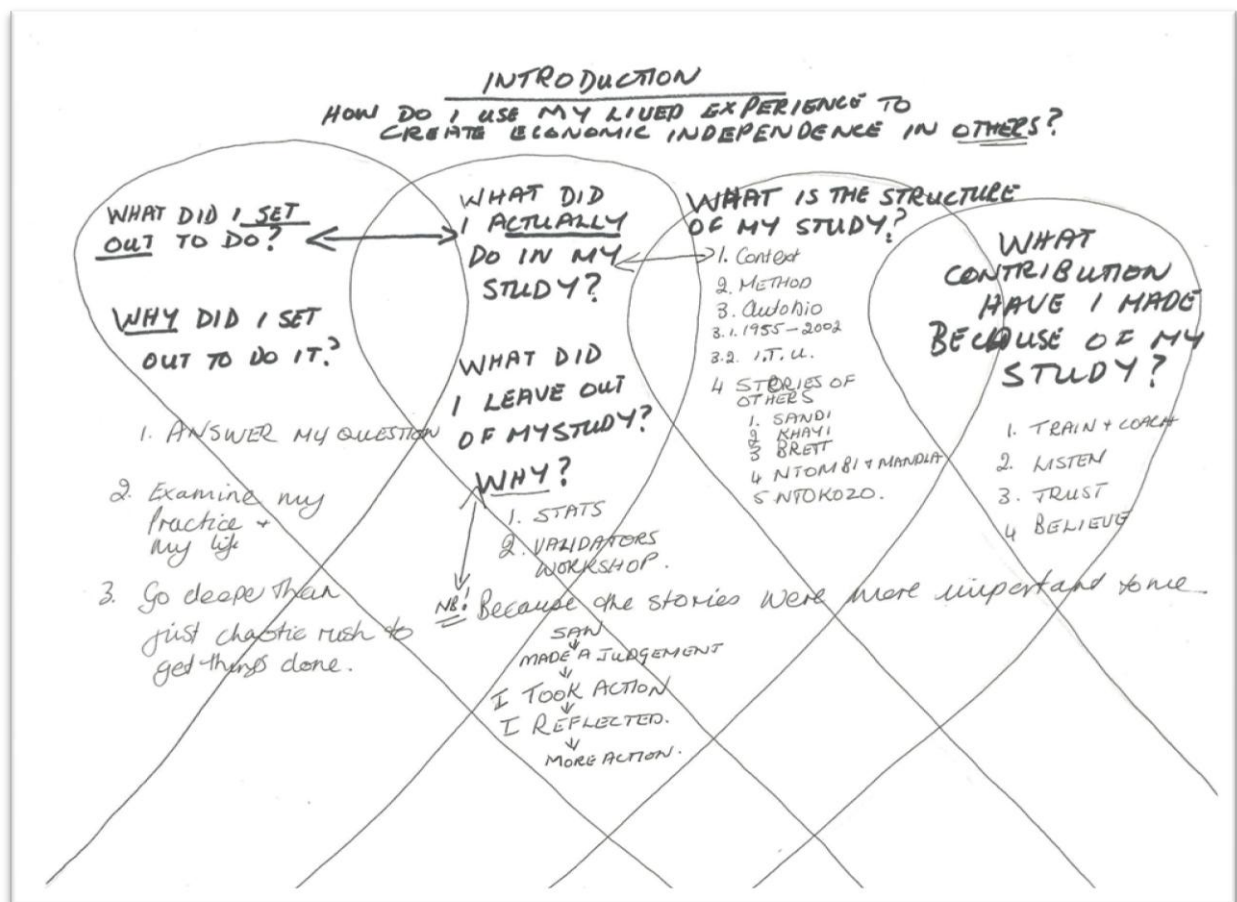


Figure 1: Graphic representation of my reflections

In the above graphic representation, I show how I have used my lived experience to create and influence economic independence in others. I outlined my autobiography, the methodologies I used, my data collection and critical reflection.

What have I deliberately excluded from my dissertation?

I have deliberately limited my dissertation to five stories because any larger number would have made the dissertation too long. I have chosen to exclude a great deal of detail and the stories of the remaining NVC group members.

How have I referred to the relevant literature in my dissertation?

I have deliberately not included separately a chapter on the literature relevant to my study in this dissertation. The reason is because I have used multidisciplinary literature including autoethnography (Hamilton and Pinnegar 2009), self-study (Tidwell, Heston and Fitzgerald 2009), visual methodology (Moletsane *et al.* 2009; Mitchell 2008), action research (McNiff 1995, 2002a, 2002b, 2007) and living theory

methodology (Whitehead 1989, 1998, 2000, 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2008). I found it more appropriate to “integrate my literature references throughout my study” (Timm 2012:6). This position is informed by Bruce who says:

It is usual for students to write a literature review as part of their thesis. This is normally a chapter appearing early in the thesis, but in some styles of thesis, literature may appear throughout the work (1994:144).

How do I present my evidence in my dissertation?

I present the evidence for my dissertation in the form of writing with graphic expressions of my critical reflections (Schon 1983), photographs and videos.

I have been able to experience the importance of “including visual data with text” (Whitehead 2012:10), by “communicating the “meanings of energy-flowing values as explanatory principles in (my) explanations of educational influences in learning” (Whitehead 2012:10).

What is the structure of this dissertation?

I begin my dissertation by describing the context of my study. This is followed by the method that I used to discover how I have used my lived experience (Whitehead 1989, 1998, 2000, 2005a, 2005b, 2012, 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2008, 2009) to create economic independence in others. My dissertation shows the evidence of how critical reflection, intuition, living theory methodology and visual methodology have benefitted me as a practitioner researcher. There are two sections to my autobiography. The first section describes and critically reflects on my life from age ten to 2002. The second section of my autobiography describes my work with emerging entrepreneurs in the NVC programmes at the Durban University of Technology (DUT), and my critical reflections.

I realised that in order for me to illustrate how I had influenced creative economic independence in others, I needed to include the stories of people who were participants of the NVC programmes, which numbers three. I added the story of Brett Robson and a fifth story because as the story of Ntombi Luthuli unfolded, I realised that the story of Ntokozo Ncwane needed to be told, to show how my lived experience to create economic independence in others was growing.

I conclude my dissertation by describing what I have done to discover how I have influenced creative economic independence in others and what I have learned in the process.

Chapter 2

What research approaches, methodologies and methods have I used in this study?

From August 2009 I attended weekly meetings of Mentoring Practitioner Research (MPR) for the Self-Study for Transformative Higher Education Studies and Social Action (SeStuTHESA) group, DUT. I was introduced to Whitehead's (1989, 1998, 2000, 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2008), living theory methodology and McNiff's action research which is acknowledged worldwide as a powerful means of learning (1995, 2002a, 2002b, 2007).

How did critical reflection inform my study?

I have come to realise that my NVC work was initially reflection in action.

When we go about spontaneous, intuitive performance of the actions of everyday life, we show ourselves to be knowledge-able in a special way. Often we cannot say what it is that we know. When we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are inappropriate. Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing (Schon 1983:49).

Initially, I did not have a conscious awareness that I was reflecting critically on my work and study. I realise now that my practice of critical reflection (Schon 1983) before, during and after action has become part of my being. I use my own critical reflection to inform my decisions and actions. I have come to trust my critical reflections and myself because I have a lived experience (Whitehead 1989, 1998, 2000) of the benefits of critical reflection (Schon 1983).

In 2006 when I began my work with NVC, I would not have been able to describe the intuitive process I was going through. I have come to realise that I followed my intuition when I began my work with NVC. I have come to be more conscious of my intuitive process and to trust my gut feel (Gershon 1998).

How did action research inform my study?

I used action research to continually assess my study (McNiff 1995, 2002a, 2002b, 2007; Cahill 2007). The reason why I chose this approach is because through action

research I am able to describe the interventions that I devised for the emerging entrepreneurs, report on their implementation, report on the evolution of new perceptions and understandings that developed as a result, provide evidence of the educational influence of these interventions, reflect critically (Schon 1983, 1995) on what has been completed and achieved, and critically assess the way forward. I have chosen to engage in critical reflective interrogation of my practice to emerging entrepreneurs because I believe that critical analysis and reflection is how ideas develop and practice improves (McNiff 2002a).

How did living theory methodology inform my study?

Living theory methodology assisted me to create my own way to reflect upon my life and my work in a way that I could create a unique dissertation which is based on the study of my life, my work and the “social formations that influence my practice” (Whitehead 2012:9). I have been able to “create my own unique living theory methodology in the course of the enquiry and in generating their (my) explanation of their (my) educational influence” (Whitehead 2012:9).

What did I do to collect the data to discover the evidence of how I have influenced creative economic independence in others and obtain consent from participants?

At the end of 2009, I started collating data by placing all the NVC project proposals, reports, evaluation forms and registers in one file in date order. (A sample of these proposals and reports are found in Appendix 1). Once that was done, I wrote the chronological order of all the NVC projects in a document which I called NVC Historical Reconstruction. I included any other work that I had done relating to social and economic transformation in the NVC Historical Reconstruction. After organising the NVC Historical Reconstruction, I created a file called NVC Pictures where I placed all the photographs that I had taken of the NVC work since its inception on the 16 March 2006. At this stage I did not know that I would choose any participants to write individual stories about as part of my study (see page 18).

In early 2010, I re-read my journal entries that I had written since 2000. I underlined parts of my journal writing that I thought may be significant for my dissertation. I also photographed my paintings and created one file with the images of some of my

paintings and the poetry I had written in 2008 and I included my artists' statement (Appendix 3).

I read many books to assist me through my dark period which I mention in chapter 3. I placed all my journals and the books that I had read in the book shelf next to my neatly filed collection of articles on living theory methodology (Whitehead 1989, 2000, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2012), action research (McNiff 1995, 2002a, 2002b, 2007), autoethnography (Duncan 2004), visual methodology (de Lange *et al.* 2006), marketing (Baptiste *et al.* 2011; Fisher 2011) entrepreneurship (Sullivan 2000; Parente 2003; Antonites *et al.* 2007; Pretorius and Wlodarczyk 2007; Johannisson 2008; Worthington-Smith 2008; Johannisson 2009; Van Vuuren and Groenewald 2007), poverty in South Africa (Meth 2008; May 2010; Ozler 2007) Schussler 2012), and newspaper articles relevant to justice, equality, poverty and unemployment references (Aliber 2003; Dardagan 2011; Naran 2013; Regchand and Moolla 2013).

What happened?

On the surface I was organised. I had collected a great deal of data including reflections and memories on my early childhood into adulthood. Once I had gathered all my data I became very anxious, confused and muddled (Stringer 2007). I was challenged to account for my dynamic lived experience. I could not make any order of all my lived experiences, memories and reflections or actions on my reflections. The overwhelming amount of data collected caused me to feel confused.

As a result of reading I became aware of critical reflection (Schon 1983) living theory methodology and action research (Whitehead 1989, 1998, 2000, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2012; McNiff 1995, 2002a, 2002b, 2007; McNiff and Whitehead 2006; Stringer 2007; Brydon-Miller *et al.* 2003; Wood and Petocz, 2008; Wood 2010). I was optimistic when McNiff said that "action research is becoming increasingly known as an approach that encourages practitioners to be in control of their own lives and contexts" (2002a:8).

I understood that I could take control of my confusion through reflecting on my confusion and acting on my reflections. I became more "self-reflexive", (McNiff 2002a:6). I tried to "improve my practice" (Whitehead 2008:1) as a practitioner

researcher while influencing creative social and economic transformation for emerging entrepreneurs. With hindsight and with a better understanding of critical reflection, I realised that I was “muddling through” (Lindblom 1979:1, 1959), while becoming a practitioner researcher in my NVC process. I identified with the “swampy lowland” (Schon 1995:28) that Schon speaks of:

Shall the practitioner stay on the high hard ground where he can practice rigorously or shall he descend to the swamp where he can engage the most important and challenging problems of greatest human concern? (1983:42).

I realised that my action reflection cycle needed to become more conscious and critical for me to be less confused and more comfortable with making sense of what I thought was chaos. According to Wood:

By following a repetitive cycle of critically observing – analysing – acting to change – and evaluating the researcher is continually learning how to improve their personal and educational experience, changing their mindsets, their behaviour, their views of self and others. This form of self-study is vital for “transformation in times of great social change, such as we are currently experiencing in South African society” (2010:110).

As I was writing about my NVC lived experience, I realised at that point that I had been working intuitively, without consciously labelling what I had been, and doing.

I also found it useful to apply the reflection and action cycle that Hope and Timmel (1995) suggest in a series of graphic representations about each of the action reflection cycles I could see emerging in my work.

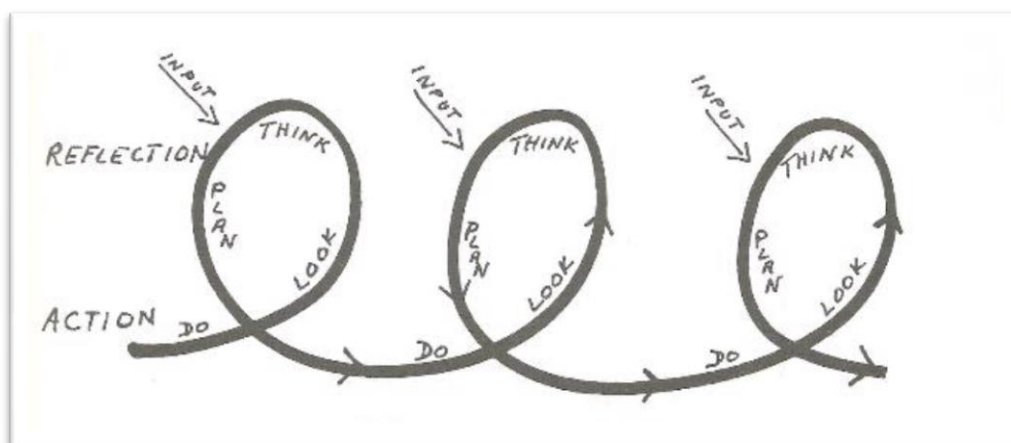


Figure 2: Action reflection cycle (Hope and Timmel 1995:20).

To create these drawings I found that I had to *stand* at my table do many drawings and try to make sense of all my reflections and data. I found the process of drawing and writing on A3 and A2 size paper very useful while I reflected on each chapter or section as I was either preparing to write the chapter or reflecting on the conclusion of the chapter or section. I did many untidy chaotic looking drawings and diagrams with writing all over them including all my thoughts and reflections, before each chapter or section. Once I had all my random, stream of consciousness thoughts on one or more pieces of paper in front of me, a structure would develop in my mind that I felt was more organised and clear. When the structure started to develop, I sat down and drew a graphic representation of my reflections in a more structured way. I then followed the final graphic representation of my reflections to write each particular section for my study, with my thoughts and reflections being more organised and scholarly.

While reflecting on how to gather the data, I created the graphic representation (below) so that I could see a framework of the picture of my data as a whole.

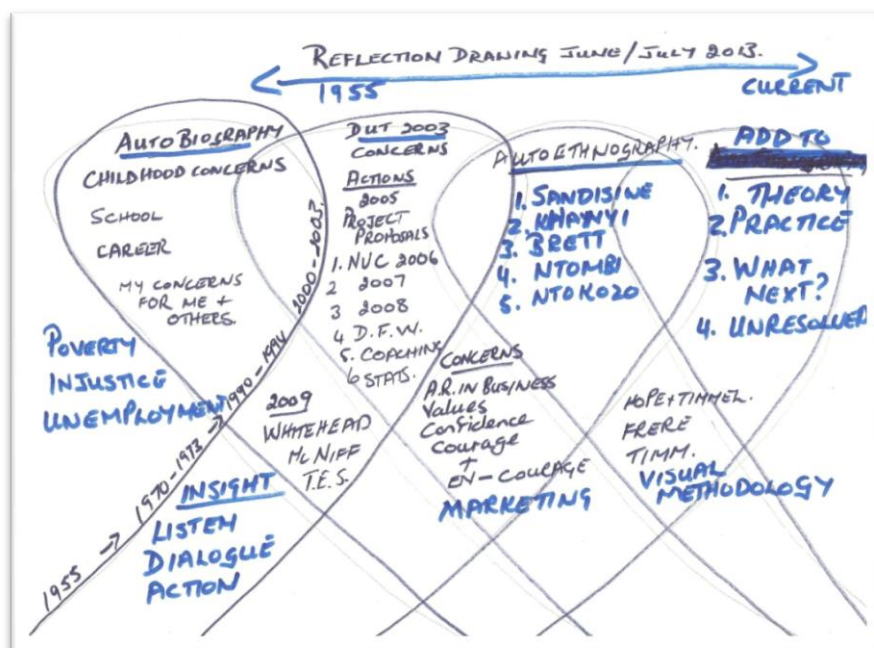


Figure 3: Graphic representation of my historical reconstruction

Once I had collected all my rough drawings and final diagram, I used McNiff and Whitehead's (2006) framework of questions to discover my own questions based on the data I had, and then to answer those questions one by one. I observed that writing about my action research and self-study made sense to me and was easier for the reader to understand. The questions posed by McNiff and Whitehead (2006:29) are:

- What was my concern?
- Why was I concerned?
- What kind of evidence have I produced to show that I was concerned?
- What did I do about it?
- What will I still do about it and how?
- What kind of evidence have I produced to show that what I did was having an educational influence?
- How have I evaluated that influence?
- How did I ensure that any judgement I made was reasonably fair and accurate?
- How did I modify my practice in the light of my evaluations?

The questions I used for my autobiography were:

- What was the context into which I was born?
- What were my concerns about the context in which I lived?
- What were my concerns for myself? Why was I concerned for myself? What evidence do I have for my concerns for myself? What action did I take to address my concerns for myself? What happened?
- What were my critical reflections?
- What are my critical reflections about this period in my life?

The questions I used in the context of my work were:

- What were my concerns for others? Why was I concerned for others? What evidence do I have for my concerns for others? What action did I take to address my concerns for others? What happened? What evidence do I have of how I have influenced creative economic independence in others?
- What were my critical reflections on the NVC programmes?
- How did my concerns arising out of my critical reflections on the NVC programmes lead to more actions?
- What were my concerns as a result of my critical reflections on the DFW?
- How did my concerns on the Durban Fashion Week (DFW) lead to more actions?
- How did my concerns on the NVC Management Programme lead to more actions?
- What was my concern about the participants in the coaching workshops? Why was I concerned? What evidence do I have for my concern? What action did I take because of my concern?
- What was my concern about the participants marketing abilities? Why was I concerned? What evidence do I have for my concern? What action did I take because of my concern?
- What are my critical reflections? What remains unresolved?

The questions I used for the stories of my participants were:

- What were my concerns about 'Name'?
- Why was I concerned about 'Name'?

- What was the evidence for my concern about 'Name'?
- What action did I take to address my concern about 'Name'?
- What evidence do I have of my influence in the development of 'Name's' creative economic independence?
- What did I do to collect the data to discover the evidence of how I have influenced 'Name's' creative economic independence?

The questions I used after I had written each story were:

- What can I add to my theory because of 'Name'?
- What can I add to my practice because of 'Name'?
- What evidence do I have of how I have influenced economic independence in 'Name'?
- What are my critical reflections?

What are my critical reflections on my Historical Reconstruction approach?

In January 2013, I revisited Hope and Timmel (1995), first published in 1984, which I was introduced to as a member of a Young Christian Group in the late 1970s to mid-1980s. I read more about reflection and action from Hope and Timmel (1995) who refer to the writing of Paulo Freire. I was struck by the similarities with my present academic research method. After all these years, I realised that this was a fortuitous background preparation for my current work and study. *Training for Transformation* programmes Hope and Timmel (1995), were widely used in the 1980s during the struggle² period in South Africa, mainly with a view to adult education and empowerment. In the 1980s, I was exposed to *Training for Transformation* programmes from my involvement in Church. Hope and Timmel write:

By setting a regular cycle of reflection and action in which a group are constantly celebrating their successes and analysing critically the causes of mistakes and failures, they can become more and more capable of effectively transforming their daily life (1995:21).

In particular I was reminded of the dependence Hope and Timmel (1995) and Mackie and Collins (1980) had on the great adult educationist from Brazil, Paulo Freire who

² The 1980s witnessed a convergence of forces that saw the collapse of the apartheid government. <http://www.sahistory.org.za/topic/liberation-history-timeline-1980-1989>

provided much of the philosophical basis for their action-reflection training for transformation programmes. For Paulo Freire in his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, dialogue education begins with people's real-life experiences according to Hope and Timmel (1995) and Mackie and Collins (1980). It assumes that their situation (family, neighbourhood, work) is the basis of their knowing. Mackie and Collins explain Freire's diverse approach to his work below:

Freire has not built up his theory systematically or rigorously. Rather it has emerged, and continues to take shape, through an intense process of action and reflection. The diversity of his thought is both a strength and a weakness. Distortion is an ever-present danger. The most appropriate solution is to view his work as a whole (1980:118).

McNiff (2002a:6) says that "critical analysis and reflection is how ideas develop and practice improves" . Hamilton and Pinnegar (2009:25). state "reflection has improvement of practice as its goal" The methodology of action research entails "assessment and continuous evaluation and is used widely in mentoring and self assessment" (McNiff 2002a:4). Brydon-Millar *et al.* describes action research as a "work in progress" (2003:11). The action reflection method according to Duncan provided me with "internal decision making which was valid and noteworthy", (2004:3) i.e. I used methods which encouraged me to reflect more efficiently.

I also found Stringer's two major processes which provided the means for me to "distill the data that emerged" (2007:98) from my ongoing process of investigation. In the first process I categorized "units of meaning" (experience/perception) and summarized experiences and perspectives of the participants (Stringer 2007:98). In the second process I selected "key experiences" or "*transformational*" (2007:98) moments. I identified the elements that illuminated the nature of those experiences" for my evidence or data analysis (Stringer 2007:98).

I realised that I needed to account for my lived experiences which I did in my autobiography (Hamilton, Smith and Worthington 2008; Hamilton and Pinnegar 2009). Hamilton and Pinnegar advise that elements of good research commonplaces use of narrative/story "I" (2009:25). I used my autobiography to begin recording the explicit self-study part of my study. I found that I had to write my autobiography to be able to reflect on my life so that I could find out why I do the work I do.

For Freire, the lived experience (Mackie and Collins 1980) of people is always the starting point. I called my narrative “The Thread” because I began to see a common thread weaving itself through my life. I do not include all the writing from “The Thread” in my dissertation but I observed that my writing became more honest and conscious as I wrote my autobiography using critical reflective skills (Schon 1983). Beginning with The Thread was my way of becoming familiar with action research (McNiff 2002a) and living theories (Whitehead 1989, 1998, 2000). Grossman and McDonald (2008) recommend closer attention being paid to self-study for data collection and analysis. I realised that The Thread was connecting all my past lived experiences to my current lived experiences. I realised that The Thread connected my values, beliefs and talents to my work in the NVC projects as McNiff reminded me that:

Action research is an enquiry conducted by the self into the self. You, a practitioner, think about your own life and work, and this involves asking yourself why you do the things that you do, and why you are the way you are (2002a:6).

McNiff tells us that “action research begins with values” (2002a:13). As a self reflective practitioner I needed to “be aware of what drives my life and work, so that I can be clear about what I am doing and why I am doing it” (McNiff 2002a:13). Once I realised the connection, I had to scrutinize what my values beliefs and talents were. I also had to ask myself why I was doing the work in creative social and economic transformation. McNiff says:

You would then turn the data into evidence in terms of whether you felt you were living in the direction of what you hoped to achieve in the first place (2002a:6).

Each source of data in my dissertation is unique. The sources of data begin with a retrospective account using my autobiography. I have discovered while interrogating each area of data that a whole picture has emerged (Yin 2009). I felt that I had to become transparent to myself first as Hamilton and Pinnegar. say: “If our methodology lacks transparency, then the value of the work can be questioned” (2009:23).

While writing The Thread, I realised that writing was not the only medium I could or wanted to use to tell and reflect on my lived experiences. I felt that I needed to create a piece of art which reflected my values, beliefs and talents as gifts to others. I

needed to paint because the action of painting would bring a further awareness of my values beliefs and talents. While I did the paintings, (Appendix 3), I reflected on why I was doing the work to influence creative social and economic transformation. The answer to the question ‘why’ became clear when I realised that I value justice and equality. I value everyone’s right to social and economic independence. I value my talent to inspire people to reach their own potential and greatness.

I believe I am living my life influenced by *ubuntu*³ and as Mandla Luthuli says, Ubuntu is an “action word” (p.c. Mandla Luthuli, 30 May 2013). Whitehead suggests that “in generating our own living educational theory” (Whitehead 2012:18) (I) include *ubuntu* to “improve (my) practice and contribute to the public good” (Whitehead 2012:18, 2004a).

Once I started the process of writing, painting and reflection I felt the need to engage in a critically reflective way with some of the participants of the NVC projects. McNiff recommends that action researchers need to get information from the people they work with in order to “show that your influence was as you wished it to be” (2002a:18). I read articles on autoethnography by (Duncan 2004; Coghlan 2008; Leggo 2008; Afonso and Taylor 2009). Using autoethnography enables “discovery in an organised way by analysing evidence” (Duncan 2004:3). Therefore, I decided to write about and interview some of the people in the NVC programmes with whom I had developed an ongoing relationship.

Using autoethnography enables “discovery in an organised way by analysing evidence” (Duncan 2004:3). Therefore, I decided to write about and interview some of the people in the NVC programmes with whom I had developed an ongoing relationship. I chose five key participants, three participants from the NVC group, one from the Fashion Entrepreneur Programme at UKZN and the fifth participant was incorporated as a result of my reflection processes leading to the inclusion of others in my coaching and mentoring practice. I created a consent form in English and in

³ **Ubuntu** ([/u-buntu/](http://u-buntu/) oo-**BUUN**-too; Zulu/Xhosa pronunciation: [ùbùntú](http://u-buntu/)) is a **Nguni Bantu** term roughly translating to "human kindness"; in **Southern Africa** (**South Africa** and **Zimbabwe**), it has come to be used as a term for a kind of **humanist** philosophy, ethic or ideology. Since the transition to democracy in South Africa with the **Nelson Mandela** presidency in 1994, the term has become more widely known outside of Southern Africa, notably popularized to English language readers by **Desmond Tutu** (1999). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ubuntu_%28philosophy%29

Zulu and asked each participant if they would be willing to participate in my study to read the consent form and sign it. Each participant agreed. Because some of the photographs included others who were indirectly participants I also obtained their permission and written consent in the same manner (Appendix 7). Data from the participants in the photographs has also been used and analysed in the chapters where they appear.

Before I interviewed the participants, I wrote my account of my interaction with each of them. I created individual photographic files in chronological order from the first photograph of each person. As I looked at all the photographs, I realised how valuable it had been to take photographs of the people in the NVC projects. Organising the photographs into individual files triggered my memories of each person as I looked through the many photographs I had taken since 2006. And this process caused me to question the history of my photographic records.

I was given a camera for my 50th birthday in 2005. Sometime in 2006, I recall wanting to capture my working life in the form of photography. I also chose to take the photographs because I intuitively wanted a visual representation of my work (Atkinson and Claxton 2000; Burke and Sadler-Smith 2006; Hodgkinson, Langan-Fox and Sadler-Smith 2008). Hodgkinson, Langan-Fox and Sadler-Smith, say that intuition is “looking, regarding, or knowing from within” (2008:2). My intuitive process was similar to the following description:

Intuition occurs almost instantaneously, is effectively charged but does not have any accompanying verbalisation or conscious awareness (Hodgkinson, Langan-Fox and Sadler-Smith 2008:2).

I was unaware at the time that taking photographs would form an authentic historical reconstruction of my work in how I influenced creative economic independence in others. I have now realised that I was able to use these photographs to inform my critical reflection by visual methodology as a “visual text” de Lange *et al.* (2006:46), to assist me with memory recall to create text, (de Lange *et al.* 2006; Mitchell *et al.* 2008; Mitchell 2008; Mitchell, Weber and Pithouse 2009; Moletsane *et al.* 2009; Whitehead 2005a). I had no idea at the time that I would write, and no idea that writing would begin by writing as a reflective practitioner researcher (Schon 1995).

Once I started writing the photographs became the “narrative behind the visual text” de Lange *et al.* (2006:46). de Lange ask:

Is taking a picture, the act of choosing and selecting a shot in the first place, the narrative behind the visual text? (2006:46).

I think that I have been able to create the “narrative behind the visual text” de Lange *et al.* (2006:46), because of the visual text.

I created individual photographic files for each of the research participants I had identified, viz. Ntombi and Mandla Luthuli, Sandisiwe Dani, Khanyisile Zungu, Brett Robson and Ntokozo Ncwane, because I wanted the photographs and the story to be stored in an organised way. I also wanted to have a reference for future use.

I gazed, observed and reflected on the photographs in order to write about my observations of the person whose photographs I was looking at.

Then I invited Ntombi, Mandla, Sandisiwe, Khanyisile Brett and Ntokozo to participate, individually and in face-to-face conversations, by reflecting on the photographs I had chosen for inclusion in their individual stories (Tidwell, Heston and Fitzgerald 2009; Wang 1999, 2006). Wang’s (2006) visual methodology called ‘photovoice’ enables participants in research to be researchers. I asked each of the research participants to tell me what they thought of the collection I had curated for his or her story. I also asked them to reflect on specific photographs.

Ntombi, Mandla, Sandisiwe, Khanyisile Brett and Ntokozo were elated to see the visual evidence I shared with them of their creative economic achievements. Observing their delighted reactions to the visual progress of their journey towards economic independence made me realise how important keeping visual records was. We shared a “lived” Lister and Wells (2001:76) experience together which is fortunately recorded in the photographs. As Lister and Wells say:

Photographs also work by utilizing many of the visual codes that are employed in the “lived” rather than textual forms of communication (2001:76).

Other questions de Lange *et al.* (2006) ask are:

Is the resulting artefact, the picture, the point (and for the researcher) the data?
Or is it the story that is evoked by the picture, the narrative text that begets the

story? Or is the story evoked years later, a photograph as an artefact 'in history and with a history'? (de Lange *et al.* 2006:46).

For me the resulting picture was “data” (de Lange *et al.* 2006:46) which assisted me to create the narrative text de Lange *et al.* (2006:46). My photographs together with my written text became evidence by:

communicating the meanings of energy-flowing values as explanatory principles of educational influences in learning (Whitehead 2012:10).

Kuhn reinforces my belief that my photographs are evidence when he says:

Photography draws on an ideology of the visible as evidence (1985:27).

The photographs that I took have resulted in “truth and authenticity”, because, “seeing is believing” according to Kuhn (1985:27). The meaning of the visual representation de Lange *et al.* (2006) is significant for me because I have verification of my influence on creative economic independence for others through the photographs. By taking photographs I have evidence (Whitehead 2004a) which has authenticated my work to influence creative economic independence. Kuhn also says:

The photograph is a record, a piece of evidence that something happened at some time, somewhere – in the time and place in front of the camera (1985:1).

I have been able to critically reflect (Schon 1983) while gazing at and “contemplating” (Kuhn and McAllister 2006:1) on the photographs.

The photograph holds this recorded moment in stillness, capturing and offering up for contemplation (Kuhn 1985:1).

I discovered that critical reflection while gazing at the photographs was easier than writing about what I saw, Lister and Wells confirm my difficulty by saying:

It is difficult to spell out the meanings of pictures in verbal or written language (2001:76).

The answers are in the visual, the evidence is in the visual. “Visual imagery being constructed by the mind can be as eloquent as the pages of prose. Pictures transcend language” (p.c. Mike Maxwell 21 June 2013).

My photographs have become very important for me, in my study, because of the concerns I had when I first started the work of influencing economic independence of others in 2006. Taking photographs assisted me to “see things differently” (Mitchell, Weber and Pithouse 2009:119) and more accurately. I realised after I had used the photographs to reflect on, that I had in fact influenced creative economic independence in others, because I saw the evidence of economic independence in the photographs. I had acted on my concerns. In the process my vulnerability changed to improvement and inventiveness. Mitchell, Weber and Pithouse ask: “Do we recognize change when it happens?” (2009:120). By making use of visual methodology in studying my own practice, I have been able to see and discover changes for the better in other people’s lives.

I am thankful for the gift of my camera because the creative visual representation of my work has not only assisted me with memory recall, but the visual representation has allowed me to observe the progression to creative economic independence of the people I wrote about. I was thus able to see the evidence of my influence on others to become creatively economically independent. I may have made incorrect assumptions and perceived my efforts to be a failure, if I had not had the photographs to prompt my telling of success stories of those I have influenced to become economically independent.

My journal 23 June 2013

The words have to go with the pictures. If not, the meaning stays in the mind of the observer.

I interpret my journal entry above to rather mean: The meaning stays in the mind of the researcher and is not transferred to the reader.

By organising the photographs into individual documents, I was able to critically reflect (Schon 1983) on how I had influenced each person’s creative social and economic transformation. My critical reflections (Schon 1983) on each person triggered another response which was curiosity. I wanted to know more about their lives, their lived experiences, their families, communities and their business. The process of engaging with each person was important and energising for me. My interviewing skills improved with each interview experience. I knew that I loved listening to people but I did not know how valuable all the interviews would be to me

and to those I wrote about. I realised how important it was to tell our stories in a critically reflective (Schon 1983) way.

What other forms of communication did I use to record my data and present it as evidence?

I remember that when I realised my photographs were valuable to my study, I wanted to make video recordings as well, but I had to overcome my fear of being unfamiliar with recording a video interview. I also had to overcome my fear of finding appropriate evidence while editing each video.

In October 2011, I started taking video recordings when I participated in the interview Professor Cassim had with Sandisiwe Dani. I video recorded parts of my face-to-face conversations with Sandisiwe in December 2012, and with Ntokozo Ncwane in April and May 2013. I describe how I needed to use Microsoft Movie Maker while I was interviewing Khanyisile Zungu in April and May 2013.

I used social media in the form of BlackBerry Messenger, Whatsapp, SMS and Facebook to communicate with Sandisiwe, Khanyisile, Brett, Ntombi, Mandla and Ntokozo. Other practitioner researchers are also finding new resourceful ways of presenting their practice using multi-sensory forms of communication, such as pictures, graphics, video and other technology (Whitehead 2004a, 2005a). Each of my methods of using multimedia is described in the individual stories.

What were my critical reflections on using multimedia to conduct and record my study in this dissertation?

To create the historical sequence of photographs of each person, I had to teach myself how to use Microsoft Movie Maker and before I started, I was afraid of not having the technical ability to do so. Once I created the movie of Khanyisile, I was delighted at my perseverance and new found ability. I discovered that making use of multimedia to capture data added a practical and useful dimension for me to use in my study.

Conclusion

My use of critical reflection Schon (1983), action research McNiff (2002a), living theory methodology Whitehead (1989) and visual methodology de Lange *et al.* (2006), is evident in the chapters to follow.

Chapter 3

Who am I and where do I come from?

The cultural I is shaped by my cultural context (Hamilton and Pinnegar 2009:25).

What is the context into which I was born?

Apartheid⁴ was seven years old when I was born in 1955. I am a 58 year old South African woman of Anglo-Saxon descent but of Roman Catholic religious persuasion, divorced from a Jewish husband and mother of two Jewish children Sara (23 November 1990) and Joel (4 February 1996). My father Anthony Kaufmann (31 May 1928) became a lawyer in Pretoria in 1948, the same year as the establishment of apartheid. My mother Teresa Kaufmann neé Campbell (6 September 1931) was a housewife. My siblings are Larry (23 May 1954), 16 months older than me and Paul, (11 December 1957), Martin (4 October 1959) and Holton (27 March 1969), who are all younger than me.

I was very strongly influenced by my father who was a humanitarian and a lawyer during the apartheid era in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. His debates and arguments in our home for human rights, equality and justice impacted on my life and the life of my siblings. As far back as I can remember my own thoughts on social and economic injustice began at a very early age. I was concerned about the vast gap between the rich and the poor.

As a child in the early 1960s, I remember a family friend who was a Catholic priest, Father Martin Curran, serving in a township⁵ called Hammanskraal⁶, several miles

4 Apartheid (Afrikaans pronunciation: [əˈpɑːrtɦɛɪt]; from [Afrikaans\[1\]](#) "the state of being apart") was a system of [racial segregation](#) enforced through legislation by the [National Party](#) (NP) governments, who were the ruling party from 1948 to 1994, of [South Africa](#), under which the rights of the majority black inhabitants of South Africa were curtailed and [white supremacy](#) and [Afrikaner minority rule](#) was maintained. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apartheid_in_South_Africa

5 [Township \(South Africa\)](#): In [South Africa](#), under [Apartheid](#), the term township (or location) in everyday usage, came to mean a residential development that confined non-whites (Blacks, "coloureds," and Indians) living near or working in white-only communities. [Soweto](#) ("SOuth-WEstern TOWnships") furnishes a well-known example. However, the term township also has a precise legal meaning, and is used on land titles (in all areas, not only traditionally non-white areas). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Township#South_Africa

6 Hammanskraal is a small town in northern [Gauteng](#), [South Africa](#) which serves a large rural community. It was named after Hamman, a [cattleman](#) who, to protect his livestock from predators, set up a stockade here. The town also serves as a shopping centre for surrounding locations such as kekana gardens, mandela village, Ramotse, Marokolong, Kanana, Temba, Unit d, Majaneng, Bosplaas, Makapanstad, Dilopye, Suurman,

outside Pretoria, the city where I grew up. Our family would visit Father Curran on a Sunday and attend mass in his parish which was legally and unjustly only for black people, under the laws of apartheid.



Photograph 1: Father Martin Curran, left relaxes with my mother Teresa, her brother Dennis Campbell, Father Eddie Dexter and my father Tony bottom right in about 1963

Because I came from a comfortable, privileged home I noticed the difference between me and my black friends I made at Hammanskraal. I noticed the difference in the style of homes in Hammanskraal. My home was large with more than three bedrooms. We had a large garden that was beautifully maintained by a black gardener who mowed the lush green grass, trimmed the many trees we had and kept the flower beds immaculate. The homes in Hammanskraal that I went into had only one room and a kitchen. The floor was concrete with no carpets. There were no gardens or grass outside the homes, only sand and cracked concrete verandahs. The clothing my black friends wore was old and dusty and my clothing was new and freshly ironed by the maid my parents employed to work in our home⁷. I had a deep sense that this difference was not just. I can visualize the dusty sports field we played on, the sports field in my suburb, Hatfield, Pretoria, South Africa, was mowed

Lephengville, Sekampaneng and other nearby villages. Majaneng in Hammanskraal is a rural village with a chief.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hammanskraal>

⁷ I remember her first name was Sarah and she was tall and beautiful and I loved her very much.

green grass. I remember there were few trees in Hammanskraal as opposed to the tree lined, tarred roads in the suburb I lived in. I remember the roads in Hammanskraal were not tarred or maintained, they were rutted and dusty in winter and muddy in the summer rainy season.

I don't remember the names of my black friends, but when we played together in Hammanskraal, even as a small child I noticed that I seemed to have more than my friends. I was too young to really understand what was bothering me. I played with my Hammanskraal friends anyway and remember looking forward to being with them.

I did not realize until January 2013, that playing in Hammanskraal with my black friends would have an impact of how I have lived my life and the work I choose to do. Father Curran left South Africa in the late 1960s because of his anti-apartheid activism. Critical reflection Schon (1983) on this period of my life has made me aware of Father Curran's influence on my life and work.

Between 1970 and 1985 as a young person in Church circles I was a member of the Young Christian Students (YCS). This movement was inspired by Josef Cardijn who according to Gigacz, "considered see-judge-act to be the core component" (2007:2) of his legacy to the Church. Gigacz says that Cardijn described the method as a key means for developing the "interior freedom" (2007:2) that exists in germ in every person as a natural gift but which requires a "long education" (2007:2). Cardijn initiated and developed the method with his founding of the Young Christian Students and Young Christian Workers to assist these sectors of society in making sense of their life experiences – which included their anxieties and fears, their hopes and dreams, their struggles and challenges – and to understand and judge them in the light of faith. Cardijn believed that only this would lead to mature action.

So, I have come from a politically, economically and culturally privileged white South African background.

What were my concerns about the context in which I lived?

I had, and still have, a number of concerns as follows:

1. I was and am concerned about the job losses in the clothing and textile industry as described above and the high rate of unemployment because of job losses.
2. I was, and am concerned, about the poor living standards which were and are, a consequence of job losses and unemployment (Meth 2008) which meant/means that the majority of my fellow South Africans were/are living in conditions that were/are unacceptably difficult. Such difficulties include(d) parents being unable to provide shelter, food, clothing and education for their children because they were/are unemployed⁸.
3. I was, and am, concerned about the high levels of inequality and difference in living conditions and quality of life, mostly falling along racial lines. Gaibie and Davids confirm that the historically-privileged white population still enjoys “dramatically better living conditions than the historically oppressed black African population” (2009:2). I concur with Archbishop Tutu who tells us in the *Business Report* of 21 August 2012 that:

As a country we are failing to build on the foundations of magnanimity, caring, pride and hope embodied in the presidency of our extraordinary Tata Nelson Mandela. We have created a small handful of mega-rich beneficiaries of a black economic empowerment policy while spectacularly failing to narrow the gap in living standards between rich and poor South Africans. Instead we have allowed the gap to widen (2012:14).

Timm explains this state of affairs as I encounter it at the DUT clearly in her doctoral thesis:

The legacy of apartheid in South Africa will have negatively influenced the education, and living conditions of both the teachers and students. The majority of our staff and students come from the Black/African, Indian and Coloured previously classified groups. These race groups suffered then, and still do, from lack of economic empowerment, poorly resourced and underfunded education systems and living conditions with high incidences of crime and violence (2012:153).

⁸ eThekweni Municipality has the largest number of informal settlements in South Africa with a 60% housing backlog and 42% of total population of eThekweni living in informal settlements.
http://www.mile.org.za/Come_Learn/Capacity%20Enhancement/Multimedia%20Library/Peer%20Exchange%20124%20February%202011/Durban%20Housing.pdf

I was, and am concerned, about the self-esteem of the people I encountered in my work at the ITU because of retrenchment and the lack of job opportunities. Timm describes what I have seen:

Their whole beings are no longer whole due to the distresses they experience. The distresses are felt deep down in all their fibre and in the very viscera of their beings. They no longer have a strong sense of self (2012:153).

I am concerned about the emotional wounds caused by apartheid. Archbishop Desmond Tutu says:

We are a deeply wounded people who are custodians of a very special country with people and resources that are second to none (2012:14).

I believe that the shrinking job market in the formal clothing and textile industry, is an incentive for people to become entrepreneurs in the informal sector of the clothing and textile industry, that of small and medium businesses. I became focused on how I could influence creative financial independence of the people I encountered in my work at the ITU. I became focused on contributing to the upliftment and equality in my country.

There is enough for all South Africans to share. (Tutu 2012:14).

All my concerns described above are because I value justice and equality for all. I also have “a passion to see values of freedom, justice, compassion, respect for persons, love and democracy lived as fully as possible” Whitehead (2008:4).

I came to realise that I was in a valuable position of employment to address the inequalities that I saw around me. As Archbishop Tutu says, “I can address injustices that cause a small percentage of our world to consume the vast majority of its resources” (2004:23). My work, I believed, could assist the process of “closing the gap” between the “haves and the have not’s” Gaibie and Davids (2009:2) in our new democracy in South Africa.

Where do I begin my story?

The first question to be asked in my autobiography is this: What is The Thread through my life that led to my actions in 1971 and subsequently? My personal critique includes judgements I make regarding my concerns and the actions I take on my judgements.

My own life's journey has been one of perseverance and determination. The first major hurdle in life was getting through school. From day one I battled to concentrate or read anything for long periods of time. When I reached Standard Eight (today Grade Ten) I imagined that it would be my last year of school. However, during the course of that year I found myself overcoming whatever negative self-image I may have cultivated, and instead growing in a new determination to complete my schooling with a matriculation certificate. Marks were almost irrelevant as long as I stayed true to this quest. I spoke to my English teacher, Miss Solomon, a true mentor and support who generously put things such as a study programme in place for me to complete my schooling successfully.

In Standard Nine (Grade Eleven) I chose what I thought would be the easiest subjects, one of them being Accounting. After two weeks of disastrous test marks, my wonderful teachers arranged for me to be examined by the art teacher, Mrs Groenewald, in order to be accepted into her art class. After making an attempt to draw during a selection test, Mrs Groenewald, accepted me and a new world opened for me in her absolutely glorious art class. With the help and encouragement of my teachers, I obtained a matriculation exemption in 1973 with art as one of my better subjects.

Reflecting back critically Schon (1983) on those years I believe that they represent something of what Gladwell (2008) insists in his book on the story of success: the necessity of having a support system; having opportunity; and working conscientiously within both the opportunity and support system.

After school, my family encouraged me to take up a safe career as a nurse. I had wanted a career in the creative field but went along with my parents' advice, partly because I also did not think that I was good enough to be an artist. I nursed from 1974 to 1989. My desire to work in a creative field was eventually satisfied when I changed my career in 1990 and enrolled at the then Natal Technikon⁹, to do a National Diploma in Fashion Design. I completed my diploma in Fashion Design in 1993. During this period I had my first child, Sarah Megan, in 1990, and was working

⁹ Until 2002: Then in 2002 and 2003 Durban Institute of Technology and since 2004 Durban University of Technology – DUT.

part time as a theatre sister at a local Durban hospital to assist with the household finances.

After completing my diploma in fashion design at the Natal Technikon, 1993, I started my own business with a children's wear clothing range from a room in my home in January 1994.

What were my concerns for myself? Why was I concerned for myself? What evidence do I have for my concerns for myself? What action did I take to address my concerns for myself? What happened?

I was concerned about being economically independent. In 1994 even though I was married and my husband was the breadwinner, I wanted my own independent source of income so that I could contribute financially to our household. I was concerned about my role as a woman in South Africa in 1994. I felt that I wanted to be a business woman and recognised as such. I was aware that women were not being recognised in South Africa as business women and professional people. See the stories of my key participants, Sandisiwe Dani, Khanyisile Zungu, Brett Robson and Ntombi Luthuli who also wanted to be recognised as business women in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.

I had a desire to be part of a growing number of small clothing businesses in Durban. Starting my business was also a lifelong dream to be self-employed. I had become aware of encouragement and opportunities created for small enterprises to emerge as a down-turn of the formal economy was being felt at the same time as competitive pressures on the clothing sector increased with the opening of the global economy to South Africa Fakude, (2001), after the 1994 democratic elections. I also wanted to respond to the national policy to seek ways to increase employment opportunities. I wanted to align myself with the post-apartheid democratic South African government's strategy to develop small business (Republic of South Africa, 1995:2). I felt that I wanted to play my part and make a contribution, however small, to generate employment and perhaps in the process help to stimulate economic development.

I borrowed R500 from my mother to buy three second-hand industrial sewing machines and some fabric to produce children's swimwear. Initially I did all the work myself, designing, making patterns and manufacturing children's wear. My designs

were quite conventional and nothing out of the ordinary. I started selling my garments at flea markets in January 1994. My customers' comments about my children's wear range of clothing influenced and directed the development of my designs and products. Early in 1994, (about April), one of my customers said to me "You need to offer your market something different". I immediately began to explore ways to improve on the clothing range (Wikstrom 1996; Dorrian 2007). I decided to create my own fabrics by painting on white textile and then making the children's wear out of the hand painted fabric. I developed this technique over the next few months. It worked! In no time I had customers knocking on my door to buy my children's wear range. My ability as a textile designer grew dramatically as did my ability to produce striking, colourful and attractive designs on the textile. By the end September 1994, my business was more successful than I could ever have anticipated. By 1996, a number of children's wear boutiques around South Africa started to buy from me and there just seemed to be no end to the demand for my product. So, a comment from one customer in April 1994 became the catalyst for me to produce significantly marketable children's wear in South Africa at the time.



Photograph 2: Bonnie B clothing with me, left and friend Avril Ward

But I still had concerns about my business. I was concerned that I did not have a sufficiently strong business strategy. I realised that my business strategy was weak

in that I was not marketing my products creatively enough. I realised that I had to develop a stronger business strategy. Indeed, this is what Laljit (2006) herself argues when she urges Small SMME in the Clothing Sector to develop stronger business strategies in order play a more vital role in the country's economic growth. I realised that my marketing strategy had to be more creative because during the initial stages of the establishment of my business in 1994. I was concerned that I did not have the money to develop a marketing strategy. I did not plan any budgets and therefore had no money for advertising. I had to find ways to give my business more exposure without spending money (Fisher 2011). I phoned the local newspapers to tell them about my unique range of clothing. They were interested and for a few years I was regularly featured in newspapers and magazines (Appendix 2). In addition, I always wore the clothing I manufactured and dressed my children in my own range of clothing. I also gave clothing to my friend's children for their birthdays. I also entered as many fashion shows as possible for exposure of my brand, including the Durban Designer Collection in 1995, the Durban Gold Cup horse racing event in 1998, and I was the invited designer at the Durban July in 2000 (Appendix 2). Soon my brand "Bonnie B" was well known in Durban. The brand eventually spread beyond Durban when a customer in Jeffrey's Bay, Eastern Cape, South Africa, who had bought my painted fabric, made up children's wear with it and marketed it in Dubai. I used my lived experience to creatively market myself and my product later in my coaching work.

What were my critical reflections?

The design, production, marketing and sales were all going extremely well. I knew that the administration of the business was not doing as well, but I did not want to deal with the finances or administration of my business. I remember hoping that my concerns would just disappear if I ignored them for long enough. I was thinking about other things like creating employment for others.

I was concerned about employing others to assist me with my increasing workload. With my children's wear clothing becoming more popular an opportunity to grow the business presented itself. Finally I believed I could also fulfil my desire to create employment for others. But this called for another business strategy. In September 1994 I had employed a machinist Doreen Joseph (nom de plume). Soon after I took

on a young man named Bongani Khumalo (nom de plume) whom I taught to paint on fabric. Bongani was born in Bergville¹⁰, a rural and rather poor area in KwaZulu-Natal. He completed his matriculation in 1993 and came to find employment in Durban in 1994. Without consciously being aware at the time that I was being a “custodian of a very special country” Tutu (2012:14), I simply felt that I wanted a better future for Bongani. I operated on a principle I hold dearly, namely that there is enough for all South Africans to share.

I recognized in Bongani a leaning towards entrepreneurship. Chrisman and Mc Mullan suggest that it is the “unique attributes” (2000:231) of the entrepreneurs or ventures studied that make them more likely to succeed. I recognized those unique attributes in Bongani and encouraged him to become self-employed. I taught him how to run his own business by sharing my knowledge with him. I taught him pattern-making, painting, sewing and financial management, using the simple financial methods I had devised for myself by that time. In a sense I suppose I was motivated by the saying that it is more important to teach a person *how* to fish, than to give them a fish.

Bongani and I started having conversations about his hopes and dreams, his ambitions and goals and his purpose in life. It was more than a privilege to be part of Bongani’s discovery of a new horizon and I believe I was instrumental in creating some space necessary for that to happen. Bongani started his own company in 2000, using what I had taught him. His company is still a viable concern. He owns two vehicles and employs staff to paint on fabric and manufacture his children’s-wear, which he sells at flea markets and to shops in South Africa.

While I was delighted that Bongani had learned and developed, I was still anxious about the administration and finance sections of my business. I was concerned because the business administration and finance of the business was difficult for me. In addition, it was not a priority for me. At the time, I just wanted to create beautiful clothing for children. I neglected the administration of the business and did not attempt to obtain skills in administrative management for my business. I neglected

¹⁰ **Bergville** is a small town situated in the foothills of the [Drakensberg](#) mountains, [KwaZulu-Natal](#), [South Africa](#). It was established as Bergville Mountain Village in 1897 and is now the commercial centre for a 2,500 km² [dairy](#) and [cattle](#) ranching area. A [blockhouse](#) was built by the [British](#) soldiers in the town during the [Second Boer War](#). <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bergville>

the financial aspect of my business because I was afraid of dealing with the finances of my business and because I did not have a good understanding of finance.

By neglecting the administrative and financial aspect of my business, I found it increasingly difficult to continue with my business. In 2000 I decided to stop fighting a losing battle and closed the door to my business. The experience of my financial and administrative neglect of my business led to an evaluation of my practice much later when I started to coach others in their own creative economic independence (Whitehead 1989, 1998,2000; McNiff and Whitehead 2006).

Once again, looking back reflectively over those years, it is probably true to say that my ability to draw and paint had been lying dormant within me since I left school in 1973. It needed the circumstances and events I have described above to bring it to the fore, while at the same time on a personal level it entailed a growing self-confidence which I needed to overcome the poor self-image I had cultivated so much earlier in my life. I believed I could now use my talent and gift as an artist to paint beautiful pictures on fabric which would delight me, my customers and most importantly the children who wore the clothing. It was always a source of joy for me to observe their delight in wearing clothing that had animals, fish, flowers, fairies painted with lovely colours that children enjoy. It was important for me to listen to the needs of customers and the children who wore my creations. I realised that they would only buy my clothing if I gave them a product that delighted and excited them (Lipe 2006; Wikstrom 1996; Brink *et al.* 2004; Weitz Castleberry and Tanner 1998; Dorrian 2007; Baptiste *et al.* 2011 and Fisher 2011).

In about 1997, I came to realize that, it mattered less to me to be a successful business owner myself and it mattered more to me to inspire others to become business owners in their own right. I was beginning to see that I had a purpose in my life which was to inspire and encourage myself as well as others to reach their dreams and goals in life. In about 1997, I remember thinking that being able to make a difference in my own life and the life of others was more fulfilling than just existing from day to day with no purpose. According to Warren:

Living with purpose is the only way to really live. Everything else is just existing. (2002:312).

Working with Bongani all those years ago led me to a deeper understanding about finding purpose that comes from within one's self so that one is able to assist others to find their purpose.

At the heart of my autobiography is the present realisation that my own living theory started to emerge Whitehead (1989). I had begun to ask myself "How do I make a better life for myself *and* others?" Whitehead (1998:4) encourages the autobiography of learning where one's present practice is explained and evaluated by past practices. This is done with the intention of creating a "better future" which is not yet in existence (Whitehead 1998:4).

But at that point various events in my life intervened and I experienced a flood of personal loss and bereavement. My mother died in October 1997. Towards the end of 1999, I became concerned about my own emotional and financial well being. In the following five years, two of my closest cousins died of cancer. My marriage started falling apart, and ended in June 2002. I was concerned about the sense of failure and grief I felt at the loss of my business and my marriage. I felt a deep sense of grief because, while I was establishing my business, I had neglected some of my most important relationships with the people closest to me, and then I lost my business as well.

In mid 2000 and early in 2001, I took time off from working to spend time 'exploring myself'. In 2000, I attended an art therapy course, painting classes and read widely exploring literature and reading poetry. *The Artists Way*, (Cameron 1996) made a big impact on me because it was by following the exercises prescribed in her book that I began to write my own journal, paint art for my own sake, visit art galleries and do things in life that pleased me. I started walking, swimming in the sea, snorkelling and kayaking. The practice of journaling is something I still do and improve upon continuously to this day. It is here that my critical reflection and "self dialogue" (Naidoo 2010) is most productive. In the words of Timm I was:

exploring unconventional resources in order to find relief from real pain
(2012:152).

I can identify with John O'Donohue, who believes that "being connected to the earth" (2003:17) is vital for our connectedness to God, to each other and to our work. I have an inner desire to walk and be close to the earth when I need to reflect deeply

and meditate on the things that matter to me or concern me. I like to walk in a place where I feel connected to the earth and find that when I am in the city, the park and the beach are the best places. It is while walking in these places that I find answers and solutions where I can find creative ways to make a difference in my immediate world.

Hence we must pay close attention when we are walking. Walking meditation is conducive to spiritual development. It is an efficient tool to help us remove mental defilements. Walking meditation can help us gain insight into the nature of things (Silananda 1996).

There are times when I seek the solitude of a game farm or mountain retreat where I can connect to creation, meditate and think very deeply without interruption or the noise of a busy city life. It is in these spaces where I reflect on my life's purpose, the pain I feel when others suffer and when I suffer, as O'Donohue says:

When the mind is festering with trouble or the heart torn, we can find healing among the mountains and fields, or listen to the steady rhythm of the waves. When serenity is restored new perspectives open to us and difficulty can seem like an invitation to new growth. Rather than taking us out of ourselves nature coaxes us deeper inwards, teaches us to rest in the serenity of our elemental nature. When we go out into nature clay is returning to clay. We are returning to participate in the stillness of the earth which first dreamed us. This invitation to friendship with nature does of course entail a willingness to be alone out there. Solitude gradually clarifies the heart until a true tranquillity is reached. The irony is that at the heart of the aloneness you feel intimately connected with the world (2003:17).

Another book that had a big influence on my personal transformation was called "Braided Streams" (Zoet Bankson 1985) where she explored the story of Queen Esther from the Bible. She linked "God's story, our stories as women and my own personal story" (1985:11) to her own stages of self discovery with the story of Queen Esther

It contains many stages of self-discovery through which modern women can understand their own lives, both as a process of inward growth and outward action (1985:9).

Other books that encouraged me were written by (Hillesum 1981, 1983; Kushner 1981; de Mello 1985; Cloud and Townsend 1992; Johnson 1992; Gibran 1996; Johnson 1987; Chave-Jones 1989; Learner 2004 and Nolan 2006). In 1999, I began

the journey in a state of despair and with a conscious effort and critical reflection (Schon 1989) to address my despair. I learned how to be a person with a sense of well being and self-awareness while feeling joy and happiness.

The twelve years following 1999 was a very dark period for me. In the beginning of the twelve year period, I felt deep emotional pain, drained and depleted. The emotional pain only started to improve from 2006 and eventually from 2009 to 2011, I knew that the dark period was coming to an end.

In my journal on the 11 December 2012 I wrote:

So, my inner identity is a very deep spirituality with a massively huge love for God and God's creation, God's humankind, animals, forests, trees, seas, beaches, valleys, mountains. I have a deep connection to creation. My identity now is a woman of quiet strength, power, love, compassion, tolerance, generosity and energy. My identity now is a hard working practitioner researcher with a strong purpose in life.

As I emerged from this dark period, I was concerned that my personal and financial life needed transformation.

During these dark years as part of my recovery, late in 2001 I registered in the Fashion Department at the Durban University of Technology, to do the Bachelor of Technology (B Tech) Fashion degree which I completed in 2002. My B Tech research report focused on Customer Relationship Management Kaplan, (2002), because I believed that looking after a customer is vital to any business and I wanted to explore the notion of relationships with customers. It was the importance of customers in my own business that inspired my research into relations with customers in business. By the end of my B Tech degree in 2002, I had decided that somehow I was going to continue to mentor people to become business owners but at the time I did not know how.

What are my Critical Reflections now about this period of my life?

I have learnt to "sustain a self-transformational state of attentive and dialogical learning", (Scholes-Rhodes 2002:13) by using my period of despair and self-transformation during 2000 to 2001, as "my present practice is explained and evaluated by past practices informing my current experience" to assist me in making decisions that are good for me Whitehead (1998:4). I started to discover that by

looking inwards I can turn my “gaze” outwards. Pithouse, Mitchell and Moletsane speak for me when they say:

The very process of self-study itself changes its practitioners and their situations.
“Seeing things differently, self-study can prod us to take action” (2009:11).

Conclusion

On reflection, I realise that my lived experiences Whitehead (1989, 1998, 2000) narrated in this chapter became significant in my attempts to influence creative economic independence in others. I realise now that my lived experiences Whitehead (1989, 1998, 2000) of low self-esteem, a lack of self-confidence, despair, grief, loss and bereavement have contributed to my desire and capacity to influence others. I record these lived experiences in chapters’ five to nine.

In the following chapter, I continue my story framed on the workplace since 2003.

Chapter 4

What is the context in which I work?

From 2003 to 2013, I worked as a project manager for the Industry Training Unit (ITU) in the Department of Clothing and Textile Studies at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). The post-apartheid government of South Africa introduced Sector Education Training Authorities (SETA) in 2000. The role of SETA is to fund projects which provide skills training and upliftment in South Africa (Republic of South Africa 2005). The ITU skills training programmes were funded from 2000 to date by the Clothing Textile Footwear, and Leather Sector Education Training Authority (CTFL) SETA. My role in the ITU was to manage skills training programmes and New Venture Creation (NVC) (Republic of South Africa, 1995) projects funded by the CTFL SETA.

Introduction

I started working at the DUT on 1 March 2003. One of the duties in my position was to assist students to be placed in clothing and textile companies for work experience which is called Work Integrated Learning (WIL) at the DUT.

What were my concerns for others? Why was I concerned for others? What evidence do I have for my concerns for others? What action did I take to address my concerns for others? What happened? What evidence do I have of how I have influenced creative economic independence in others?

I was concerned that WIL students could not find work to fulfill the requirements of their diplomas. I started to realize that the chances of being employed were becoming increasingly difficult for the post graduates (Republic of South Africa, 2009). I would discuss options with the students and the participants of the ITU training programmes.

Many students would also ask me to find jobs for them because of the useful network I have with the whole of the Clothing and Textile Industry in South Africa, (particularly KZN) thanks to the nature of my job. I had a large data base of formal and informal companies. Because it became increasingly difficult for me to find suitable companies who would accept students for WIL, I became aware that many companies had converted to importing clothing or textile from the East. As an

alternative, when I attempted to approach the informal companies instead, I discovered that many of them had shut their operations down. I was concerned about the financial independence of many participants attending the ITU training and skills programmes. Many were being retrenched from the clothing and textile companies that had sent them on our training courses.

My learners and I shared the frustration of not finding a clothing manufacturer to accept them for WIL. I have described the context of the clothing and textile industry which explains why I was becoming increasingly concerned about creating financial independence in the people I was assisting.

I became concerned when I listened to the stories of the students at DUT and the participants of the training courses I coordinated. They told me of the poverty they experienced (Özler 2007; Meth 2008; Gaibie and Davids 2009; May 2010; Schussler 2012). Making a choice between taxi fares for transport or food to eat was one of the choices many had to make. Some told me that they lived in shacks with no electricity though they were acquiring tertiary education. I discovered students who came to DUT for class without having eaten properly for a number of days¹¹. I was concerned about participants in the ITU training programmes who were being retrenched and so needed to seek other alternatives for creative economic independence (South Africa 1995; Morris, Bessant and Barnes 2006; Skinner 2006; Davies and Thurlow 2009).

On the assumption that if there is no employment there is no alternative but to create self-employment, I asked myself the question: 'If people are forced to become self-employed through the current lack of employment opportunities which we are experiencing, how can I assist to change the mindset from 'wanting employment' to creating a 'desire to become self-employed'?' I realised that one possible way for the ITU participants to find work, was to make work for themselves, which meant that they had to become entrepreneurs in medium, small and micro businesses. This was later confirmed for me by Ilbury and Sunter who say:

Globalisation has converted the two great engines of job creation, big business and the public sector into net job destroyers as they seek to be leaner and

¹¹ The DUT management also became concerned about the lack of nourishment for many students and began an initiative to provide meals for those students.

meaner. That leaves medium sized, small and micro enterprise as the area of most potential for future employment (2001:66).

I realised that the development of entrepreneurs needed to be treated with a sense of urgency. I agree with Gaibie and Davids (2009) who advocate speeding up the rate of social and economic transformation to improve the quality of life because of the lack of employment and the high rate of poverty in our country, (South Africa 1995; South Africa 2009).

I sent project proposals to the CTFL SETA and successfully secured funding to run NVC programmes. I began project managing NVC projects in 2006 (Appendix 1: South Africa Department of Labour 2005).

The first NVC project started in May 2006 with 15 participants and the final report was sent to the CTFL SETA in May 2007. Kim Tomlinson facilitated the training. (Appendix 1 for details of the course). The training took place in two phases. Phase One was five days of theory about the establishment and sustainability of a small business. In Phase Two the candidates actually ran a mini business and developed a product to sell. Phase Two took six weeks and the purpose was to gain practical experience in setting up and managing a small business. The CTFL SETA New Venture Creation certificate was awarded on the presentation of a viable and good business plan.

The SETA was satisfied with the outcome of the pilot project and made funding available for another three NVC programmes. The second group with 15 participants started on 22 April 2007. The third group with 18 participants started on the 2 July 2007 and the fourth with 35 participants group started in November 2008 and completed the programme in February 2009, 83 people including DUT post graduates from the Department of Clothing Management completed the NVC training programmes.

What were my critical reflections on the NVC programmes?

The NVC programmes worked well, even though the participants found the theory component difficult until they had the opportunity to put their learning into practice. The six week practical component was the most successful because the participants were involved in running a mini business under the supervision of Kim Tomlinson.

At the end of the NVC programmes, I listened to the stories of the NVC participants and they told me how difficult it was for them to begin a new business on their own. I became concerned when I listened to the stories the NVC participants told me about obstacles, such as access to finance, suitable markets, promotion, supply of materials and other logistical issues. I realised that while the NVC programmes had equipped the participants with the theory and some practical experience to run a business, many participants still needed more support. I began to reflect on the shortcomings the NVC training programmes. I realised that simply training people in entrepreneurship, for a short course, then, letting them go without any follow up on their progress was inadequate.

How did my concerns arising out of my critical reflections on the NVC programmes lead to more actions?

I began to consciously reflect deeply on my own perceived lack of intervention with the NVC groups. I was beginning to speculate how to improve my role as the project manager for the NVC programmes. I was not aware at the time that I would be embarking on developing my own action research (McNiff 1995) and living theory methods Whitehead (1989) to assist in business establishment.

I started to reflect on the methods I had used to make my own business a success. I realised that I needed to draw on my experience to provide more assistance for the budding entrepreneurs that I was coming to know. I also began to realise that I could provide guidance and coaching to the emerging entrepreneurs. My superior at DUT, had sent me on a course to become a personal and business coach so that the ITU could offer a coaching service to the CTFL companies in KZN. I obtained a certificate as a coach in April of 2006 and the training providers told me that I was one of the best coaches that they trained in that particular group. Many of the books I studied on coaching were written by leading coaches worldwide like Alexander and Renshaw 2005; Downey 1999; Kline 1999; Sullivan 2000; Eaton and Johnson 2001; Stout Rostron 2002; and Stephenson 2004. Ironically, I did not make use of my new skill at the time because I was still in the midst of the dark years that I spoke about in my autobiography. Fortunately I had purchased the coaching books which I was able to revisit and use later from 2010 onwards.

On reflection, I realised that I still had concerns for others, and that their concerns were evidenced by many lived experiences Whitehead (1989, 1998, 2000). I was concerned that the NVC participants needed to market their clothing and that they did not have money to fund this process. I knew from experience in my own business that branding and marketing is vital for success in a new business. Early in 2008, I remembered that when I needed to market my clothing range in 1995 and 1996 without finance, one of the strategies I used was to participate in fashion. So in January 2008 I looked for an opportunity for the NVC group to expose their clothing at a fashion show. In February 2008, I approached the organisers of the Durban Fashion Week (DFW) requesting an opportunity for a group of the NVC emerging entrepreneurs to present a range for DFW. The organisers agreed. The condition for acceptance to DFW was to present a storyboard of the clothing range for review and only if it was accepted would the newly formed group – hereafter referred to as the DFW group - be permitted to participate in DFW.

This is when I started becoming more involved in coaching and mentoring. I used all my experience in participating in fashion shows with the DFW group who took up the challenge to successfully enter the DFW. I naturally took the role of inspiring the group to push their own personal boundaries to do their best. I also asked a well-known Durban fashion designer and businessman Greg Wallace to assist me. I knew that he already had his own mentoring programme for fashion entrepreneurs. Greg offered a lot of technical assistance and insisted on the highest quality of design and manufacture. I also asked a well-known Durban fashion designer, Michelle Starling who had her own occasion-wear clothing factory to provide the DFW group with space in her factory from which to work. Michele agreed and made space in her factory which is described in Sandisiwe Dani and Khanyisile Zungu's stories which follow in chapter six and seven.

Through working closely with the DFW group I was getting to know people individually. Many participants of the NVC groups were no longer just a name on the NVC register. It mattered to me that I saw the new ventures of the people I was beginning to know become sustainable and profitable businesses

What were my concerns as a result of my critical reflections on the DFW?

I was concerned that the DFW group and others from the NVC groups needed support in the form of formal and organised coaching to establish and sustain their new ventures. I knew from my own experience I would have benefitted from a coach or mentor to assist me to sustain my business. I did not have a mentor to help me to become financially and administratively organised and now, on reflection, engaging a financial coach may have saved my business. I agree with Laljit who observes that the challenges of establishing enterprises “in the real world” (2006:14) for independent entrepreneurs are considerable (Chrisman and McMullan 2000, 2004; Chrisman, McMullan and Hall 2005). Chrisman and McMullan’s study confirms that offering “funded, professional quality coaching” (2005:241) makes sense from an economic perspective.

Chrisman and McMullan (2004) assessed the impact that the American Small Business Development Corporation’s coaching and mentoring interventions had over a period of three to five years. Their study revealed a large number of new ventures not only surviving but doing well in terms of growth in sales and employment. The same study reported that the new ventures also produced a significant number of innovations, when the people involved were mentored or coached.

I wanted to become more ‘hands-on’ in NVC projects. When Stringer (2007) talks of the instincts we use while being engaged in a project, I realised at this stage that I was indeed using my instincts to guide me to action. I wanted to include business coaching as the basis for the next funding application to the SETA.

How did my concerns on the DFW lead to more actions?

I applied for more funding from the CTFL SETA at the end of 2008, knowing that funding proposals take a long time to be approved. The funding proposal I sent to the SETA was based on a business coaching framework giving the reasons why I believed that coaching was required in the business establishment and sustainability. (Appendix 1: The NVC management programme funding proposal). Funding was approved to run the NVC Management Programme from 1 July 2009 to 30 March 2010. All the previous NVC Programme participants, post-graduates from Fashion Design, Fine Art, Jewellery Design and Clothing and Textile Studies were invited to

join the NVC Management Programme, 24 participants were coached by business coach, Marlene Powell, was contracted to conduct the coaching workshops.

As a result of the coaching workshops, some members of the group did acquire

- motor vehicle licences;
- motor vehicles;
- premises from which to run their business; and
- an improved method of managing cash flow.

Therefore I believe that the coaching workshops achieved much of what they were supposed to achieve. I observed a new positive energy in the coached group. I strongly relate to Gladwell (2009) who came to the conclusion that people are successful because they are given an opportunity, they take the opportunity and work very hard while they are using the opportunity given to them in life. I will be providing evidence of this insight later in my research participants' stories.

What were my concerns as a result of my critical reflections on the NVC Management Programme?

I was concerned because I believed that the group attending the NVC Management coaching still needed support in the form of coaching to assist them to grow their businesses. I was concerned because I believed that the group attending the NVC Management coaching needed to have access to computers in order to have documents for their business. Documents were needed for quotes, invoices, proposals with a business header and company information. I also saw the need for access to email, the internet for research on products, fashion trends and even a blog to market their business. I was concerned that when the coaching came to an end, their businesses would be less sustainable. I was concerned that funding for coaching was unavailable because the SETA had an obligation to fund skills training and not coaching workshops.

I began to ask myself how I could provide a support structure with more workshops, coaching, computers and a safe nurturing space. The manner in which I hoped to apply this was to create an environment that would facilitate personal and business growth.

How did my concerns on the NVC Management Programme lead to more actions?

I decided to create a space at the DUT where I could have coaching workshops - from now on referred to as coaching workshops. I approached my colleagues in the Clothing and Textile Studies Department and they agreed to let me use the computer venue to facilitate these coaching workshops. My intention was to conduct the coaching workshops myself. I revisited the handouts and coaching books purchased while on the coaching course I attended in 2006. The coaching books I used included books written by (Downey 1999; Kline 1999; Sullivan 2000; Eaton and Johnson 2001; Stout Rostron 2002; Stephenson 2004; Alexander and Renshaw 2005).

The NVC Management programme group were invited to attend and by word of mouth new participants arrived at the workshops which were open to anyone wanting to attend.

I started to approach my new role as coach and mentor more consciously from the perspective of my current and past experiences Whitehead (2008). I used the action reflection cycle McNiff (2002a) in the planning and implementation of the coaching workshops which meant I was more “self reflexive” McNiff (2002a:6). I discovered that I needed a method in which my internal decision-making, in the context of my self-study, would be valid, scholarly and systematic. In April 2010, I began the workshops by introducing living theories Whitehead (1998) and action research McNiff (2002a) which I hoped would improve their practice as business owners and personally.

What was my concern about the participants in the coaching workshops? Why was I concerned? What evidence do I have for my concern? What action did I take because of my concern?

I was concerned about the participants in the coaching workshops being unaware of their values and beliefs. I was concerned about this lack of an awareness of values and beliefs because I believe that knowing what our values and beliefs are is the foundation of what we do and why we do it. Therefore, I started the coaching workshops by going through a process of knowing ourselves and our values and beliefs together. I helped the group to see that starting with values would enable

them to create a strong foundation for their personal lives as well as business careers. They unanimously agreed that this was in fact a good point of departure for their own business lives. I personally enjoyed the first few workshops because I got to know the participants. I was confronted with the real lives of the coaching group. I could reflect on the workshops and plan for the next one with a particular person in mind (Hope and Timmel 1995; Tutu 2004; Whitehead 2004a).

Each week I handed out evaluation sheets so that I could reflect on the comments in the evaluation sheets, to reflect on and evaluate my practice and decide what to do in the next weeks coaching workshop.

What was my concern about the participants marketing abilities? Why was I concerned? What evidence do I have for my concern? What action did I take because of my concern?

I was concerned because the participants of the coaching workshops did not have an entrepreneurial or marketing mindset. I could see that they were not considering where or how they were going to sell their clothing. I was concerned about the lack of marketing abilities in the group. I was concerned because I believed that the coaching group needed marketing tools like personal branding. I remembered that my greatest success in my own business was the ability to market myself and my product. I had established Bonnie B Clothing and people even gave me the nickname 'Bonnie B' at the time. I wore my own style and dressed my children in my own children's wear range. I did not realise it at the time, but I was creating my own personal brand and it worked because of the recognition I got as 'Bonnie B'. So from my personal experience I knew that personal branding was a good working tool. (Video 1 and 2, Bonnie coaching)

I noticed that the participants were more focussed on creating and producing beautiful garments. For the next few workshops I referred to books by: Buzan 2005; Pahn 1993; Conradie 2002; Machado and Cassim 2002; Brink *et al.* 2004; Antonites *et al.* 2007; Rossouw 2007, in my effort to "inculcate entrepreneurial mindsets, provide necessary skills and assist with creating the right conditions for their enterprises to grow" CSI Handbook (10th Edition:246). As a result of this intervention the group drafted marketing strategy followed by the practical application of their own particular marketing strategy.

I was concerned because most of the participants of the coaching workshops did not have email addresses, blogs, Facebook profiles and other internet marketing tools. I believed that their marketing could be done via the internet. Each week at the workshops the coaching group used their internet marketing tools to gain access to as many potential customers as possible.

What are my critical reflections? What remains unresolved?

On critical reflection I now realise the irony that initially, I outsourced the training because I did not have the self-confidence at that time to facilitate the NVC Programme myself. Johannisson argues that academics that have come from a background of small business and entrepreneurship “often silence the insight” (2002:2), they have gained through this experience and how they created their knowledge (Johannisson 2008, 2009). Even though I have a proven track record of experience in entrepreneurship, from 2006 until 2008, I silenced my experience in business. I silenced how I had created my own knowledge of beginning and sustaining a small business. I also undermined my own capacity and passion to help people make themselves powerful and enter the “universe of possibility”, Zander and Zander (2002:ix). But, even though I was personally silencing myself I continued to make sure that other people did the work to facilitate entrepreneur development. With hindsight and with a better understanding of critical reflection, I was also still in the midst of my own chaos and I identify with the “swampy lowland”, Schon (1995:28).

I could not function to my full capacity because my anxiety and feelings of inadequacy got in the way of being pro-active. I relate to Delysia Timm’s discovery of “JNGE-Ginger” (2012:180) in her doctoral thesis where she describes her own feeling of being “Just Not Good Enough” (2012:180). Timm went on to discover “AGE-Aggy” (2012:180) the name she gave to being “Absolutely Good Enough” Timm (2012:182). I was not to discover my “Aggy” (Timm 2012:182) until a few years later, yet I still proceeded with my work anyway. I realise now that I was “muddling through”, Lindblom (1979:1).

I did not, at that time, know much if anything about action research (McNiff 2002a, 2002b, 2007, McNiff and Whitehead 2006), living theory methodology (Whitehead 1989, 1998, 2000; 2005a, 2005b, 2008, 2012), the hermeneutical circle (Hope and

Timmel 1995; Draucker 1999; Gigacz 2007), or self-study (Scholes-Rhodes 2002; Pithouse, Mitchell and Moletsane 2009) which would have assisted me then to critically reflect in an informed scholarly way to improve the efforts I tried to make.

I realise now, if I had not started a self study in 2009, I would have continued to skim the surface of my life and my work, because of my perceived inability to reflect deeply about entrepreneur development, poverty and the lack of opportunities for jobs. Yet, I was reflecting deeply about the poverty I was encountering everyday and the challenges the emerging entrepreneurs were facing. I spoke to them as a group often and individually as well. During my morning walks I reflected on these discussions and at times felt as though I did not have the strength or capacity to address all the issues that were presented to me. I took it all personally and felt helpless. I was also projecting too much of my own pain and lack of self-confidence. Consequently I felt as though I was not contributing to social and economic transformation. I discovered the concept of “ethnostress” and realised that this may be one of the causes of my lack of self-esteem.

Antone and Hill describe how a sense of self is formed:

A strong sense of self is shaped in the early years of our life when we can be loved as a ‘precious child” who has purpose, who is acceptable, who belongs and has a place, whose very existence is beneficial and who has a sense of safety and security in the world because he or she also lives in the world that has sufficient food, water and shelter. These are the basic needs which are required by all human beings and which act as the foundation for a strong sense of self (1992:2).

Therefore without a sense of self I was concerned that the entrepreneurs would not know or trust their own capacities, gifts and talents to start and sustain a new business. If personal issues of self-esteem affected my work how would their personal issues get in the way for the people I was working with? How could they sustain and grow their business in order to provide a good living for themselves and their families and be successful business people?

I also became concerned that “ethnostress” Antone and Hill (1992) would affect the “entrepreneurial culture” that Pretorius and Van Vuuren speak of (2003:514; Marsh 1992). Start-up culture or entrepreneurial orientation is not being addressed, according to Pretorius and Van Vuuren who hypothesize that emerging

entrepreneurs do not have enough “courage, motivation, locus of control or enough role models to become successful business owners” (2003:526).

I began to reflect more critically on what my values were, and realised that I value the dignity that comes from doing meaningful work. Gladwell (2008) suggests that working successfully arises from doing meaningful work. It enhances human dignity. Therefore it mattered to me that the emerging entrepreneurs I worked with found meaningful “opportunity for personal evolution” (Zander and Zander 2002:4) and business growth.

In August 2009, I became aware that my work was grounded in my values described in my Methodology Chapter which inform my living theories (Whitehead 1989, 2000, 2005a, 2008; McNiff and Whitehead 2006). As an action researcher, I was encouraged by McNiff to “think about my own life and work and to ask myself why I do the things I do and why I am the way that I am” (2002a:3).

The people on the NVC programmes often told me how much I inspired, encouraged and influenced them to be better, do better, and persevere (Zander and Zander 2002). When any of the members of the groups see me to this day I see their “eyes shining” as Ben Zander says in his presentation on TED Talks, when he sees that people are responding positively to his inspirational method of making people powerful Zander (2010)¹².

Conclusion

In the next chapters I record the stories of my research participants, and provide evidence of my influence in their emerging creative economic independence.

¹² http://www.ted.com/talks/benjamin_zander_on_music_and_passion.html

Chapter 5

What evidence do I have of how I influenced the emerging creative economic independence in the work of Ntombi Luthuli?

Context

Ntombi Luthuli (née Dube) was born in 1968 in Durban South Africa. Ntombi did not know her father. Ntombi studied chemistry at Mangosuthu Technikon outside Durban because her mother, Sarafina Dube told her to study something that would enable her to become gainfully employed. In 1983, after graduating with a national diploma in Analytical Chemistry, Ntombi worked as an analytical chemist for a private company in Durban. Ntombi did not like being in an enclosed laboratory which had to have very low temperatures and where there was little opportunity for creativity or interaction with people. Ntombi was continuously ill from lung infections due to the cold working conditions. Ntombi told me that she became interested in interior decorating when she reflected on her unhappiness at work.

In 2001, when Ntombi married Mandla Luthuli, her friends gave her a sewing machine. Mandla was a Grade 12 mathematics teacher at Ntuzuma High School¹³. Ntombi left the sewing machine in its packaging until 2003 when she was recuperating from a lung infection. She unpacked the sewing machine and asked a friend to teach her how to use it. Once Ntombi acquired sewing skills, she made bed linen as gifts for all her friends at work. She soon became passionate about interior decorating and wanted to learn more. In 2004, Ntombi, and Mandla, decided that it would be best if she resigned from work as an analytical chemist.

Ntombi started to buy interior decorating magazines from which to get ideas for making interior decorating items. In one of the magazines she found an advertisement offering a two week training course in interior decorating and manufacturing lessons in sewing curtains, cushions, bed quilts and other items related to interior decorating. The lessons were in Krugersdorp and Mandla and Ntombi had never left KwaZulu-Natal. Ntombi applied and was accepted to do the course. In mid-2005, Mandla took leave to be with Ntombi while she attended the

¹³ Ntuzuma township is 12km away from the Durban CBD, it constitutes 98.7% black community and 1.3% other. <http://wiki/Ntuzuma>

interior decorating training in Krugersdorp. He drove her to Krugersdorp and supported her while she was being trained as a decorator.

Early in 2006, Ntombi attended a furniture making and upholstery course arranged by the Ethekewini Municipality Business Support Unit. After completing the furniture making and upholstery course she registered her business with the name Injiya Trading and Projects. Shortly after completing the practical course Ntombi heard about the NVC course being offered at the DUT through the ITU. In July 2007, Ntombi attended the NVC course and obtained a certificate from the ITU acknowledging that she had successfully completed a workable business plan.

What did I do to collect the data to discover the evidence of how I have influenced Ntombi's creative economic independence?

When I began writing the story about Ntombi, for my dissertation, I relied on the memories that I had of the many conversations I had with Ntombi between 2007 and 2012. I compiled a file of photographs taken of Ntombi from my collection of NVC photographs that I had taken since 2007. I used the photographs to assist me to remember the influence that I have had on Ntombi's creative economic independence. I also interviewed Ntombi and Mandla in December 2012 and asked them to assist me to verify my memories of the conversations with Ntombi that I used to write about her. In May 2013, I interviewed her children, Wami, 16 years old and the twins, Nomakha and Nandi, 13 years old to discover their experience and memories of Ntombi becoming economically independent. In June 2013 I interviewed the people Ntombi has employed since 2009. On the same day, because Ntombi was too busy to see me, I asked Mandla to assist me with the accuracy of dates and names that I had used in my story of Ntombi.

While writing about Ntombi, I drew the diagram below to assist me to remember the events during my relationship with Ntombi. I used the drawing to reflect on my influence of Ntombi from 2007 to 2013 towards her creative economic independence

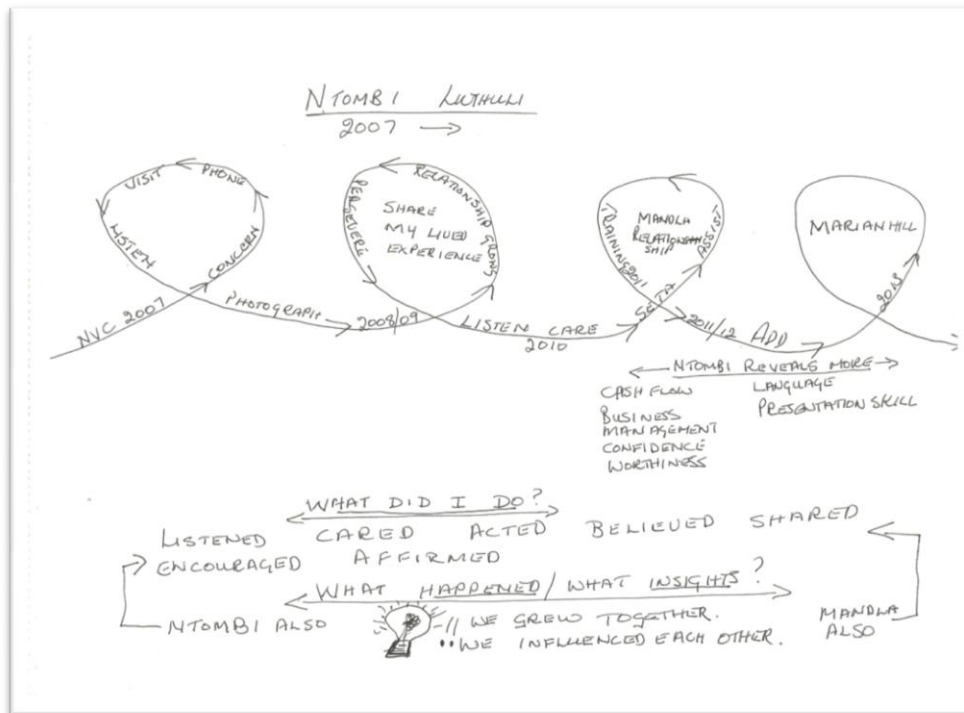
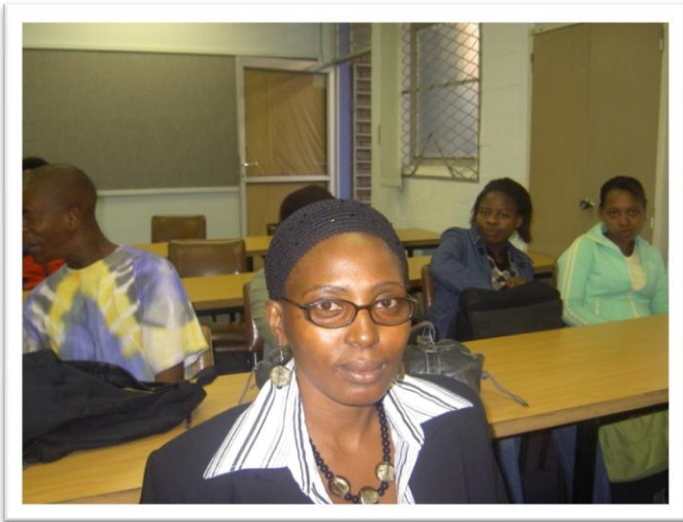


Figure 4: My graphic representation of my reflections about Ntombi Luthuli

What were my concerns about Ntombi? Why was I concerned? What was the evidence for my concern? What action did I take to address my concerns about Ntombi? What evidence do I have of my influence in the development of Ntombi's creative economic independence?

When I first met Ntombi in 2007, I remember her ambition, enthusiasm and joy about her business, but I was concerned that her enthusiasm would be clouded by the tough realities of establishing a small business, because I knew from personal experience the exertion and effort it takes to establish a small business.



Photograph 3: Ntombi Luthuli in 2007

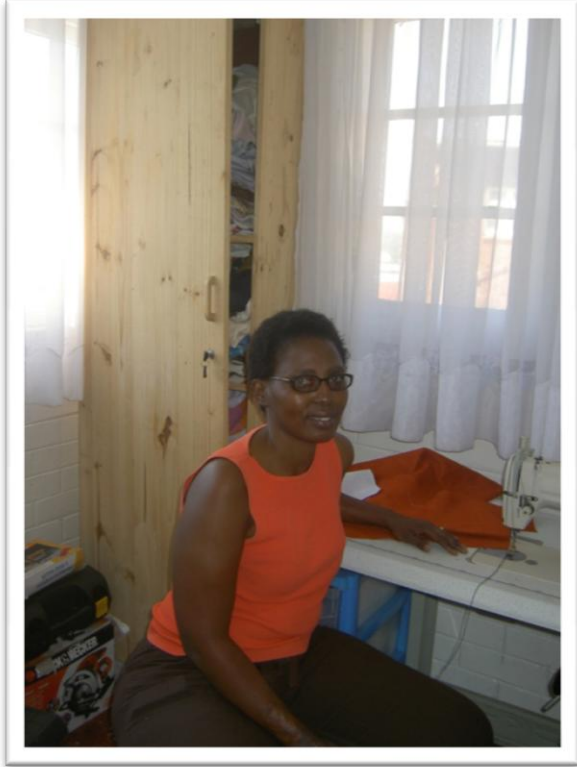
Photograph 3 was taken of Ntombi on the first day of the NVC course in July 2007. In photograph 1, I observe a strong well-presented person with a serious expression. This photograph triggered my lived experience memory which was observing Ntombi's enthusiasm with bright expectant "shining eyes" Zander and Zander (2002:10) as she anticipated being part of the learning opportunity and her determination to succeed.

When Ntombi started the NVC programme, she did not have premises from which to work and this concerned me because I did not know how she was going to be able to establish a furniture and upholstery business without premises to work from. I was also concerned about where Ntombi would find customers because I assumed that without premises or a showroom it would be difficult to show potential customers what she was capable of producing. I was also concerned about the lack of finance she spoke of, to establish her business.

Because I was concerned about Ntombi establishing her business successfully I kept in touch with her after she completed the NVC course, so that I could follow her progress and encourage her to persevere through the difficulties I knew from experience that she would encounter.

I first went to visit Ntombi in her home in 2007. Ntombi, Mandla and their four daughters, Nakedi (24 years), Wami (ten years) and the twins Nomakha and Nandi (seven years) were living in a small three bedroom flat, which also served as

Ntombi's working space. The entrance to the Ntuli home was a small kitchen which led into a living room.



Photograph 4: Ntombi in her children's bedroom

Photograph 4 was taken in the children's bedroom where Ntombi worked on her industrial single needle lockstitch sewing machine next to the end of one of the beds.



Photograph 5: Wami and Nomakha Luthuli in their bed 2007

Ntombi's twin children, Nomakha and Nandi are on their bed in photograph 5, with Ntombi's domestic sewing machine next to the bed. The industrial machine is next to the wall. I recall the children being shy, but they allowed me to photograph them and Nandi peeked at me over the book she was reading.

Sharing their living space with Ntombi's work was clearly difficult for the family. Ntombi's working space was cramped and inconvenient, and the children had to be consistently mindful of their mother's work. In spite of the lack of space, I watched Ntombi's progress as she made curtains, ottomans and headboards and upholstered furniture for people.

When I visited Ntombi at home and took the above photographs, I recall observing how her pride and enthusiasm for her business was not affected by her confined working space. I remember her telling me she was weighing up her options for alternative premises. One option was her mother's home in Kwa Mashu¹⁴ which she had inherited. Even though her mother's home was not much bigger than her flat, she thought she would have a little more space to work there. The other option Ntombi was weighing up was to apply to work from Furntech¹⁵ in Springfield Park, north of the Umgeni River. Ntombi told me she would have access to better equipment at Furntech where she could manufacture her own furniture. The other advantages associated with Furntech were the proximity to her children's school in Morningside, her fabric suppliers and her flat in Morningside. I remember listening carefully to Ntombi while she described these options and I recall feeling delighted that Ntombi had options that would improve her working environment. In late 2008, Ntombi moved to Furntech.

In 2010, Ntombi moved from Furntech to Umkhumbane Business Support Unit in Cato Manor, south of Durban on the banks of the Umkhumbane River (History SA 2000). Umkhumbane provided her with even more space for her factory.

¹⁴Kwa Mashu is one of Durban's first townships; it was established in 1959 because of the Group Areas Act. Most of the people who live within the borders of Kwa Mashu originally come from Umkhumbane ([Cato Manor](#)). People were removed from Umkhumbane during the apartheid regime in 1950's. The Group Areas Act was a system used by the apartheid government to separate Indians, Coloureds and Africans who lived together in places such as Umkhumbane in Durban, Sophiatown, in Johannesburg and District Six, in Cape Town. Before the establishment of the township the area was a sugar cane plantation owned by Marshall Campbell whom the township was named after.. http://wiki.ulwazi.org/index.php5?title=History_of_Kwa_Mashu

¹⁵ Furntech is a South Africa's only Centre of Excellence for the furniture industry and is the first port of call for anyone looking for information on business incubation and/or skills development in furniture manufacturing. <http://www.furntech.org.za>

Umkhumbane is a business incubation unit run by the eThekweni Municipality Business Support Unit. Umkhumbane is also situated close to Morningside.

By word of mouth and participation in SMME trade shows from 2009 to 2012, Ntombi broadened her customer base. The increase in commissions to manufacture furniture, curtaining, headboards and re-upholstery, enabled Ntombi to employ an upholsterer Zwanane Khuzwayo in 2009 to assist her with upholstery and furniture making. Ntombi also employed a machinist, Stephano John in 2011, to sew curtaining, cushions and prepare the sewn sections for upholstering furniture.

By employing Zwanane, Ntombi had provided Zwanane with an opportunity to assist his family. Zwanane was born in 1985 in Umgababa¹⁶ south of Durban. Zwanane's father (Vincent Khuzwayo), a pensioner, lives in Umgababa. Zwanane travels to Umgababa each week-end to take food and money to him. Zwanane also has two nephews, Ntombela Mngobi (18 years) and Ayanda Mngobi (16 years) who lived in Inanda¹⁷, in 2009, west of Durban. When Zwanane observed their behaviour deteriorating because of the influence of drugs, alcohol and crime, he took them to Umgababa to stay with his father in late 2009. Zwanane arranged for them to be schooled in Umgababa and when I spoke to Zwanane in May 2013, he told me that Ntombela Ayanda are now in grades 11 and eight respectively at a school in Umgababa. Zwanane told me that he hoped they would commit themselves to be educated with his help, but does not know what the future holds.

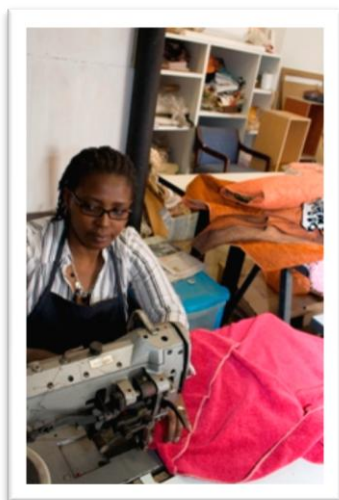
Stephano John was born in 1983 in Malawi. Stephano came to South Africa in 2010 to join his father who had come to Durban in 2006. Stephano's father taught him to sew on an industrial sewing machine and instilled in him a commitment to hard work good quality workmanship. A friend took him to Ntombi in 2011 because this friend knew Ntombi and knew that she needed a hardworking machinist who was committed to good quality workmanship. Stephano said he was very proud of the

¹⁶ **Umgababa** is a rural community area with a large market place for tourists in [KwaZulu-Natal](#), [South Africa](#). It forms part of [eThekweni](#). The uMgababa River (originally "Umkababa", which means "my father's wife") enters the ocean at Umgababa. The name is derived from an ancient feud between the Luthuli tribe who used to live in the valley. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umgababa>

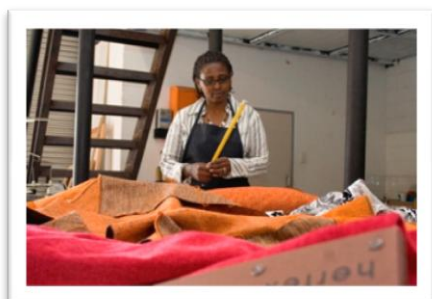
¹⁷ Inanda (isiZulu: Pleasant Place) is a city in western KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa that is situated 24 km inland from Durban; it now forms part of eThekweni, the Greater Durban Metropolitan Municipality. Populated primarily by Zulu-speaking [Black Africans](#), Inanda is known as the home of [John Langalibalele Dube](#), first president of the [African National Congress](#) (ANC), as a residence/base of operations of [Mahatma Gandhi](#). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inanda,_KwaZulu-Natal

lessons he learned from his father. Stephano is married to Sakina, who is still living in Malawi. They have a daughter Snmiyatu who was born in 2001. Stephano financially supports Sakina and Snmiyatu but told me that he hopes to bring his wife and child to South Africa once he has saved enough money to do so. Stephano told me that he did not know how long it would take him to save the money to bring Sakina and Snmiyatu to live with him in South Africa.

In 2010 Mandla left his teaching post and joined Ntombi in her business on a full time basis. Mandla also registered at the University of South Africa (UNISA)¹⁸ to study law. Mandla told me he wanted to be educated in law because was interested in community upliftment and democracy in South Africa and believed that he needed a legal background to pursue these interests. Mandla also bought a second car for the business because he and Ntombi needed to deliver furniture to customers.



Photograph 6: Ntombi sewing curtains



Photograph 7: Ntombi measuring fabric

¹⁸ Africa's leading open distance learning institution offer internationally accredited qualifications and have world-class resources that inspire learners to create meaningful futures on their own terms. A proudly African university in the service of humanity. <http://www.unisa.ac.za/Default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=3>



Photograph 8: Ntombi assisting Zwanane to measure and cut wood



Photograph 9: Ntombi and I discussing fabric colours

Photographs 6, 7, 8 and 9 were taken in June 2010 to illustrate Ntombi's progressive economic independence¹⁹. I remember that when I arrived at Umkhumbane to take these photographs, Ntombi was busy making cushions and before she could look up I took photograph 6 of her working behind the same industrial sewing machine she had used in her flat when she was working from home in 2007. I observe Ntombi in photograph 6, totally absorbed in her work with a slight smile on her face. The fabrics Ntombi was using for the cushions she was making are scattered on the work space of the industrial sewing machine behind the one she was working on. Fabric that Ntombi had cut and prepared for sewing into cushions and curtains were stored on the shelves in the background on the right. Once Ntombi had greeted me, she continued to work while allowing me to take photographs and ask her questions about her business progress. In photograph, 7 Ntombi has moved to her cutting table where she is measuring and cutting fabric to upholster the chair which Zwanane her

¹⁹ I included these photographs in the chapter entitled "Entrepreneurship in Durban. Are we getting it right?", in the book entitled (Re)searching Durban (Khan and Ramlutchman 2010).

upholsterer is preparing at the wood cutting machine in photograph 8. In photograph 8, Ntombi is checking the size and shape of the wood Zwanane is cutting for the chair he would make and upholster. In photograph 8, Ntombi and Zwanane are smiling while they focus on the work in front of them.

I have observed that Ntombi assists her employees to deliver orders on time by working closely with them. Ntombi has told me that she takes her work seriously and is passionate about good quality in her work. She said:

“Quality is very important to me because I am proud of my work and I want my customers to come back to me and refer me to others” (p.c. Ntombi Luthuli June 2010).

Photograph 9 is of Ntombi and me, discussing the colour scheme for re-upholstering my couch at home. Ntombi had already been to visit me at home earlier in 2010 and therefore had an idea of what my decorating needs were.

In 2010, when Ntombi moved to her factory at Umkhumbane, she created a showroom where she could display the furniture, upholstery, headboards, curtains and cushion manufactured by Injiya.



Photograph 10: Ntombi in her showroom

Photograph 10 is a photograph of Ntombi in her showroom. I observe how Ntombi leans into the photograph while holding the chair on the right, which has been made and upholstered by Zwanane. Her posture indicates to me that she takes ownership of her products with pride and satisfaction. I came to know that Ntombi's pride in her

work and business comes with humility and a desire for others to achieve social and economic independence.

It was around this time, that I remember telling Ntombi how I had sought journalists from the local Durban newspapers to write articles with pictures describing my emerging small business. I recall advising Ntombi to contact the local Durban newspapers to write about her own emerging business. Ntombi did so, and the first article about her business appeared in *The Mercury* on 24 June 2011 Omeshnie Naidoo the journalist who interviewed Ntombi describes Ntombi as a regular exhibitor at the East Coast Radio House and Garden Show, which was held at the Durban Exhibition Centre from June 25 to June 30 2011. Omeshnie Naidoo (2011) wrote:

The husband-and-wife duo behind it all not only run a successful interior décor consultancy, but are manufacturers of locally crafted furniture and run their own training centre. “The business was born out of our passion for quality handmade interior décor items and, as a result, our products are configured to suit individual personalities,” said Ntombi Luthuli. For the Luthulis, providing a handful of opportunities for meaningful employment was just not enough, and so in 2009 they initiated the Injiya Interiors Training Facility. “We started the training facility as there was a constant flow of people who were interested in learning the skills that we use on a day-to-day basis,” said Luthuli .

In August 2011, I contacted *The Mercury* journalist Colleen Dardagan to tell her about Ntombi and ask her to write an article about Ntombi. Colleen interviewed Ntombi and Mandla, and the article appeared in *The Mercury* on the 31 August 2011 entitled “Real help, not talk, needed for growth”. In this article, Dardagan (2011) had recorded the shortcomings of SMME assistance in Durban from eThekweni municipality.

Less rhetoric and more practical action from the government is needed if small business is to take up the call to increase South Africa's economy and create work. This is the view of small furniture manufacturing and interior decorating company owner Mandla Luthuli, who says the government should start focused procurement strategies to support growing enterprises. “My wife and I have been in this industry for the past five years. Our business is growing steadily, but we are not taken seriously.”

And while enterprise was growing steadily and had received good support from the eThekweni Business Support and Tourism and Markets Unit, the couple said assistance programmes were often out of time with what small businesses needed.

For example, our lease at the centre is only for three years. The rent is subsidised, which is a great help, but by November next year we must find other premises. This scheme has been put together by someone who doesn't know anything about running a business. Small businesses such as ours take at least nine years before they are properly established, to change premises in midstream will affect our growth tempo (Dardagan 2011).

Mandla and Ntombi did indeed move their factory and this will be described at the end of Ntombi's story.

Because Ntombi was concerned about others needing to learn the skills of upholstery and furniture making in order to achieve creative economic independence, she asked me to assist her with the process required to become an accredited training provider. Towards the end of 2010, Injiya Trading and Projects, became a furniture and upholstery training provider, accredited by the Furniture Education Training Authority (FETA). Ntombi and Mandla were then able to legally provide further opportunities for others to become economically independent in the furniture and upholstery business. In January and February 2011, the ITU used Injiya Trading and Projects to train 20 people in the skill of furniture-making and upholstery. Because Injiya Trading and Projects were so successful with the January and February training of the 20, the newly amalgamated Furniture, Pulp and Manufacturing (FP&M) SETA provided funding for the ITU to contract Injiya Trading and Projects to train a group of 33 people in the skill of furniture-making and upholstery in October and November 2011. In addition to practical furniture-making and upholstery skills, Ntombi included lessons in

- entrepreneurship and how to develop entrepreneurial qualities,
- how to start and run a business and adapt to changing business environment,
- business management and administration,
- identifying analysing and selecting business opportunities,
- planning and managing time in a business environment.

Throughout this process, I have observed Ntombi's passion for others to succeed in business. I have observed Ntombi never hesitates to assist those she has taught by mentoring them, lending them tools for furniture-making and upholstery while they are in the process of starting their own business. Ntombi has also told me that teaching her skill to others is important to her. She has told me that others must also

have an opportunity to run furniture making businesses. I believe that Ntombi is a role model for those she teaches. I have never seen Ntombi worried about the fact that teaching others will create competition for her business. Ntombi often says:

“There is space for everyone in the furniture business”.

In 2012, the ITU were given funding to train a third group. Injiya Trading and Projects were contracted to be the training provider again and the training took place from July 2012 to September 2012.

Mandla and Zwanane were responsible for teaching the group in 2012. Umkhumbane also has a facility separate from the incubation factories, which houses the manager’s office and a large boardroom which can be used for training.



Photograph 11: The upholstery and furniture making class July 2012

In photograph 11, the 2012 group are in the boardroom at Umkhumbane learning entrepreneurial skills.



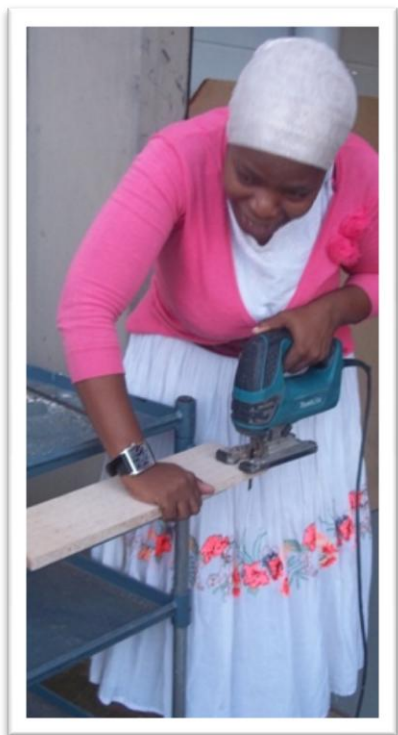
Photograph 12: Senzo Luthuli left, Jimmy Nomabhunga centre, Ntokozo Ncwane right

I observe in photograph 12 how serious and focussed participants Ntokozo Ncwane on the right of the picture with his two friends next to him, Jimmy Nomabonga and Sanele Luthuli. They told me that they enjoyed learning upholstery and furniture-making skills.



Photograph 13: Ntokozo Ncwane sewing fabric onto an ottoman, with Mrs Makhosana Bengu, looking on from behind

Photograph 13 shows Ntokozo in the centre with other learners watching him make a small ottoman, Makhosana Bengu is looking on from behind.



Photograph 14: Sanele Mngoma cutting wood for an ottoman

Photograph 14 shows Sanelesiwe Mngoma learning how to use a machine to cut wood in preparation for making a small ottoman. I observed how intense and focussed she was while carefully manipulating the electric tool.

After working on the skills development training programmes together in 2011 Ntombi, Mandla and I realised that we shared the same passion for enabling and empowering creative social and economic independence in others. Late in 2011, Ntombi and I discussed our concern that the participants of the 2011 groups had no resources to establish their own businesses. We reflected on our own difficulties when we started our own businesses - mine in 1995 and Ntombi's in 2006. Even though our experiences were twelve years apart, we recognised that we both experienced difficulty in:

1. accessing finance to establish our businesses,
2. learning how to market our businesses with a limited budget, and
3. growing our businesses to become sustainable.

During these discussions we began to plan how we could and use our own time and resources to assist some of the participants of the 2011 training programmes to establish their own businesses.

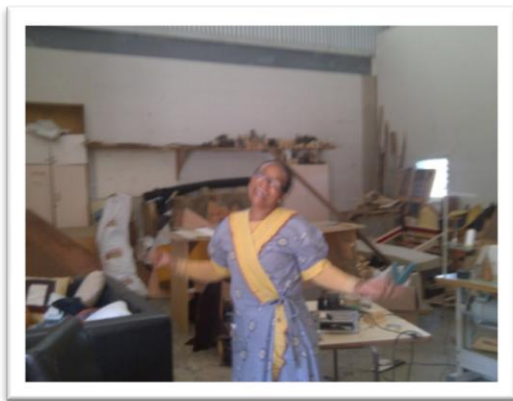
Then in December 2011, Ntombi, Mandla and I met at a restaurant in Florida Road Durban and while sharing a meal together we discussed possible names for our social and economic development project. We discussed how we would implement the project and we also discussed possibly obtaining funding to manage the basic financial needs the project may require. We agreed that we did not have the time or the finances to assist all of the participants who had attended the upholstery and entrepreneur course in October and November 2011 to establish businesses. We decided to allow the process of assisting others to unfold. I explained the action reflection cycle I was using for writing my masters dissertation (McNiff 2002a) and I also explained Jack Whitehead's living theory methodologies (Whitehead 2009). Arising out of this conversation, I drafted a framework for our social and economic development project in December 2011, which we decided to call "Art and Design Development" (Appendix 4: ADD)²⁰. We like the acronym ADD because the word **add** made sense to us because we wanted to **add** value by assisting others to become socially and economically independent.



Photograph 15: Zanele Zikalala left and Mrs Ndlela

²⁰ Our ADD project was slow to begin with in late 2011 and early 2012 because we were all very busy. In January 2012, Ntombi started to ADD value by assisting Zanele Zikalala and Mrs Ndlela when Zanele Zikalala and Mrs Ndlela rented a factory at Umkhumbane to establish their upholstery and furniture making business.

Photograph 15 is a picture of Zanele Zikalala and Mrs Ndlela taken in early 2012 after completing the upholstery and entrepreneurship course with Injiya and the ITU at the end of 2011. Photograph 14 shows how happy Zanele Zikalala and Mrs Ndlela are to have started their own furniture business. When Zanele Zikalala and Mrs Ndlela spoke to me during my taking these photographs, Zanele Zikalala and Mrs Ndlela told me they had no money to connect the electricity for their factory. They also told me they had no money for tools to do upholstery, no machines to sew curtains, cushions and other decorating items. They told me the factory next door to them allowed them to use an extension cord to connect for electricity when it was needed. They also told me that Ntombi allowed them to use her tools for upholstery during times when Ntombi and her employees were not using the tools.



Photograph 16: Zanele Zikhala

In photograph 16, Zanele with open arms is inviting me the observer of this picture to embrace her in her joy of being given the opportunity to develop social and economic independence. I observed in Sanele a woman who has the inner strength to transform her life, making use of the opportunity and the assistance she has received from others.



Photograph 17: Zanele Zikhala left, Mrs Ndlela in the background and Ntombi right

Photograph 17 is Ntombi on the right with Zanele and Mrs Ndlela, all of whom look very happy and appear to be enjoying the process of mentoring while establishing a new business.

In August 2012, while Ntombi was training the 2012 group, she told me about her financial difficulties. She had told me that in spite of having a constant stream of customers, she was experiencing a lack of money to use for running expenses in her business. To further complicate matters, Ntombi was also preparing furniture for her stand at the eThekweni municipality SMME trade show on the 21 to the 24 September 2012. Ntombi told me that she was concerned because she had to purchase fabric to cover the chairs for the trade show and make cushions to add detail and interest for her stand on the trade show.

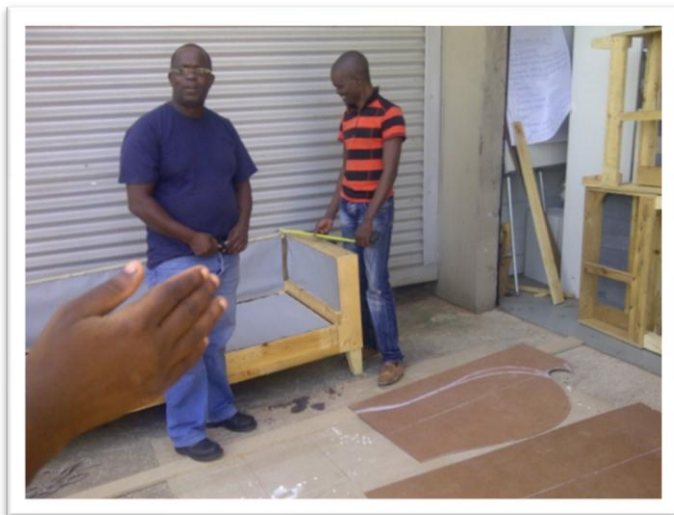
I was concerned about Ntombi's cash flow problems because I understood from my own lived experience (Whitehead 2009) in business how a lack of cash flow can hamper business progress on a practical level and interfere with a need for a good self-esteem on an emotional level. To assist Ntombi, I approached a decorating fabric wholesaler in Durban asking the company to supply Injiya with fabric. The company were in the process of launching a new range of fabrics and discontinued samples of the previous range of fabrics were in a store-room on the premises. The manager of the company instructed the store room supervisor to fill my motor vehicle with all their discontinued fabric samples. I could not fit it all in my car, but took what I could to Ntombi at Umkhumbane. The following day I took Mandla and Ntombi to the

decorating fabric wholesaler, introduced them to each other, and at the same time Mandla's car was filled to capacity with the rest of the discontinued samples. Since then Mandla has been invited directly by the decorating fabric supplier to collect discontinued samples when they became available.



Photograph 18: The chair at the SMME show with patches of donated decorating fabric

Photograph 18 provides evidence of the sample swatches from the fabric supplier being used to upholster a chair for the SMME trade show.



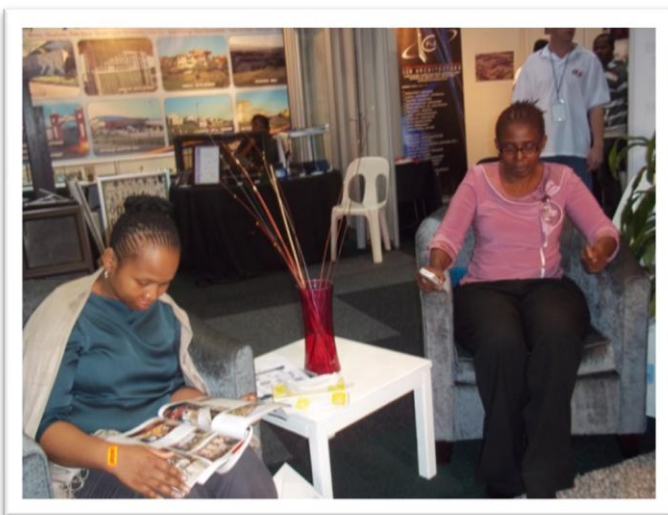
Photograph 19: Mandla Luthuli, left with Stephano John measuring

Mandla is on the left in photograph 19 with the outline on wood of that became the chair in photograph 17. Behind Mandla on the right is Stephano measuring a couch. Once he has the measurements, he cuts the fabric into pieces which he sews together in preparation for Zwanane to upholster the couch.



Photograph 20: Zwanane making the chair for the SMME show

Photograph 20 shows Zwanane making the frame for the chair to be upholstered. The chair in photograph 17 is made up of patches of the same colour tones but different designs from the discontinued samples. Ntombi chose the grey and black samples to blend in with the colour scheme for her stand at the SMME fair. The colour scheme was black, white and grey with patches of bright colour found in cushions. All the furniture on Ntombi's stand was manufactured by her and Zwanane and all the cushions and preparation for the upholstery was done by Stephano. By introducing Ntombi to the fabric supplier, I enabled Ntombi to decorate her stand the way she wanted to without having to worry about her cash flow.



Photograph 21: Ntombi at the SMME show with a customer

On 22 September 2012, I went to visit Ntombi's stand at the SMME fair, and when I arrived, Ntombi was busy with a potential customer in photograph 21. The immediate

background is a passage with an artist's stand in the far background. I observed Ntombi patiently waiting for her customer to look through a magazine before choosing designs for furniture. In a conversation later with Ntombi (p.c. 22 May 2013), she told me that she had decorated the lounge and four bedrooms of the house belong to the customer sitting with her in photograph 21.



Photograph 22: Ntombi sitting on the couch she made to hire

The white couch Ntombi is sitting on in photograph 22 was a couch that Ntombi wanted to hire to people who are having functions. In photograph 22, I observe Ntombi relaxed and happy on the couch for hire. The photograph triggered my memory of how I observed Ntombi's body language at the time as open and generous.

Even though Ntombi was becoming more successful, she often told me that she lacked confidence in herself. Ntombi said that her lack of confidence comes from being nervous when presenting the portfolio of services her business offers to potential customers. Ntombi said:

I am frightened of messing up when communicating with a customer (p.c. Ntombi Luthuli October 2012).

Yet, I see evidence of a confident person who is determined to grow her business in the visual evidence of the photographs of Ntombi. I see someone who keeps making progress, who also trusts in her religious faith to guide her in her success as a business woman. Because Ntombi often tells me how she lacks confidence in herself I offered to introduce her to Toastmasters International²¹, a public speaking

²¹ Toastmasters International is a non-profit educational organization that teaches public speaking and leadership skills through a worldwide network of meeting locations.

organisation, so that she could overcome her fear of giving a presentation to her customers. I have done so and Ntombi has joined Toastmasters after I accompanied her to a meeting in March 2013.

I recall observing Ntombi being completely focussed on her customer and I observed her taking details of his requirements with an attitude that he was her most important customer.

In mid-2012 the religious community running the woodwork factory at Mariannhill²² approached SEDA to find an emerging furniture making company to take over the factory because the members of the religious community were becoming too old to continue managing the factory. Late in 2012, Ntombi and Mandla were approached by the Small Business Development Agency (SEDA) in Durban to consider moving their business to Mariannhill. In February 2013, Ntombi moved her business from Umkhumbane to Mariannhill 20 kilometres outside Durban. The premises at Mariannhill are spacious enough to accommodate her expanding business.

Ntombi told me that from the day she moved to Mariannhill her cash flow had improved with an increase in daily cash sales because of a constant flow of customers ordering church benches, chairs and pulpits.

Zwanane moved to eTshelimnyama²³ close to Mariannhill in March 2013 to be closer to his place of work at Mariannhill. He rents a room for R450 per month and still visits his father and nephews at Umgababa every week-end.

Ntombi also employed more people when Injiya moved to Mariannhill because of the increased demand for furniture.

Since 1924, Toastmasters International has helped people of all backgrounds become more confident in front of an audience. <http://www.toastmasters.org/Members/MembersFunctionalCategories/AboutTI.aspx>

²² Father Francis Pfanner a catholic priest left his monastery in Bosnia and bought a farm called Zeekoeigat (Hippopotamus Pool) on Boxing Day in 1882. The property selected for his new mission was divided into smaller units and Pfanner coaxed the local chief, Manzini, to bring 300 families to live around the monastery and form a congregation. There the local children were given elementary schooling in the mornings, and practical courses in agriculture in the afternoons. They were also taught skills such as printing, carpentry, blacksmithing and tailoring, and the mission soon became self-supporting. Pfanner retired in 1892 and died 17 years later at the age of 84, but his work lives on, and the mission now provides education, work, health care and religious guidance to hundreds of thousands of people in the Pinetown area and throughout the province. <http://showme.co.za/durban/tourism/mariannhill-monastery-a-haven-of-tranquillity/>

²³ eTshelimnyama: The Place of the Black Stone

Not far from here, roughly 30 minutes from the thriving, bustling, cacophony of noise which is Durban's city centre, lies a community called Tshelimnyama (the black stone). You take an off-ramp, just before Marianhill toll plaza, and suddenly find yourself in a world you had no idea existed, particularly if you are a white, middle class South African. <http://thehappywafrican.wordpress.com/2012/07/03/tshelimnyama-the-place-of-the-black-stone/>



Photograph 23: James Ntusi with wooden candle holders used in churches

James Ntusi in photograph 23 was born in 1970. James told me that he had learnt to be a cabinet maker and carpenter when he left school and worked for a furniture manufacturer. James said he was always passionate about turning his wood-work skills into a fine craft and preferred to work on one item at a time rather than the mass production as was the case in his previous place of work. When he saw an article in the Isolezwe Newspaper about Ntombi which included her phone number, he contacted her and went to see her at Furntech in mid 2008. James said thereafter he made chairs on order for Ntombi in his spare time. When Ntombi moved to Mariannhill, James started working for her on a full time basis. James lives with his wife Lindiwe and three daughters Nolwaze, (20 years), Samdelo, (11 years), and Mhlengi (four years). James told me that Ntombi asked him to join Injiya at Mariannhill because he could provide them with the expertise he had working with large machinery to manufacture furniture.



Photograph 24: Dingaan Kitywa at the back left and Patrick Mchunu in the middle of the photograph

Dingaan Katywa is on the left in photograph 24 was born in 1988. Dingaan went to school at Mariannhill and loved visiting the wood-working factory where the Mariannhill brothers got to know him well. Once he was old enough the brothers employed him and when Ntombi and Mandla moved to Mariannhill they continued his employment. Dingaan lives with his mother whom he supports.

Patrick Mchunu in the middle of photograph 24 was born in 1981 and completed his schooling with a matriculation in 2009 at Mariannhill. Patrick told me that he had worked in the Mariannhill wood-working factory for the past seven years. Patrick told me that he was getting married soon and had no children. He lives in Mariannhill with his mother Nomuso Mchunu and sister, Ayanda Mchunu and neither are employed.

Bonisiwe Chwela in was born in 1982 and has a four year old child, Ayanda Khwela, Bonisiwe lives in Folweni²⁴ and attended the furniture-making and upholstery course at Injiya in 2011. When Ntombi realised that she needed a receptionist with an understanding of furniture making, upholstery and training, she employed Bonisiwe on 20 May 2013. Bonisiwe told me that her salary would assist her mother Mavis Khwela to support her two younger sisters, Andile (26 years) and Portia (16 years), both of whom are studying.

Interview with Ntombi's children

On the 20 May 2013 at 6.30 pm, I went to visit Ntombi's children. I had wanted to interview Ntombi again to clarify a few details about her business for my dissertation. When Ntombi phoned me to say she would not be home until very late because she had to see a customer, I suggested that I speak to her children, she agreed.

²⁴ Folweni township was established during the early 1930's, in those days there were only five leading surnames which were Makhanya, Shezi, Langa, Gumede and Khwelas who each owned a very big piece of land during those times.. Before Folweni was formerly established it was called Ezabelweni In 1970 to 1980 more houses were built the area was divided into 3 sections which were a, b and c Section c was given to the big companies like Ferodo and Toyota to build house subsidies for their workers, that when Folweni started to develop and people started flooding in. In 2013 there are about 40.000 to 50.000 people living in Folweni. <http://archive.org/details/04RawFootageArchiveImisebenziyentshaFolweniTownship>



Photograph 25: Nomakha, Nandi and Wami Luthuli on 20 May 2013

Wami (16) and the twins, Nomakha and Nandi (13) were at home. Photograph 25 is a photograph of Wami, on the left, Nandi in the middle and Nomakha on the right. Their older sister Nakedi (30) was not home from work yet. Wami was cooking supper for the family when I arrived. The three girls appeared to be shy again and I observed the same curiosity I had observed in 2007. I showed them the picture (photograph 5) that I had taken in 2007 and asked them to comment on it. They did not recall me taking the photograph. I asked them to tell me their story of how their mother had established her business. All three spoke at once and said the memory uppermost in their minds was that they had to tidy their bedroom before going to bed because that is where Ntombi worked. They also remembered that they would have to fall asleep with the sewing machine noise while Ntombi worked late into the night. Wami said:

It wasn't nice because of cleaning up and the noise because of our homework.
(p.c. Wami Luthuli 28 May 2012).

The children told me that their mother constantly explained to them that she had to work hard to sustain her business and bring money in for the family and that they would all benefit in the end. They also recall Ntombi encouraging them to work very hard at school because education and hard work would make them successful in their lives. They told me that there was also a scarcity of money during the first few years of Ntombi starting her business, but now Wami said:

There is money for the things we need and also for extra things if we want them
(p.c. Wami Luthuli 28 May 2013).

The three children told me that their mother had influenced their lives a lot and they learn from her to keep trying and never give up. They also said they remembered a few times when their mother seemed to be despondent because starting her business with so little finance was very hard on the whole family. They remember her telling them never to give up easily. They also said that their father was a very strong kind man but also very strict. They reflected on how supportive he was to the whole family all the time, always showing them a “strong side” (Wami p.c. 28 May 2012).

What can I add to my theory because of Ntombi? What can I add to my practice because of Ntombi? What remains unresolved about Ntombi?

In May 2013, I wanted to clarify my own memories with Ntombi before completing this dissertation. It was becoming increasingly difficult to spend time with Ntombi because she had become so busy since she moved to Mariannhill. I was passing Mariannhill on the 30 May 2013 and decided to visit Injiya hoping Ntombi would be there. She was not, but Mandla was. Mandla and I had had many conversations before this conversation (which are not recorded in my dissertation), about our work together to improve the creative economic lives of others. I asked him to assist me with some of the detail and dates that concerned me for accuracy in my dissertation. I asked Mandla if he thought I had influenced Ntombi’s creative economic independence. Mandla shook his head and said:

“Bonnie!! You have given us knowledge. THAT we cannot touch!!” (p.c. Mandla Luthuli 30 May 2013).

I asked him what he meant by that. I recall Mandla using his hands and facial expression to describe what he meant. He was trying to find the words to describe my influence on Ntombi. There were a few moments of silence, which were an important and significant for me because we understood each other within the silence. I believe the silence was an acknowledgement of a friendship and understanding arising out of our many conversations and interactions. The silence, I believe was acknowledging the unity in our work to improve the lives of others. Then Mandla said:

“Intangible knowledge, holistically your presence has brought in a component of going forward with the business, with training other people, with changing all of us. Your passion is there, I can see.” (p.c. Mandla Luthuli 30 May 2013).

I asked Mandla if we could try to recall historically how I had influenced Ntombi's creative economic independence. We started at the beginning in 2007 when he remembered my first visit to their home to photograph Ntombi. He recalled how he thought when he saw me, that because I cared and was interested in Ntombi's work, somehow my presence in their lives would be good for their progress in becoming economically independent. Mandla recalled how I assisted Ntombi when I could. We listed the times I assisted Ntombi.

1. Since 2007, I visited her place of work often, listened to her and encouraged her.
2. In 2009 or 2010, I recommended that she approach the local newspapers and invite journalists to interview her. I also contacted a journalist who interviewed Ntombi and Mandla.
3. In late 2010 I assisted Ntombi and Mandla to become accredited training providers with the SETA.
4. In August or September 2012, I introduced Ntombi and Mandla to the decorating fabric supplier when they most needed fabric.
5. In September 2012, I recommended Ntombi to Raizcorp and she became one of the successful applicants to be coached and mentored in business by Raizcorp²⁵.
6. In 2013, I took Ntombi to a Toastmasters International meeting.

When I told Mandla what Zwanane had told me about his life assisting his father and nephews,

"In my heart I have a feeling that good stories are not told". (p.c. Mandla Luthuli 30 May 2013)

Mandla was referring to the story of Zwanane's life that I had just shared with him. Mandla told me how it pleased him that I was telling good stories because he said he believed that the good stories of success in becoming economically independent should be told. He believed that telling the stories would encourage others when they go through the difficulties encountered when trying to become self-employed.

²⁵ <http://www.raizcorp.com/raizcorp/> Raizcorp is Africa's only unfunded for-profit business incubator model, which provides full service **business support** programmes that guide entrepreneurs to profitability

Mandla then said:

“Government is all of us. We are responsible for the people, we have to help government.” (p.c Mandla Luthuli 30 May 2013)

Mandla told me that he thought Zwanane was also another person assisting the South African Government to educate people.

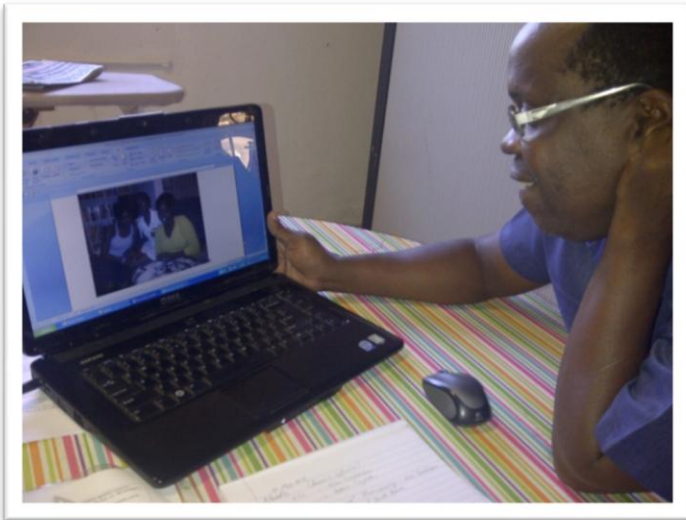
I told Mandla that I believed Ntombi, Mandla and I, in our work together, and in their work in their business, were experiencing the lived experience of Ubuntu (Mangaliso 2001; Whitehead 2004a). I asked him if he agreed and he replied:

“You cannot define Ubuntu, you experience it like love, dignity – they are ingredients of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is an action word – a verb – like love. I am sceptical of the word because I believe it is abused in many ways. Yes, you are correct but more than Ubuntu. Now there is an element of responsibility and accountability. If we don’t do this thing the socio-economic situation won’t improve in our country. Your study is a very essential. It is a very essential study to see and look at how our work influences and changes peoples’ lives.” (p.c. Mandla Luthuli 30 May 2013)

Mandla then told me about a sculptor that he had met, since Injiya had moved to Mariannhill, who worked from the Mariannhill premises. Mandla and I agreed that we would interview the sculptor in order to assist him as our next ADD candidate. That was the end of our conversation because Mandla was already late to fetch his children from school.

The seed of our relationship and growth was planted when we met in 2007. We have both grown together. I have influenced Ntombi and she has influenced me. Ntombi’s belief in herself and her own passion for her business inspired me through the years from 2007 to 2011 when I experienced personal difficulty in believing in my own worth. As I was being influenced by Ntombi whose positive energy inspired me to be positive, I was listening to Ntombi’s concerns for her own business growth and influencing and inspiring her at the same time.

In 2010, when I started to get to know Mandla, Mandla had a very significant influence on me, because he encouraged me when I felt burdened by the enormity of our work in influencing economic independence in others. Mandla encouraged me to keep going with my work even when I felt overwhelmed by it.



Photograph 26: Mandla Luthuli looking through photographs with me 30th May 2013

When I took photograph 26 in May 2013 I recall thinking how hard Ntombi has worked since I met her in 2007 to bring to fruition the ambition she told me she had to have a business that grows continuously. I recalled my concern about the difficulties Ntombi would face to establish and grow her business and I reflected on whether my concerns for others could sometimes be based on my own perceived inadequacies.

I believe that Ntombi has lived the traits that Munns talks of in his practical guide to the informal and small business people of South Africa:

Patience, timing and courage are the super traits of the modern day entrepreneur. To be ready is much. To have the capacity of waiting is much, but to be able to utilise the right moment is everything. In each one of us are places where we have never gone and only by extending the boundaries, do we ever find them (2011:5).

The evidence of my influence on Ntombi is Ntombi herself making use of the opportunities for growth that I provided for her from 2007. I have made time to listen to Ntombi describing her anxieties and fears to me. I have acted on the information she has given me by directing her to places that can help her continued business and personal growth like Toastmasters.

I showed photograph 3 to Ntombi on 22 May 2013 when she came to visit me at home. Her first reaction was:

“Is THAT me? I cannot believe it! Look where I am now! A successful business! Bonnie, you are going to make me famous with all the writing you do about me!”
(p.c. Ntombi Luthuli 22 May 2013).

I have used explanation marks to try and describe Ntombi’s tone of voice. Ntombi’s tone of voice as I heard it was excited, delighted and proud.

While writing the story of Ntombi for my dissertation, I decided to include the story of Ntokozo Ncwane because I realised that my influence on creative economic transformation was ultimately increasing in numbers

Ntokozo Ncwano was a participant of the July to September 2012 group learning upholstery and business management skills at Umkhumbane. Ntombi and I noticed Ntokozo because of his ability to learn very quickly. Before the end of the course in September 2012, Ntokozo showed us a handbag he had made. He told us that he had bought the leather from a street child. Ntokozo used the leather to make a hand bag and seat belts from an abandoned vehicle were used for the handle. I spoke to Ntokozo because I was fascinated by his ability to recycle waste material into a very attractive hand bag. Ntokozo told me that he had been an architecture student at the DUT and had to abandon his studies at the end of his first year because of a lack of finance. Ntombi, Mandla and I agreed for us to assist Ntokozo as a candidate in our ADD project. I phoned Ntokozo to ask him if I could include his story in my dissertation and he agreed to meet me on Saturday 18 May 2013 at his home where I could interview him and take more photographs. Ntokozo’s story follows in chapter 9.

Chapter 6

What evidence do I have of how I influenced the emerging creative economic in dependence in the work of Khanyisile Zungu?

Context

Khanyisile Zungu was born in 1980 and raised in Ulundi²⁶ a town in rural north eastern KwaZulu-Natal. Khanyisile's mother, Shiella Zungu is a dressmaker in Ulundi. Khanyisile told me that she was influenced by her mother to study fashion design. In January 2006, Khanyisile enrolled at Lindiwe Khuzwayo Fashion Academy in Durban. Her father, Sipho Zungu, was very unhappy with her choice of career. Khanyisile told me that he did not understand how being in the fashion business could be a good career like teaching.

What did I do to collect the data to discover the evidence of how I have influenced Khanyisile's creative economic independence?

I have used the reports from the November 2007 NVC programme, the 2008/2009 Patternmaking course, the 2009 NVC Management Programme and the Wednesday Coaching Workshops in 2010 to verify the dates that Khanyisile participated in the training opportunities that I provided for her. In my collection of photographs I found photographs of Khanyisile, to provide critical reflections of my influence on Khanyisile's emerging creative economic independence. My telephone conversations with Khanyisile are described in her story, including the emails we have sent each other and the BlackBerry Messenger communication we had during May and June 2013.

Before I began writing the story of Khanyisile's progression towards creative economic independence, I created a video using movie maker on Microsoft Office, so that I could see her progress each year from 2007. In order to assist me with my reflective process about Khanyisile, I created the reflective drawing below in figure 1.

²⁶ The Ulundi Local Municipality is located in north-eastern KwaZulu-Natal. The Ulundi Local Municipality area is approximately 4 185 km². It includes the Traditional Authorities of Buthelezi, Hlatshwayo, Jama, Lukwazi Ntuli, Mbatha, Mpungose, Ndebele, Ntombela, Usuthu Ximba, Zondo. Approximately half the Municipal area consists of commercial farms and the area supports a substantial agricultural community. Ulundi town represents the only urban area in the municipal area and therefore plays an important role in the provision of social and economic facilities to the total population of Ulundi. This places an enormous pressure on the urban area for the delivery of services. A significant number of households in the rural area are headed by females, who are usually more disadvantaged in terms of resources and education. <http://www.ulundi.gov.za/>

I used the progressive circles with arrows to create a timeline for my relationship with Khanyisile. By doing this I could visualise the process that Khanyisile went through with me in becoming economically independent. I wrote words to assist with my memories. My reflections and memories assisted me to write her story.

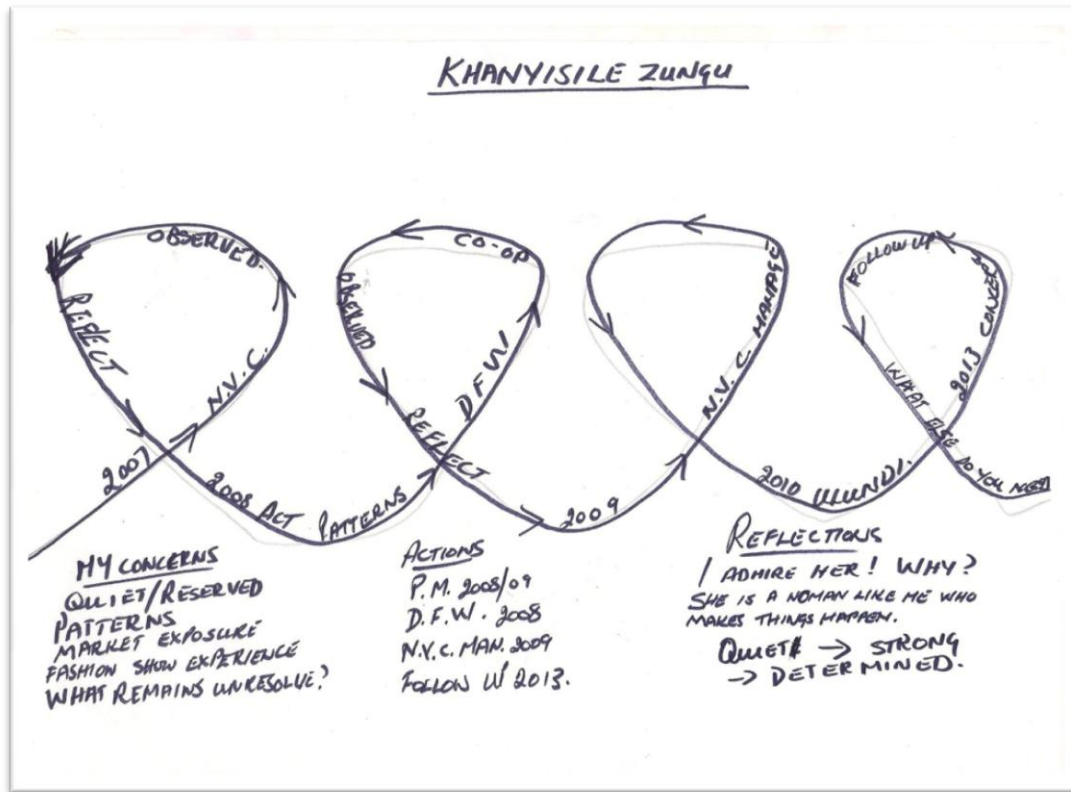


Figure 5: My graphic representation of my reflections about Khanyisile Zungu

What were my concerns about Khanyisile? Why was I concerned? What was the evidence for my concern? What action did I take to address my concern about Khanyisile? What happened? What evidence do I have of my influence in the development of Khanyisile's creative economic independence?

In November 2007 Khanyisile enrolled for the New Venture Creation (NVC) course with her peers from the Lindiwe Khuzwayo Fashion Academy.

In November 2007, when I first met Khanyisile, I remember being aware of her pretty face and lovely smile. I observed that she was shy and quiet. I seldom heard her voice. I was concerned that because Khanyisile was so quiet and unassuming, she may struggle to establish a business in fashion. I did not realise at the time that behind Khanyisile's apparent shyness was a quietly determined business woman. I

incorrectly assumed that she needed to be more outgoing in order to have a fashion business.



Photograph 27: Khanyisile Zungu November 2007



Photograph 28: Khanyisile Zungu November 2007

In November 2007, I took Photograph 27 and 28 on the day of registration for the NVC programme. I observe in photograph 27 Khanyisile appears to be very shy and serious. In photograph 28 I observe how when she smiles, her face lights up and this photograph reminds me of how often Khanyisile's face would light up with a bright and friendly smile. Khanyisile completed the NVC Programme and in February 2008 received her certificate from the ITU.



Photograph 29: Gladys Dimba left, Khanyisile middle, looking at Zodwa right

Photograph 29 was taken in the sewing lab at Ethekewini FET College, where the November NVC participants manufactured their products to sell while completing the practical component of the NVC programme. In this photograph, Gladys Dimba is cutting red fabric in the background, beads are scattered on the working table on the left, Zandile Bulose is beading fabric and Khanyisile is watching her from behind. I observe in this photograph how Khanyisile has a slight smile on her face.



Photograph 30: Gladys Dimba left, Khanyisile middle, Zandile right

In photograph 30, Khanyisile is focused on her task which was to keep a record of the costs to produce products and work out the mark-up on the costs in order to make a profit when the products were sold. I do not remember what product Khanyisile and the group in photographs 3 and 4 made, neither does Khanyisile. Gladys and Zandile are focussed on their work as well in photograph 4. Photographs 3 and 4 remind me of how I observed Khanyisile working hard with a very pleasant, helpful disposition.



Photograph 31: Khanyisile left, Zandile middle, Sthandiwe right

Photograph 31, is Khanyisile on the left with Sthandiwe on the right and Zandile behind her on the right. I remember that Khanyisile was always working and in this photograph was busy with hand sewing a garment. Sthandiwe had paused from working on the sewing machine for the photograph.

Once the November 2007 NVC programme was complete, I was concerned because many participants from that NVC group had weak technical pattern-making and sewing skills. I was concerned because I had observed the difficulties some of the NVC group experienced when they were doing the practical component of the NVC programme. Some of the NVC group needed more tuition in pattern-making and the use of an industrial sewing machine. Because I realised that they needed further training in technical skills, I accessed funding from the CTFL SETA for a one year pattern-making course which began in February in 2008 and ended in March 2009. Khanyisile, wanting to improve her pattern-making skills, enrolled for the pattern-making course.



Photograph 32: Khanyisile left, Dumisani Radebe middle and Sthandiwe back

Photograph 32, Khanyisile in front with Dumisani Radebe in the middle and Sthandiwe Shongwane behind him. I took this photograph while they were in a pattern-making lesson. This photograph reminds me of how the NVC group enjoyed their pattern-making course. Khanyisile told me that she enjoyed each moment while improving her pattern-making skills. She told me that she appreciated the opportunity to participate in the one year pattern-making course and, because of this she worked very hard while she was on the course to improve her pattern-making skills.

In mid 2008, while Khanyisile was doing the pattern-making course, Khanyisile, Thabile and Sthandiwe registered a co-operative with the South African Department of Trade and Industry, which they called “Rock-on”. Khanyisile told me that the group wanted to work together in a new business.



Photograph 33: Sthandiwe left, Thabile middle and Khanyisile right

In Photograph 33, Sthandiwe is on the left with Thabile in the middle and Khanyisile on the right in the uniforms they decided to make to create an identity for their cooperative²⁷. I observe in this photograph Khanyisile warm and friendly smile.

I was also concerned that many of the participants including Khanyisile in the November 2008 NVC group needed to experience showcasing a range of fashion garments in a professional fashion show. This concerned me because I believe and know from experience that participating in fashion shows is a way to learn good technical skills while making patterns and sewing garments. It is an opportunity to practice good quality workmanship. It is also a way to discover how the intended target market interprets designs and responds to them. Participating in fashion shows is a way to become known as a fashion designer and access more customers. Khanyisile was one of the participants in the Durban Fashion Week (DFW) on 25 to 28 June 2008.



Photograph 34: Khanyisile with DFW group choosing fabrics

Photograph 34 taken in March 2008 is of the members of the DFW group who collaborated to develop a range of clothing, for the DFW. Dumisani Radebe is on the left in a green T-shirt, Sthandiwe Shongwane is seated in a black jacket, and Khanyisile is next to Dumisani. Siyanda Mthethwa is next to Khanyisile with Sandisiwe Dani at the back on the right. Thabile Mntlangeni is seated below

²⁷ Unfortunately, the co-operative did not continue as a business because Thabile and Khanyisile left Durban.

Sandisiwe. I observe in photograph 34 that Khanyisile did not push herself forward. The photograph reminds me of how I noticed Khanyisile participating fully in all the activities that took place in preparation for the DFW even though she did not speak much. I remember how Khanyisile would be given a task by one of the group and do the work quietly. She listened more and took part in the group effort for the DFW with a quiet, hard-working and committed attitude. Syanda Mthethwa's hand-painted fabrics are on the table with Sandisiwe's storyboard on the right.



Photograph 35: Khanyisile left with Greg Wallis right, during DFW mentoring

Photograph 35 is a photograph of Greg Wallis on the right while mentoring Sandisiwe next to him, Zandile in the middle and Khanyisile on the left. I observe in this photograph that Khanyisile is looking very serious. I remember that Khanyisile was very serious because Greg Wallis was having a stern discussion with the DFW group. This photograph reminds me of this particular mentoring session when Greg examined all the garments that were being made for the DFW. Greg was explaining to the group how important the technical skills of sewing were while producing garments for an international fashion show. He explained that the quality of work inside the garment would definitely influence how good or bad the garment looked on the ramp. He was strongly advising the DFW group to be very particular about the quality of their sewing. He was also explaining that the fabrics – satin, chiffon and lace – which they had chosen were difficult to manipulate on the sewing machine and he was giving them advice on how to sew these fabrics. I remember it was at this mentoring session that Greg and I became concerned that the DFW group

needed more intense mentoring and assistance while manufacturing the garments for the DFW because we believed that they needed someone with experience to assist them constantly. I approached Michelle Starling from Cachet Clothing and asked if the DFW group could work with the experienced staff from her factory which manufactured occasion wear and had also participated in many international fashion shows. Michelle willingly agreed to become one of the mentors for the DFW group.

I took the DFW group to Cachet Clothing immediately with all their patterns, fabrics and trims. Michelle created a space in her cutting room for the group to work because it was separate from the rest of the factory and the sample machinists from Cachet clothing also worked in the cutting room.²⁸.



Photograph 36: Khanyisile left, examining a garment with a DFW mentor Ishika Naidoo

In photograph 36, Khanyisile is being assisted by Ishika Naidoo from Cachet clothing. I remember that the garment was being examined for fit on the dummy as well as the quality of work from the outside of the garment. This photograph of Khanyisile reminds me of how she takes her work very seriously and when I asked Khanyisile to comment on this photograph she told me that she remembered being very concerned about her sewing skills. She reminded me that she had only learned to use an industrial sewing machine when she joined the November 2007 NVC group and had therefore not been using an industrial sewing machine for more than

²⁸ Cutting room: the area in a clothing factory where the fabric are cut before being manufactured into garments. Sample machinist: A sample machinists is a very experienced sewing machinist who makes samples in a clothing factory. Samples are used to show a range of clothing for sales to buyers in retail stores.

six months. She also reminded me of how apprehensive she was during the manufacturing of the garments for the DFW because of her inexperience and need to produce very good quality garments.



Photograph 37: One of the garments Khanyisile worked on

Photograph 37, shows the garment that Khanyisile produced on the ramp during the DFW with one of Sandisiwe's handmade necklaces and bracelets which complete the garment with suitable accessories.

Once the DFW was over successfully, I became concerned that even though the DFW group now had the experience of an international fashion show and their pattern-making skills were improving, they were not yet making money for themselves. When I questioned Khanyisile after the DFW, she told me that her mother was still sending money to her each month in order for her to survive financially in Durban. I was concerned because I felt that it was unfair for her mother

to have the financial burden of supporting her daughter. Khanyisile joined the NVC Management programme and the coaching workshops I held on a Wednesday at the DUT. I remember that Khanyisile again participated in these additional opportunities for her to grow in business knowledge with commitment to equip her with business skills. In each of the opportunities presented to Khanyisile, I observed how she participated fully in her quiet unassuming way, never speaking much.

In August 2009 Khanyisile told me that her ultimate goal was to go back to Ulundi to begin her own fashion business. In October 2010 Khanyisile went back to Ulundi. For the purposes of this dissertation, I needed to establish my influence on Khanyisile's creative economic independence, so I phoned her on the 9 May 2013 to follow up on her progress. Khanyisile told me that she was very happy to be back in Ulundi and plans "to make her business grow wider" (p.c. Khanyisile 9 May 2013). She is currently renting premises in Ulundi to run her own fashion business. She designs and manufactures occasion wear for private clients, prints on T-shirts for schools and colleges in her town and surrounding areas and is also teaching people to sew. Khanyisile said she would like to eventually establish a proper sewing school that is accredited with the relevant education authority of South Africa.

Khanyisile says she registered her business officially late in 2012 and is making enough money to assist her mother financially when the need arises. Khanyisile told me that the NVC management programme had taught her to be more professional. She also mentioned that the coaching I gave to her in the Wednesday coaching workshops helped her to manage the finances and administration of her business very well.

When I asked Khanyisile what influence I had had on her creative economic independence, she laughed. I asked her why she was laughing and her answer was: "It is too big to tell" (p.c. Khanyisile 9 May 2013). I asked her to be specific and she told me that because of my influence, she could make patterns with confidence, she was no longer afraid of an industrial sewing machine and most particularly the marketing lectures I gave assisted her to market her business more effectively. The marketing tools she mostly adopted from my workshops were making use of social media for marketing. The social media tools Khanyisile mostly uses are Facebook, Whatsapp and BlackBerryMessenger (BBM). Khanyisile told me that the most

responses came from pictures of her designs she had posted on the social media sites she uses.

I went to Khanyisile's pictures on Facebook, and observed from the pictures, that Khanyisile presents herself in a very positive way. On the 10 May 2013, I sent Khanyisile an email asking her how her business was progressing in Ulundi. I requested that she email me some of the pictures she had been posting on facebook since January 2013 and to describe her experience and thoughts on the opportunities I had provided for her to begin and sustain her own fashion

Khanyisile replied to me on 14 May 2013. Below is her email reply unedited by me.

Khanyisile is a positive person I'm always willing to learn new things in life that's makes my life better. And I also help others if they need help.

That's is why I'm here now with life and that's the thing makes me to know Bonnie. While I was at my Fashion Academy Bonnie sent an invite to attend the New Venture Creation programme.

NVC programme: This course helps me a lot since I was not used to saw with the industrial machine this was the first time to touch it, and I was afraid to use it. Its teach me how to manage the business since we were making bags and earrings to sell. Its also grown me to understand my partners since we were working as a group. Bonnie was helping us a lot in that programme

PATTERN MAKING

Again Bonnie in 2009 told me about the Pattern Making Course that was going to start. Since I'm always interested to learn new things I decide to join the class. I learned a lot in that course even now its helps me to my clients. I'm not afraid to do the designs that my clients give me.

After that course we form a co-op by the name of Style Evolution and Bonnie was still assisting us. That's was the best opportunity for me to share the ramp with the well known designers. Its motivates me to push my business.

Business coach

Bonnie organise Marlene Powell (business coach) to assist us on how to manage the business. Then she called me to be part of that group. Wow that course teach me a lot on how to manage business and how to manage your finances.

I've learnt that I must open the business account to put money for the business. And give myself the salary. And I must register my business so that I can be able to open the business account. And if you are a business owner you must always

look for new opportunities. I want to say Big Up to Bonnie she's so kind and always willing to help.

My life in ULUNDI

Life was hard financially in Durban so I decide to go back to my hometown ULUNDI towards the end of 2010 with all the skills that I've gained in Durban. In October 2010 Zululand District organise the business fair so I exhibit with my clothes that is where I get a lot of response from the people around Ulundi since then I didn't look back. And I manage to rent my own premises. And I showcase in one of the art centre (INDONSA) they invite me to inspire other students there. And I wish my business should grow bigger and I use to teach other ladies how to sew. I've registered my business last year as KHANYI STYLE

MY ZULU WORDS (Khanyisile's own Zulu words)

Ngihlala njalo ngikulungele ukukhula ngezindlela ezahlukene ebhizinisini nokubhekana nazo zonke izinqinamba eziqhamukayo. UBonnie uhlezi njalo elangazelela ukwazi ukuthi kuhamba kanjani ebhizinisini lami ngokungifonela noma athumele imilayezo futhi ngiyakujabulela lokho. Ngiswele imilomo eyizinkulungwane yokubonga lomuntu wesifazane kodwa ngiyacabanga kwaba luhlelo lukaNkulunkulu olwangixhumanisa naye.

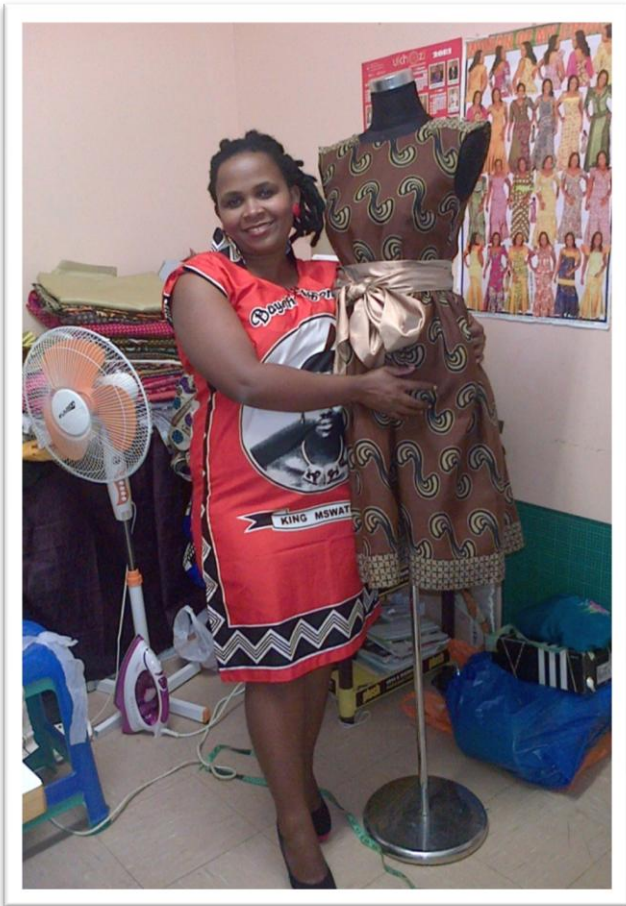
MY ENGLISH (Khanyisile's own English)

I'm always prepared to grow in many ways in business and face all challenges. Bonnie is always interested in my whereabouts and I appreciate that she always call. I have no many words to thank this woman but I think its God plan. May God bless Bonnie with more days of living.

Sent from my BlackBerry wireless device

After writing Khanyisile's story I sent her an email on 13 May 2013 asking her to check my version of her story and suggest any changes she would like made. Khanyisile responded on the same day and wrote:

Wow Bonnie it's interesting I'm happy about it (13 May 2013)



Photograph 38: Khanyisile in her business in Ulundi KwaZulu-Natal

Photograph 38, is a photograph of Khanyisile in 2013 in her own business. I observe a sense of pride in Khanyisile being a fashion designer back in her hometown Ulundi, northern KwaZulu-Natal. Khanyisile appears to be proud of her heritage because she is surrounded by fabrics and designs that are popular amongst many Zulu women.



Photograph 39: Khanyisile on the left with a client

Khanyisile is working with a client from Ulundi in photograph 39. I observe Khanyisile leaning, towards her client, the picture they are looking at and she looks comfortable leaning over her own industrial sewing machine. I observe joy on her face as she assists her client. By observing this photograph I remember Khanyisile's lovely smile which comes through while showing an interest in choosing designs with her client.

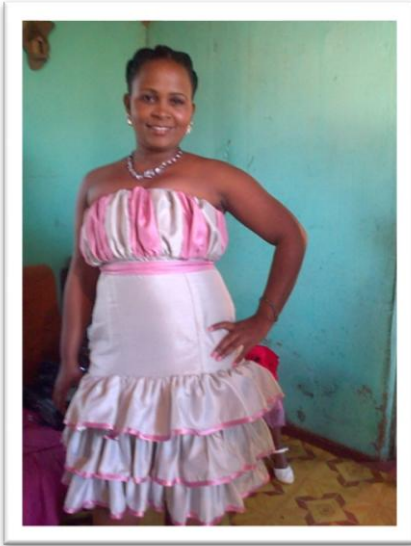


Photograph 40: Bridal Gown



Photograph 41: Bridal party

I asked Khanyisile to send me photograph 40 and 41 after I saw them on Facebook. I wanted to know more about these photographs. Khanyisile told me that the dress on the dummy in photograph 40 was for the bride in photograph 41, Khanyisile told me that she made all the garments seen in photograph 41, which I observed to be well-made traditional garments worn by a very happy wedding party.



Photograph 42: Pink dress made by Khanyisile



Photograph 43: Khanyisile in 2013

Photographs 42 and 43 were uploaded onto face book by Khanyisile in May 2013. I asked Khanyisile to send the photographs because I wanted to include them in my visual evidence of her success. I observed her smile which I believe has become

more mature and confident. When I look at photograph 43 I take Khanyisile seriously as a confident business woman with her own style and personal brand.

On 18 May 2013, I created a video of Khanyisile using most of the photographs I had of her to send to her because when I sent photographs to her to ask her to describe herself, she could not open the attachments on the emails I sent her. I know that via her Blackberry, Khanyisile has access to the internet, so I thought that if I created a video, uploaded it onto YouTube, Khanyisile could watch the video on YouTube²⁹ and then respond to my request either by email or BlackBerry Messenger. I began by posting the video on Facebook. The introduction I used for the video was:

Khanyisile Zungu did the New Venture Creation Programme with me at the DUT in 2007. One of the outcomes of my masters about creative economic independence, is writing success stories. Now I am making videos from all the photographs I have collected since 2006. Here is Khanyi, a successful Fashion Designer and business woman in Ulundi (18 May 2013)

Khanyisile immediately responded: “Wow Bonnie, I feel tears when I look where I come from, God is great, thank you a lot” (BBM from Khanyisile, 18th May 2013). And “Wow Bonnie, you are a star, *in tears*” (Khanyisile, Facebook response 18th May 2013). Dumisani Radebe posted the following repose: “Youth entrepreneurship will create jobs and by creating jobs will feed more people” (Facebook response Dumisani Radebe 18 May 2013).

What can I add to my theory because of Khanyisile? What can I add to my practice because of Khanyisile? What evidence do I have of how I have influenced economic independence in Khanyisile? What are my critical reflections?

I have come to realise that by writing the story of Khanyisile’s progression to creative economic dependence that creating the right spaces for creative economic independence is very important. I realise that I used my intuition to find/make spaces for Khanyisile to improve her pattern-making skills and sewing skills on an industrial sewing machine. I created the space for her to participate in an international fashion show, with practical mentoring from me. The coaching workshops which I facilitated were other spaces where Khanyisile had the opportunity to improve her business and marketing skills.

²⁹ <http://youtu.be/eXLYe2NP0SU>

I did not realise that the video of Khanyisile's creative economic progress, would have such a positive impact. Khanyisile told me in a telephone conversation on the 19 June 2013 how proud she felt that there was a video about her on YouTube. Because of the response to the video, I am encouraged to create videos of the many other people in whom I have been endeavouring to develop creative economic independence since 2006.

I have also benefitted from writing about Khanyisile because of the joy that I have experienced when Khanyisile has responded so positively to my writing about her. By writing about her I have been encouraged to write the stories of many others whom I have assisted and whom I assist now.

The visual record validates my work as a reflective practitioner researcher and I have discovered that while writing about Khanyisile.

Khanyisile also told me that her father is happy with her business now because he has seen the evidence of her determination to achieve her goal and succeed in business and become economically independent.

I realise that I need not have been concerned about the fact that I observed Khanyisile was a quiet person. Even though she was quiet, she has not wasted the learning opportunities presented to her between 2008 and 2010. I have shown that I care about Khanyisile because of the support I have provided for her through creating these spaces. Because I created the spaces for training, coaching and mentoring, I have encouraged Khanyisile to reach her goal which she says she has reached because she is now in a sustainable creative business.

I care about Khanyisile. I will continue to assist her to sustain her creative economic independence by continuing to have a relationship and be available to her for listening, coaching and mentoring if she needs me to.

Chapter 7

What evidence do I have of how I influenced the emerging creative economic independence in the work of Sandisiwe Dani?

Context

Sandisiwe was born on the 6 December 1985 in East London, Eastern Cape, South Africa. Sandisiwe's mother, Nosolo Dani, was a teacher and passed away in February 2012. Sandisiwe told me she remembered, as a child, she loved seeing her mother enjoy choosing clothing carefully and dressing very beautifully. She was also very proud of how her mother decorated their home very tastefully. These qualities Sandisiwe saw in her mother, she told me had a strong influence on her desire to be in a creative field of work. Sandisiwe told me that her mother was a very kind, strong and determined woman, even after she had a stroke in 2008. Her father, Batini Dani, is an auditor. Sandisiwe told me her father loved to draw and when she was a young child, she loved watching her father draw. She told me that seeing her father's drawings influenced her own desire to be creative.

In 2006, when Sandisiwe left her home town of East London, to study Fashion Design at Lindiwe Khuzwayo Fashion Academy in Durban, her father was disappointed at her choice of career and Sandisiwe recalled how his lack of support saddened her, but she followed her dream anyway. Much later in January 2013, she told me that only after her father had seen how passionate she was about her career as a fashion designer did he start to support her choice of career again. He also acknowledged that he had seen how she had grown as a self-employed, self-sufficient business woman. Sandisiwe wrote:

"I discovered my talent and my skills when I was very young. My mother took me to a high school that taught fashion design where I learnt most of my theory. When I finished I went to Tech to study fashion design again which was hard since my father didn't approve" (Sandisiwe NVC evaluation sheet 2010).

In 2007, Sandisiwe graduated with a Certificate in Fashion Design from Lindiwe Khuzwayo Fashion Academy.

What did I do to collect the data to discover the evidence of how I have influenced Sandisiwe's creative economic independence?

I used the funding reports to the CTFL SETA from the November 2007 NVC programme, the 2008/2009 pattern-making course, the 2009 NVC Management Programme and the UKZN FEP lectures to verify the dates that Sandisiwe participated in the training opportunities that I provided for her. I used the collection of photographs that I have taken of my work to find photographs of Sandisiwe to assist me with my memory of her as well as to reflect on my observations of Sandisiwe in the photographs, to write about the influence that I had on her creative economic independence. In October 2011 and December 2012, I interviewed Sandisiwe and took a video of her to watch later in order to create the narrative below.

In April 2013, I began to draw the diagram below to assist me to remember the events during my relationship with Sandisiwe that contributed to her creative economic independence. I used the progressive circles with arrows to create a timeline for my relationship with Sandisiwe. By doing this I could visualise my influence on the process that Sandisiwe went through as she became increasingly economically independent.

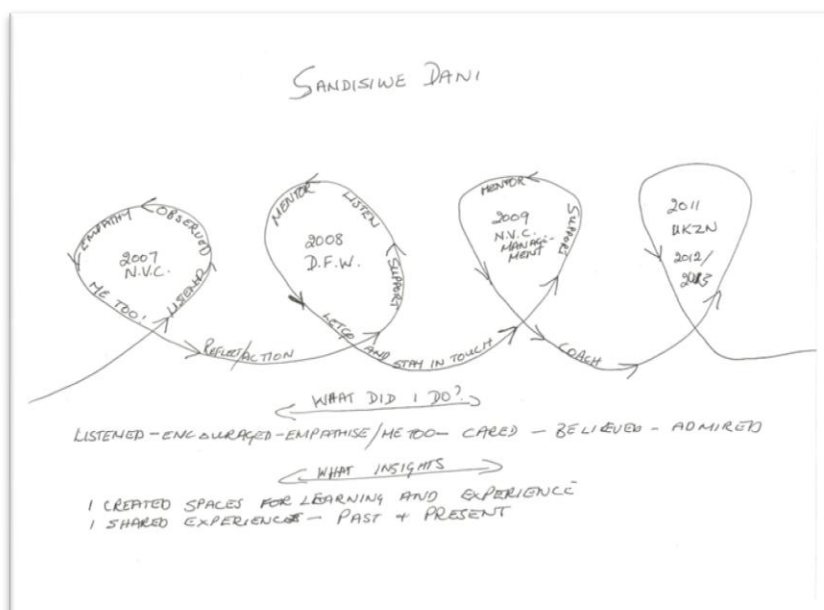


Figure 6: My graphic representation of my reflections about Sandisiwe Dani

What were my concerns about Sandisiwe? Why was I concerned? What evidence did I have for my concerns? What action did I take to address my concerns about Sandisiwe? What evidence do I have of my influence in the development of Sandisiwe's creative economic independence? What did I do to collect data to discover the evidence of how I have influenced Sandisiwe's creative economic independence?

In July 2007, Sandisiwe attended the New Venture Creation (NVC) course at the DUT while she was completing her final year of studies in fashion at Lindiwe Khuzwayo Fashion Academy in Durban.

When I first met Sandisiwe, I was concerned about her ability to make a success of a small business because she was deeply apprehensive about the financial aspects of business. Late in 2007, Sandisiwe told me that she was: "afraid of understanding finance and business administration" (p.c. Sandisiwe Dani 2007). Sandisiwe told me that all she wanted to do was create beautiful designs for customers and not deal with finance. Deciding on what product to manufacture and understanding her market was where she felt confident in her abilities. She told me that she was having difficulty writing a good business plan, which was a requirement for the NVC course. She told me that writing the financial and administrative section of her business plan was causing her much anxiety. I remember listening carefully to Sandisiwe, but at the time I was dealing with my own feelings of powerlessness, anxiety and vulnerability. I was feeling overwhelmed by what I perceived to be the enormity of the work I wanted to do to influence creative economic independence. Therefore, I listened without suggesting anything to her.

Early in 2008, when I gave Sandisiwe a lift one day, she again told me how she had no confidence in her ability to own and run a small fashion business. She told me that her fear of finance and administration almost paralysed her. She said she could not deal with her fear because she said she was too frightened to. Those twenty minutes in the motor car were very significant for me. I knew exactly what she was saying because that is how I felt when I had my own business from 1994 to 2001. I could empathise with her (Zander and Zander 2002; Timm 2012). But, simultaneously, Sandisiwe also felt that her faith as a Christian would assist her to achieve her business success. She told me that her mother had had a stroke earlier in 2008. I could also empathise with Sandisiwe about her mother's stroke, because

my father had a stroke when I was a similar age to Sandisiwe. I felt a connection with Sandisiwe and I wanted to find ways to assist her after that conversation, but I did not know how I would assist her at the time.

When I saw the notice of Durban Fashion Week (DFW) on the 25 to 28 June 2008, I realised that this was an ideal opportunity for a group of young novice designers to participate in a fashion show. I invited Sandisiwe to participate in the DFW group which I coached and mentored. It soon became evident that Sandisiwe's superior ability to design, had a significant influence on the DFW group to produce an outstanding range on the ramp.



Photograph 44: The Durban Fashion Week (DFW) group with Sandisiwe at the back right

Photograph 44 was taken in March 2008 of the DFW group at their first meeting. Dumisani Radebe is on the left with Sthandiwe Shongwane in front of him. Standing at the back are Khanyisile Zungu, Sandile Nyambose and Sandisiwe looking over his shoulder. Zandile Bulose is seated in yellow and Thabila Mlangeni is next to her. I asked each member of the group to bring a storyboard, which is a large board with fashion drawings and ideas, to this meeting. Sandisiwe's storyboard can be seen on the right of the picture below the swatches of fabric, in the lower third of photograph 44. Sandisiwe was the only one in the group who produced a storyboard of fashion designs with the potential to be manufactured into a range for an international fashion show. I was concerned because even though Sandisiwe had very good fashion designs on her storyboard, the appearance of the fashion designs needed to

be improved before presenting it to the organisers of the DFW. The sketches on the storyboard needed to be correctly placed. A suitable background to create a theme, with fabric swatches were also needed to improve the presentation for the DFW organisers.

I was concerned because the storyboards from the group did not do the creative design capacity of the members of the group justice, and would not satisfy the demands of the organisers of the DFW. Their designs were excellent, but their presentation skills were lacking. So, later in March 2008, I took the group to the Fashion Department at the DUT to look at the storyboards from fashion students in the department. My two colleagues, Lee Scott and Mark Pywell assisted the DFW group by showing them the current storyboards their students had created. Lee and Mark explained to the group how to create a storyboard that had good technical drawings to visually describe a design. They also explained the importance of making the storyboard coherent and visually appealing. They showed good examples from the storyboards which are on the floor in photograph 2 so that the group could see what was required of them to create an acceptable storyboard for the DFW organisers.



Photograph 45: At the DUT fashion Department: Zandile Bulose extreme left, Lee Scott, Sandisiwe Dani and Mark Pywell on the right

In Photograph 45 Sandisiwe is in the middle with her head inclined, listening with care. When I look at the photograph, I remember observing Sandisiwe with an

attentive and serious expression, taking in every word that Mark Pywell is saying. It was during the experience with Lee and Mark that I came to know how Sandisiwe responds to every opportunity to improve her practice as a fashion designer. I remember she asked many questions and looked carefully at all the storyboards Lee and Mark provided. When I asked Sandisiwe to describe herself in this photograph and she said:

The experience was very valuable to me. The storyboards in the fashion department were beautiful. I learned from the sketches to fit the garment on the drawing of the body. They displayed the whole storyboard beautifully by including backgrounds to blend in, which made the storyboard come together. The backgrounds completed the whole story (p.c Sandisiwe 30 May 2013).

I remember observing Sandisiwe becoming assertive and decisive in a quiet unassuming way while producing the storyboard. I believe this is because Sandisiwe is confident when she uses her creative ability. I also know that Sandisiwe cares for others, and understood that she was part of a team. I remember Sandisiwe working quietly in a determined but humble way with the rest of the group to produce a good storyboard for the DFW organisers. I believe that it was Sandisiwe's talent and ability as an illustrator and designer that produced the improved storyboard for the whole group. The result was that the group was accepted to participate in the DFW.

While mentoring the DFW group I remember that Sandisiwe was very particular about the shape and fit of the garments she was working on for the DFW.



Photograph 46: Sandisiwe checking one of the garments for shape and fit on a dummy

In photograph 46 Sandisiwe is fitting one of the DFW garments on a dummy³⁰. I remember Sandisiwe was given the garment to cut and sew in photograph 3 because the fabric was difficult to work with. The fabric was a very expensive satin, and satin tends to slide while sewing. This makes it difficult to maintain good quality sewing. The fabric also had patches of lace, organza and net, as can be seen in the bottom right corner of photograph 46, which also made it difficult to work with. I remember observing the DFW group entrusting Sandisiwe with the difficult task of cutting and sewing the garment in photograph 46.

³⁰ A **mannequin** (also called a [manikin](#), [dummy](#), [lay figure](#) or [dress form](#)) is an often articulated [doll](#) used by artists, tailors, dressmakers, windowdressers and others especially to display or fit [clothing](#).



Photograph 47: One of the garments in the process of being made

Photograph 47 is part of an unfinished garment draped over a table. Sandisiwe was working with it. I remember deciding to take that photograph because the olive green and orange colours appealed to me.



Photograph 48: On the ramp

Photograph 48 was taken at the DFW fashion show. The pleats in olive green organza with orange satin lining looked magnificent on the ramp and as the model walked the pleats swayed elegantly with the two colours shimmering together.

When I look at photographs 46 and 47, I remember that Sandisiwe was anxious about the responsibility of cutting and sewing the two most difficult dresses of the range of six garments. I believe the two garments she made were the showstoppers of the DFW groups range.



Photograph 49: Sandisiwe left, Sandile Bulose with one of the models, Sthandiwe, blue scarf and Khanyisile with another model on the far right

Photograph 49 was taken at a fitting before the DFW show. Fittings are always done before fashion shows on the models who wear each garment so that changes can be made to the garment to fit the model perfectly. This photograph is of the group of women, who worked extremely hard to make good quality perfectly finished garments. I remember that they were very tired at this point. Sandisiwe is on the left with a slight smile on her face. When I showed her the photograph and asked her if she could recall what she was feeling she told me that the smile was covering tiredness and a feeling of being overwhelmed about being part of an international fashion event.

The Department of Arts Culture and Tourism (DACT) KZN, sponsored the DFW group and attended the show. In 2009, DACT contracted Nguni Shades, a well

established fashion business in Durban owned by Nosipho Diko and Shaun Dugan to mentor Sandisiwe.

The Durban July is also an event where fashion designers from South Africa have the opportunity to participate in Fashion Shows. The Durban July Fashion Shows have judges who choose categories of designs and allocate prizes to the best male and female fashion. In July 2009, while Shaun from Nguni Shades was mentoring Sandisiwe, he assisted her to participate in the fashion event at the Durban July horse races.



Photograph 50: Sandisiwe left with Shaun Dugan middle and Sandile Bulose right

Photograph 50 was taken at the 2009 Durban July of Sandisiwe on the left with Shaun in the middle and Zandile Bulose on the right. I observe Sandisiwe is smiling and her posture is relaxed.



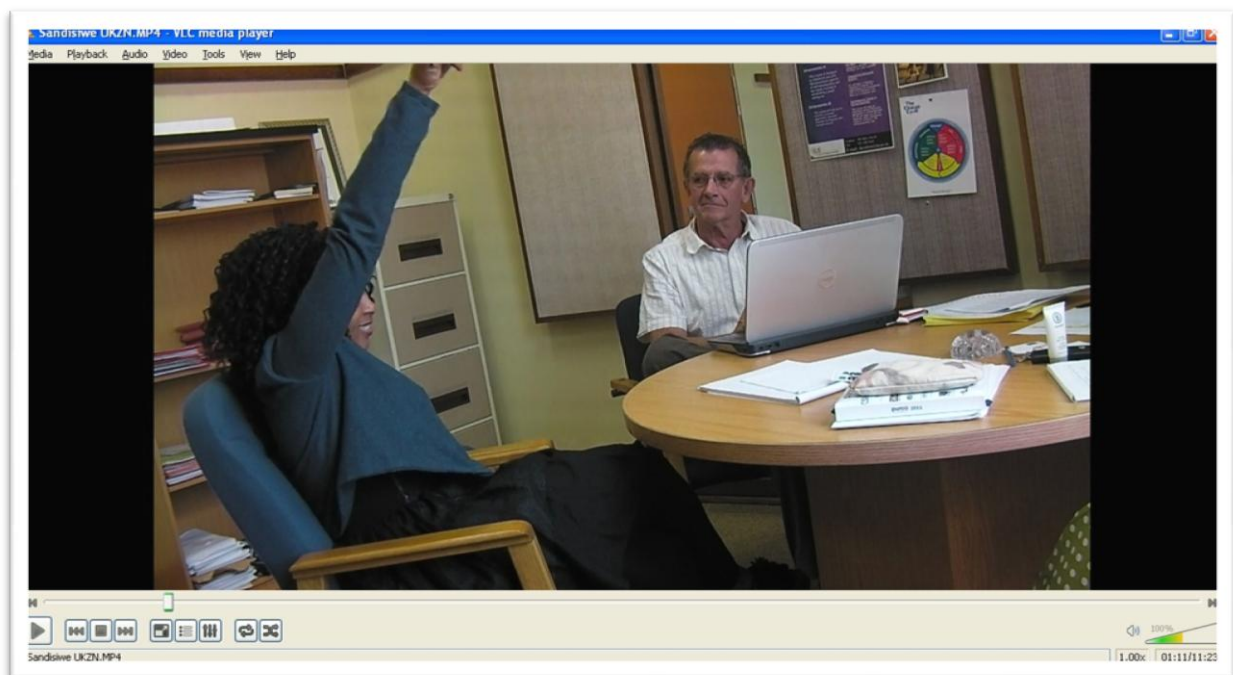
Photograph 51: Precious Gumede left in grey, Dunyiwsa Khumalo middle and Sandisiwe, right

In photograph 51 at the 2009 Durban July, Sandisiwe on the right told me that she was watching the stage. Sandisiwe told me that she looked so anxious because her design was the next to appear on stage to be judged in the female category. She told me that she was hoping it be given one of the top three places by the Durban July fashion judges. Even though her design was not placed in the top three at the 2009 Durban July Fashion competition, she told me the experience was worth it for her growth as an emerging fashion designer.

Later in 2009, I contacted Sandisiwe to participate in the NVC Management Programme. I contacted Sandisiwe because I had not forgotten the conversation that she and I had when I gave her a lift, which I described at the beginning of her story. Sandisiwe became one of the participants of the NVC Management Programme and I remember how she participated eagerly wanting to learn as much as possible so that she could learn to manage the financial and administrative side of her business better. She told me that she wanted to: “Learn and soak up everything that I could” (p.c. Sandisiwe late 2009).

In 2011, Sandisiwe also attended the Business Management and Entrepreneurship Programme (BMEP) at KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), which we called the Fashion

Entrepreneur Programme (FEP). She attended my marketing lectures on the 21 and 28 May 2011. In September 2011, after the end of the course, Professor Cassim, the Director of the Centre for Entrepreneurship at UKZN, Mr Brian Stewart who taught business strategy on the Fashion Entrepreneur course and I, interviewed Sandisiwe. I took a video of the interview with Sandisiwe. During the interview, I told Sandisiwe how I had seen her become a confident business-woman. She then described how confident she had become in her own ability to design clothing. (See Video 3: Sandisiwe interview UKZN)

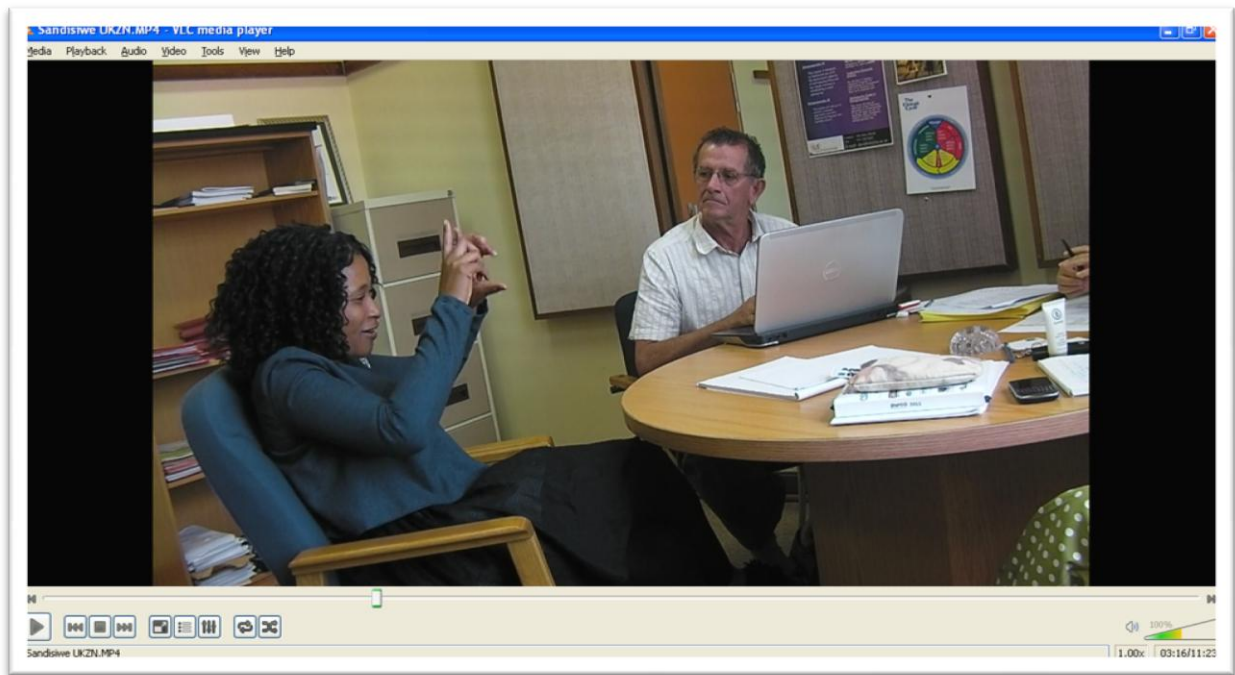


Photograph 52: Sandisiwe during FEP final interview with Brian Stewart in the background

Photograph 52 is an image taken from the video. Sandisiwe described her creativity and said:

“My creativity is way up there, off the charts!” (Sandisiwe video interview September 2011).

Sandisiwe explained in the interview that the most interesting and most useful part of the Fashion Entrepreneurship Programme, for her, were the marketing lectures given by me, because she had started to implement a marketing strategy as a result of the lectures.



Photograph 53: Sandisiwe during FEP final interview describing her logo

Photograph 53 is an image from the video where Sandisiwe was describing how she placed the logo of her business on Facebook and posted her fashion designs on Facebook in order reach a wider market for her fashion designs. When Professor Cassim questioned her further she said she had learned a lot more about the finance of a business and was not so afraid of dealing with finance any longer. Sandisiwe said that she had started to allocate a salary for herself and separated her business finances from her personal finances, which was improving her cash-flow in her business. Even though Sandisiwe had already attended the NVC course in 2007, she suggested that attending many courses had been necessary for her in order to continuously learn and gain knowledge and new abilities. Professor Cassim pointed out that she had attended so many courses which were similar and asked why she had done this. Sandisiwe's reply was that at each course she learnt something new saying: "I may have not been ready for a particular learning" (Sandisiwe, September 2011). I see a connection between Sandisiwe acknowledging a time for a particular learning. Both Pert (1999) and Timm (2012) support the belief that learning is an individual personal experience occurring at a certain time in a person's life. I observed an increase in confidence in Sandisiwe at this interview and told her so during the interview.

During most of 2011 Sandisiwe often had to break the momentum of starting a new business to visit her mother in East London, which Sandisiwe found very difficult. I listened to Sandisiwe on these occasions with empathy and it reminded me of how in 1988, I travelled from Durban to Pretoria very often during the last year of my father's life.

In September 2012, I saw Sandisiwe at the Ethekewini Municipality Small Business Fair in Durban where she had her own stand showcasing her garments. She told me she was still working from Nguni Shades who had been mentors to her since 2009. She told me that she assisted Nguni shades with their customers fashion design order while simultaneously producing made-to-measure occasion wear designs for her own customers. Sandisiwe told me that she was now costing her garments properly and was more organised with the administration of the business. She told me that she was making enough money to cover her costs and make a profit which she kept for buying more fabric or necessary equipment to make her fashion business more efficient. She told me that she was saving for an industrial steam iron which she could use to press completed garments more professionally. She was also having labels made with her company name to go inside the garment. Her company name is Sandisiwe Dani Fashions. Sandisiwe told me that she supplied a shop with her range of clothing as well as making made-to-measure once-off orders for her regular and growing clientele. I noticed a change in Sandisiwe. She smiled more easily and appeared to be more confident.

On 15 January 2013 I went to see Sandisiwe to ascertain from her where she was regarding her personal and business life.



Photograph 54: Sandisiwe with her mentor Nosipho Diko

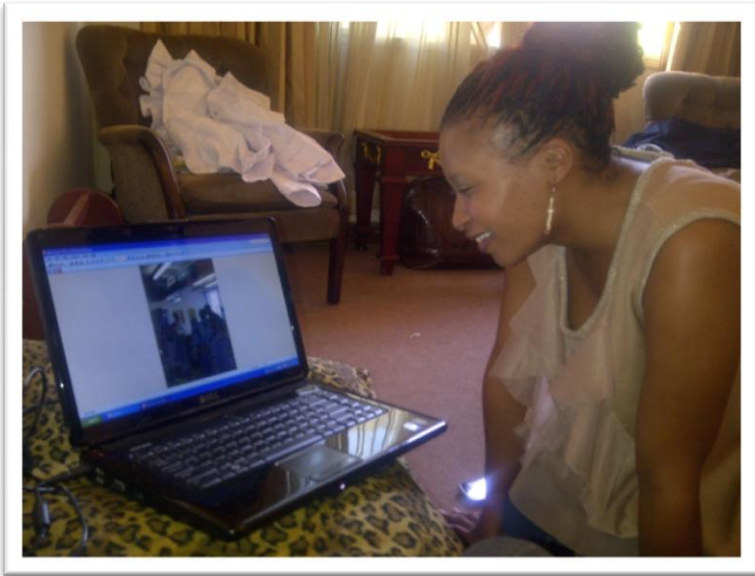
Photograph 54 was taken at Nguni Shades with her mentor Nosipho Diko on the right. In this photograph, I observe how Sandisiwe has grown into a confident woman with a business in fashion. During this meeting, Sandisiwe expressed her gratitude and joy about working at Nguni Shades. She said her career path was opening up in front of her.

Another significant insight for me at this meeting on the 15 January 2013 was when Sandisiwe said:

In the beginning of my fashion career I felt as though I was just not good enough. I would only do alterations for people. I worked in a retail store because I felt that I was not good enough to design my own clothes. It was only after the DFW fashion show that I realised that I am good enough and started to learn to be better all the time (p.c. Sandisiwe, 15 January 2013).

In Sandisiwe's quote above, it was as though I was hearing the words of Timm as well as my own about "feeling just not good enough" (Timm 2012:180). I believe I have contributed to overcoming these feelings of inadequacy by listening to her, believing in her ability and encouraging her when she was worried. Timm refers to her own sense of adequacy as "absolutely good enough" (2012:180).

I went to interview Sandisiwe again on the 30 May 2013, to clarify the details in Sandisiwe's stories with her.



Photograph 55: Sandisiwe reflecting on the Durban July photograph

Photograph 55 was taken at the interview on the 30 May 2013. In this photograph Sandisiwe is looking at photograph 7 and I observe her displaying the joy and fun that she and I had as we looked at the photographic historical reconstruction of our relationship together since 2007. Sandisiwe looks very happy in photograph 11 and more at ease in her life as a fashion designer who is achieving creative economic independence.

Sandisiwe told me during this interview that Nozipho and Shaun had started to teach sewing to people coming to them off the street. People had been hearing about Nguni Shades mentoring programme and also wanted to learn skills like sewing in order to become economically independent. Nozipho and Sean asked Sandisiwe to teach sewing. She told me that she was delighted to discover her talent as a teacher while showing others how to sew. She said she was elated to realise how much she actually knew about sewing once she had started to teach others.



Photograph 56: Sandisiwe at Nguni Shades with her hand-made accessories

Photograph 56 was taken next to the reception desk at Nguni Shades where Sandisiwe's fashion accessories are on display. In photograph 12, I observe Sandisiwe looking proudly at her own hand-made accessories which she acknowledges she is also very talented at producing. The photograph made me remember how since 2007, I had always admired Sandisiwe's ability to make beautiful fashion accessories. When I observed this photograph, I remembered sending her accessories to *Elle* magazine sometime in 2008, hoping to have the accessories photographed for publication. Unfortunately *Elle* magazine did not publish photographs of her accessories at that time.

What evidence do I have of how I have influenced economic independence in Sandisiwe? What are my critical reflections about Sandisiwe?

I believe my influence on Sandisiwe's creative economic independence began when I listened to her anxieties and fears whether they were of a personal or a business nature. I encouraged her by telling her how good she was as a fashion designer. I also shared my personal experience of the difficulties I had when dealing with the financial aspect of my small business and with the illness of my father.

I believe my influence on Sandisiwe's creative economic independence continued when I invited her to participate in the DFW. Sandisiwe told me that she thought the mentoring process for the DFW was a success, because, she realised after the DFW that she realised she was good enough (p.c. Sandisiwe, 15 January 2013). She also

realised that by participating in an international fashion show with mentors who cared for her, she could continue to improve as a fashion designer. While she participated in the preparation, mentoring and finally the actual fashion show, I observed what I believe is her determined persistence to improve her practice as a fashion designer.

I believe that I have also influenced Sandisiwe's creative economic independence because I spent time having many conversations with her since 2007. Because of the many conversations with her since 2007, I knew she would become successful as an emerging fashion design entrepreneur.

On 15 January and 30 May 2013, my belief that Sandisiwe would succeed in business was confirmed during the interview. Because we had had so many discussions about her fear of finances, we spoke about her improvement in dealing with her finances. She told me that she was saving money to be able to move to her own premises, that she had a better understanding of finance for her business and was even looking at ways to invest extra money she has at her disposal. She told me that being mentored was very important to her. When I saw her on the 15th January and the 30 May, 2013, she was supplying one shop with clothing and creating and making occasion wear garments for her growing clientele. Sandisiwe was also starting to teach others how to sew. I realised that Sandisiwe had a lot more confidence and overall ability in 2013 than when I met her in 2007.

In June 2013, while walking in the park one morning, reflecting on Sandisiwe's, feeling "Just Not Good Enough" (Timm 2012:180), I realised that Sandisiwe had taken the steps to become "Absolutely Good Enough" (Timm 2012:180).

In July 2013, I added to my reflective drawing (below) to increase my awareness of what my influence was on her creative economic independence.

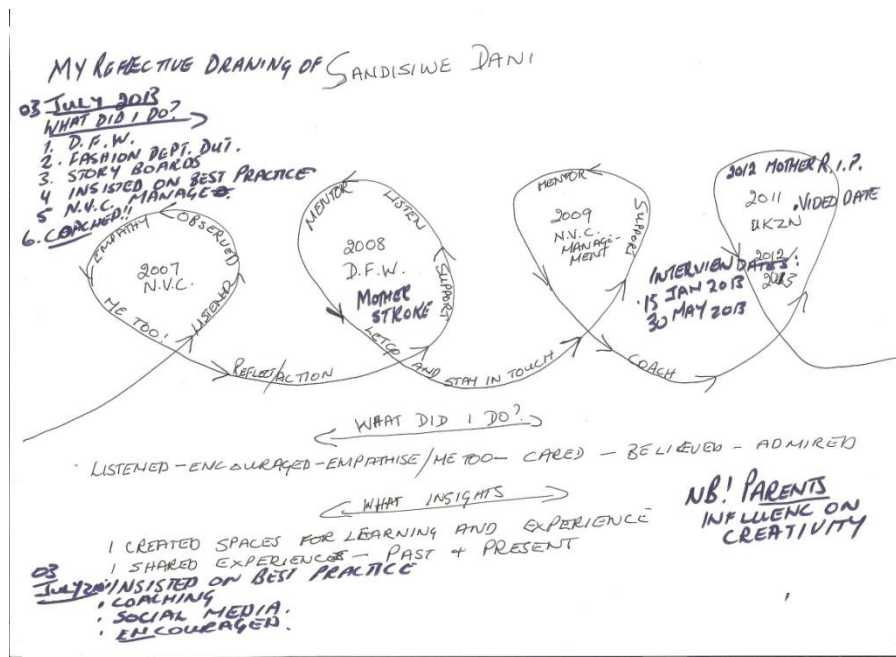


Figure 7: Additions to my graphic representation of my reflections of Sandisiwe

The additions to my reflective drawing of Sandisiwe are in dark ink. By adding the words 'coached', 'insisted on best practice', and 'parents' influence on creativity', helped me to bring back memories of how I insisted on best practice for the DFW group to develop a good professional attitude. During the coaching workshops in 2010 and marketing lectures in 2011, I introduced the concept of personal branding and using social media to market a business. I came to realise that Sandisiwe's parents had a strong influence on her creativity. I came to the conclusion that I did influence her creative economic independence by:

1. providing learning opportunities for her
2. conducting the practical coaching workshops
3. teaching marketing at the UKZN FEP
4. making her aware of using social networking to market her business
5. teaching her about personal branding
6. listening to her
7. encouraging her
8. empathising with her
9. caring for her
10. building a relationship with her
11. following her progress towards creative economic independence.

I care about Sandisiwe. I will continue to assist her to sustain her economic independence by continuing to have a relationship and be available to her for listening, coaching and mentoring if she needs me to.

Chapter 8

What evidence do I have of how I influenced the emerging creative economic independence in the work of Brett Robson?

Introduction

In January 2011, the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Centre for Entrepreneurship (CFE), under the leadership of Professor Cassim, was awarded a tender from the KZN Fashion Council (KZNFC) to provide entrepreneur training for the members of the KZNFC. The programme that was implemented for the KZNFC was called the Business Management and Entrepreneurship Programme (BMEP) which we called the Fashion Entrepreneur Programme (FEP). The purpose was to design and deliver a comprehensive BMEP for the fashion and design sector. The project manager invited subject matter experts to develop resources and conduct training in the following areas:

- Introduction to finance
- Budgeting
- Cash flow
- Constructing a business plan
- Globalisation in the fashion industry
- The development of a business model.

In the close out report the project manager, Professor S. Cassim, stated the following:

The curriculum was developed to be a practical and inspiring programme that would stimulate candidate designers to move into action. A carefully selected team was assembled that could deliver the task. Each facilitator had experience in business and had some understanding of new and small ventures and more particularly an understanding of the fashion industry (Cassim 2011)

I was one of the carefully selected team, invited to develop and facilitate the marketing section for the BMEP. The marketing programmes that I facilitated took place on 21 and 28 May 2011. It was here that I met Brett Robson.

Context

Brett completed her studies in fashion design at Linea Fashion Academy, Durban in 2009. Brett told me that when she was in her final year of school she had planned to study at university for a Bachelor of Commerce degree. When a representative from Linea Fashion Academy spoke to the matric students at her school, she instinctively knew that fashion was the career she wanted to pursue.

What did I do to collect the data to discover the evidence of how I have influenced Brett's creative economic independence?

I gave each participant in my marketing lectures a booklet with space to write reflections which I called a doodle pad. I kept a copy of the notes that Brett made on one of her doodle pad pages (Appendix 5). I used the collection of photographs that I took while lecturing marketing on 21 and 28 May 2011 at UKZN to find photographs of Brett. I needed the photographs that included Brett to assist me with my memory of her. I wanted to reflect on my observations of her in the photographs, to assist me with discovering the influence that I had on her creative economic independence. I analysed and reflected upon Brett's blog after which I carefully selected photographs from her blog to include in my dissertation. I analysed and reflected upon Brett's blog posts and carefully selected posts for inclusion in her story. I have used the email communication with Brett and interviewed her twice to verify my story of her for my dissertation.

In order to assist me with my reflective process I created the diagram below. I used the progressive circles with arrows to create a timeline for my relationship with Brett. By doing this I could visualise the process that Brett went through with me to become economically independent. I wrote words to assist with my memories. My reflections assisted me to write her story.

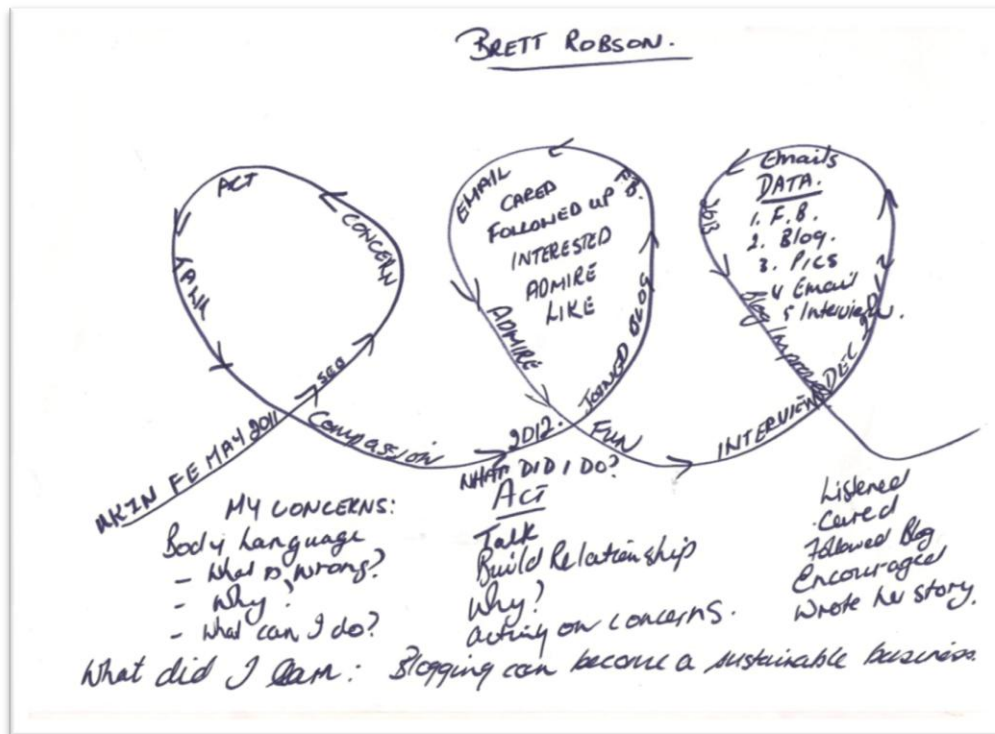
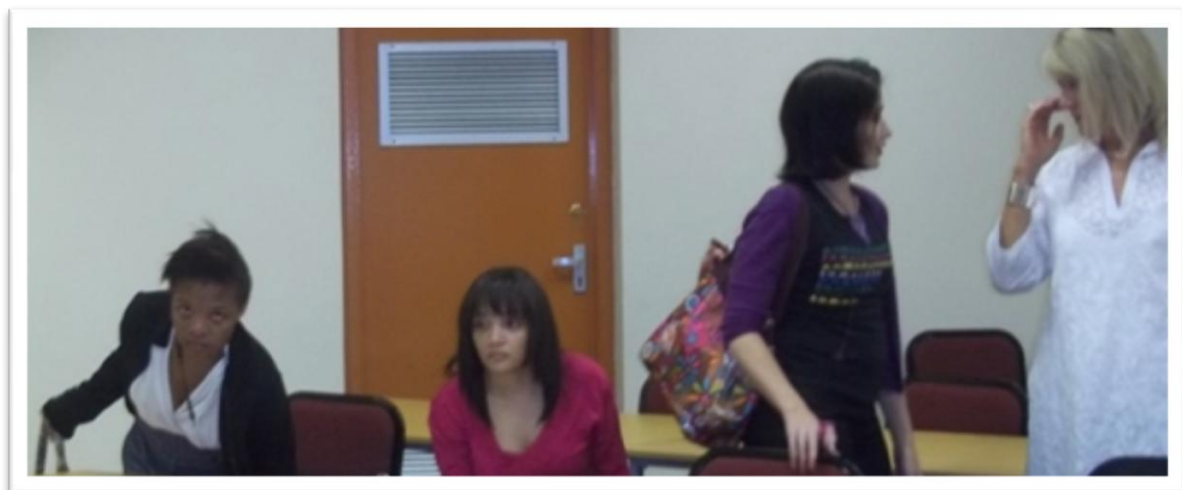


Figure 8: My graphic representation of my reflections about Brett Robson

What were my concerns about Brett? Why was I concerned? What was the evidence for my concern? What action did I take to address my concerns about Brett? What evidence do I have of my influence in the development of Brett's creative economic independence?

On 21 May, at UKZN, I noticed Brett immediately because her body language appeared to be quiet and withdrawn.



Photograph 57: Brett is seated in the middle in pink and on her left is Londeka Masinga. Karen Monk-Klijnstra is on her right with Vibeke Meehan in white next to her

When I observe Photograph 57, I remember being concerned because I believed she looked tired and worried. During breaks I struck up conversation with her because I was concerned about her. Brett told me that she slept too much because she was afraid of moving forward. She felt she lacked confidence in her capabilities as an entrepreneur and because she was not feeling very motivated during the first six months of 2011. Brett found she simply could not in her words:

“tap into my talents and gifts as a fashion designer” (p.c Brett Robson, May 2011).

Brett told me that she started a blog called *Fashion by Brett Robson* in February 2010, where she planned to give her followers information on the latest fashion trends. She wanted to write about fashion from a journalistic point of view but did not believe in her ability to write. I was concerned because she did not believe in herself enough.

On the 21 May 2011, I asked the BMEP class to write down what change they were going to make in their marketing lives (Appendix 5). In response to my request Brett wrote:

The biggest change will be to use my blog as a way to market myself, my brand (when I do develop one). Right now my blog is all about trends, designers and brands I like. Good customer's relationships are important. Customers, suppliers, stockists of my brand should trust me. I need to spend less time sleeping!!! It is an awful, bad, bad, habit!!

I asked the Fashion Entrepreneurs to send me their marketing strategies for their business plans if they wanted assistance from me with a marketing strategy. Brett was the only person who responded to my offer of help with their marketing strategies. The following is a section from Brett's marketing strategy which she submitted to me during the week of 21 to 28 May 2011:

I intend to make full use of my fashion blog, *Fashion by Brett Robson* to promote the brand. Also, I will make use of the friends I have gained in the fashion blogging community. Being featured online will increase the number of people who know about my brand locally and internationally. I believe Facebook and Twitter are great marketing tools. Social networks like these are good for keeping customers updated, as they can also be operated on mobile phones. Facebook will be used more than Twitter as I find it to be more organised: I can create a page for the brand.

I became a follower on Brett's blog in June 2011 and for a few months did not see much action. Brett's maximum posts from June to December 2011 were twenty in July 2011 and in October 2011 she only had two posts.

At the end of 2011 Brett posted:

2011 was filled with smiles, tears and laughter, mistakes and accomplishments. May we see this past year as a lesson learnt rather than a bad memory. Let's be even better than we ever thought we could be. Let's find happiness and love. Let us appreciate every second we are blessed with (31 December 2011).

I believe in the statement she made on the 31 December, Brett is summarising the year she had in 2011 and the evidence of how she described her smiles, tears, laughter, mistakes and accomplishments is described in the interview I had with Brett in December 2012. I believe in the above statement that Brett was able to use the difficulties in 2011 as a "lesson learned" (31 December 2012) which was I consider a positive disposition, rather than adopting the more negative attitude of a "bad memory" (31 December 2012). I believe that when Brett said, "let's be better than we ever thought we could be" (31 December 2012), she was beginning to move away from the quiet withdrawn person that I saw in May 2011 to find "happiness and appreciate every second" (31 December 2011).

I also observed that in 2011, Brett's posts had fashion styles taken from elsewhere, for example, the Golden Globe Awards ³¹, where Brett described these styles to her followers suggesting they try them, yet not telling her followers where they could purchase similar clothing and accessories. Brett had very few photographs of herself in clothing available locally for her followers.

Then in January 2012 Brett posted colourful pictures of herself with a caption below each photograph, describing the clothing she was wearing and where to purchase them. I perceive this move as Brett moving from looking at the global fashion market to being able to place local South African fashion within a global context.

³¹ Known worldwide for its glittering Golden Globe Awards ceremony held every January and its multi-million dollar donations to charity, the **Hollywood Foreign Press** Association had humble origins seventy years ago that stemmed solely from a group of journalists' desire to efficiently and accurately cover all aspects of the world of entertainment.



Photograph 58: Taken from January 2012 blog post

Photograph 58 Brett describes what she is wearing and where to buy these items.

I had observed by following Brett's blog that her own style and appearance had grown from being subdued to showing confidence, style and graciousness. I noticed that Brett started to have advertisers on her blog and in one of her posts she expressed a determination to reach a certain level of readership (which she did in 2013). I became interested in the changes and wanted to know more. I contacted Brett to ask her about the positive change in her facial expressions, her demeanour

and her activity on her blog. I met with Brett at 14h00 on the 9 December 2012 at Musgrave Centre (a shopping centre in Berea, Durban) Brett looked vivacious, her eyes were sparkling and she was clearly very excited about our interview. She told me that because of her regular tweeting and Facebook posts, she was currently contracted by Musgrave Centre management to shop professionally during the build-up to Christmas of 2012 and during the sales after Christmas. Her mandate as a professional shopper was to shop anywhere in Musgrave Centre with the money Musgrave Centre management gave her. She then had to photograph her purchases and post the photographs on her blog and write about her shopping experience. She also had to tweet about her shopping experiences at Musgrave Centre. Brett was paid by Musgrave Centre management for the duration of her contract which was December 2012 to the end of January 2013. Brett told me that she discovered during the short contract with Musgrave Centre that she wanted to become more professional in her blogging by registering a website domain called “BrettRobson.com” and start writing about decorating, photography equipment, books and any other items that were of interest to her.

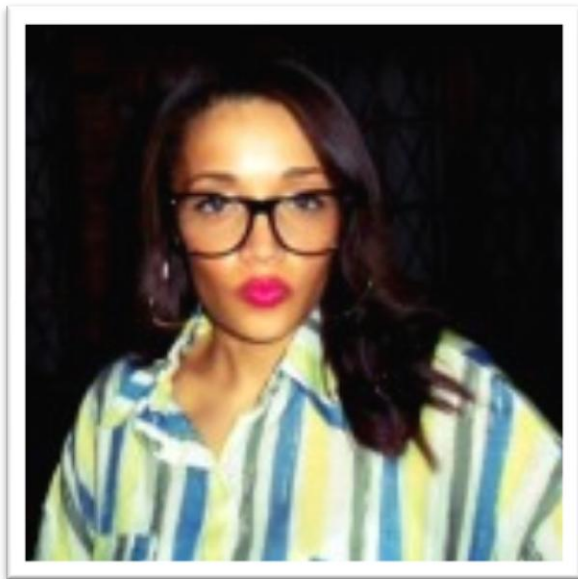
On 9 December 2012, before we met, I had sent Brett the writing that I had done about her, for her to read and I took a copy with me to our meeting. I asked her to tell me about the picture (photograph 57) of her in the FEP marketing class and her comment to me was:

I cannot believe that is me, but I remember that I was completely unmotivated at the time and was probably still affected by my first job where I felt defeated and badly treated. That was followed by not being employed except when I did some work for my boyfriend when he needed me to. He is a photographer and the work was interesting but not me.

Brett said she remembered my lecture on personal branding, after her boyfriend ended their relationship. Thereafter, she decided to re brand herself.

Brett explained that once she made up her mind to focus on her personal branding there was a shift in her energy. She stopped sleeping so much, found a job that she was very happy in, worked harder on her blog and tweeting and felt more confident. Brett said she wanted to be employed to gain more experience in the fashion industry while maintaining her blog part time. Her goal was to gain experience as a

fashion designer while being employed and, at the same time build the amount of money she wanted to earn from her blog.



Photograph 59: Is a picture was taken from Brett's blog in December 2012

We looked at the photograph 59 of her with her glasses on and Brett responded:

I never saw my blog as being something about me, but about my view on fashion. I think it is quirky, fun, cool and the picture with my glasses says: take me seriously (p.c Brett Robson, December 2012).

Brett told me that she was being invited to fashion and related events because fashion event organisers were seeing her as a worthwhile and serious fashion blogger. She said wanted to write a book about styling which will be a lot like her blog with information on how to update a wardrobe. She said she was too focused on her goals to enter into another relationship and felt that “guys find her intimidating” (p.c. Brett Robson 9 December 2012) and if “you put up with shit that is what you think of yourself” (p.c. Brett Robson 9 December 2012). I asked her who her photographer was and who did the fashion shoots for her blog. I expected her to provide me with the name of a professional photographer but she said her nine-year-old brother, Ethan Robson, took the photographs of her and took his job as her photographer very seriously. I found it delightful that her younger brother was her photographer.

Brett is conscious of material for her blog all the time because she said:

I look for something to blog about in everything I do, everywhere I go, and in everything I see. It's an addiction. Whatever is hot in fashion at that moment, you can be sure to find here. (p.c. Brett Robson, December 2012)

I love my name. I use it every chance I get. So I decided to use it in the blog name. And since the blog is about fashion, well I used that word too. After all, it is fashion from my point of view. (p.c. Brett Robson, December 2012)

I was inspired when Brett said she loves her name and I believed that implies that Brett values herself.

My greatest challenge in establishing this blog, has had to be myself. You will notice that the first few months of my blogging experience didn't go too well. I barely blogged. But by the end of 2010, I did a full 360. Now blogging is like a ritual, its apart of me I definitely think I would be kick-ass as a career-blogger, but right now I blog for fun as a hobby (p.c. Brett Robson December 2012).

The above statement from Brett's blog shows me that Brett has moved beyond the obstacles that she faced when she started her blog to being confident in her ability as an exceptional blogger. Another statement from her blog:

I blog about everything that is fashion. Expect to find the latest trends, my favourite designers, fashion/style tips, and even fashion illustration tips in the near future (January 2013).

I find the above statement shows confidence in herself and her blog as her product. I admire the fact that Brett tells her followers that they will find the latest fashion trends on her blog. Brett is also confident in the success of her blog because she knows she can invite people to become advertisers on her blog. The advertisers pay for space therefore Brett earns an income from her blog. So, from the person who told me she was sleeping too much because she was afraid of moving forward, started to become creatively economically independent. She is now supporting herself more than adequately with her comments about fashion of all kinds through social media. That is what Brett wants for herself and she is "not in your face proud" (p.c. Brett Robson December 2012). She has a goal which is:

Going all out to get there, not in a pushy way but in a fun way. (p.c. Brett Robson, December 2012).

Brett's goal is becoming a reality because she is becoming a sought after commentator and expert on fashion, styling, decorating trends, photographic equipment for photo shoots, blogging and tweeting because, Brett won the SA

Fashion Blog award in 2012. See copy of her email to me below on 13 January 2013:

I won 2012 SA Blog Award: Best Fashion Blog.

The results are on the SA Blog Awards site: <http://sablogawards.com/Results-2012.aspx>

Espresso on SABC 3 is running a segment on the blog awards & have asked if they can use my blog on the show. Not really sure about details i.e. which day next week or anything. They may use it they may not. But hopefully they do.

I'm in the *Musgrave Magazine* Jan/Feb; *Get IT Mag* Ballito/Umhlanga Feb issue; *Marie Claire Mag* April issue (13 January 2012).

Brett's last post for 2012 was:

2012 has come to an end & I thought I'd share my favourite outfit posts of the past year :) This post is also an opportunity for me to say thank you to all of my lovelies for voting for me in the **SA Blog Awards**. I won [Best Fashion Blog](#) :) I am so excited, & happy that I have so many loyal supporters of this blog (31 December 2012).

Brett told me on the 16 May 2013 that she was making more money from advertisers on her blog. She also told me that fashion designers, shoe manufacturers and accessory manufacturers were paying her to write about their products. She said fashion event organizers were paying her to attend fashion shows, write about the event on her blog and tweet. I sent Brett an email on 16 May 2013:

Hi Brett just tying up loose ends. What was the date you were interviewed on East Coast radio? Are you earning more money from your blog now? Do you want it to become your sole source of income?

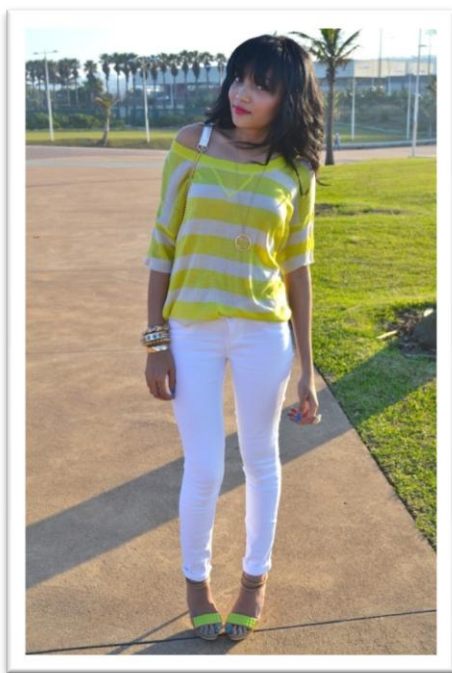
Brett responded on the same day:

Hahaha no problem. I was interviewed on ECR by Ravi R on 13 March if I'm correct. I also did Radio Junto (online Business Radio station) on 10 May 2013. Yes I am earning more money. I will put figures - not sure if they will be necessary. These are figures for May 2013.

I was paid to watch the SAMAs (at home), & talk give my fashion opinion on what their brand ambassador was wearing. I signed an advertising contract for 3 months with a brand, earning me money which was paid up front this week. My blog has gotten me to write for ECR online which earned me money this month. Considering I earn a reasonable salary, that is pretty good. Honestly, I didn't think it could be my only income, but as I grow, & more people take interest in me, I really do want it. I can see it happening if I continue at this pace (16 May 2013).

I also asked Brett to describe in her own words how I had influenced her creative economic independence and she replied:

I think that you taught me that I am a brand, & I never thought of myself in that way until I sat in your class. As a brand, I learned that everything I do, & everything about me is a part of that brand. I am more social than I have ever been. And it's not just about being seen, it's about networking. I don't go places unless it's an opportunity to network. It may seem selfish, but unless I'm getting something out of it then I don't do it. Had it not been for that, I would not be in the job I am in, nor would I be the blogger & *fashionista* I am. I am fully aware that I am a brand, & that I earn money because of what people see when they look at me. I am not just a person - I am a *fashionista*. I am stylish. I am confident. I work hard. People associate those things with me (16 May 2013).



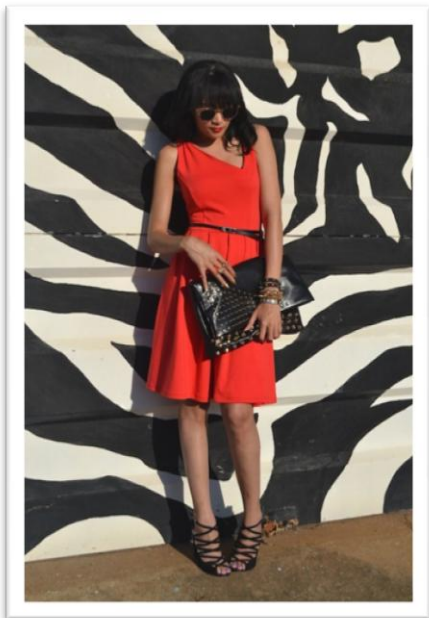
Photograph 60: Brett in a fun mood

I see in photograph 60 that Brett's ability to portray the fun quirky personality she described to me in December 2012 is evident. I see confidence and it looks to me as though she is really having fun while writing in a light playful and informative way.



Photograph 61: Brett making use of colour and shapes

In photograph 61 the background stands out to me. I have noticed that Brett often makes use of black and white in the clothing she wears. Here Brett makes use of black and white in the background of the photograph. I believe she has cleverly planned her red dress, black accessories, blue border and a hint of green foliage. To me Brett is showing her ability to plan the setting for good fashion photography, making use of colour, borders and foliage to create an interesting arrangement.



Photograph 62: Brett showing a striking pose

In photograph 62, the background directs my eyes to the whole fashion image that Brett is showing with dress, bag, accessories and shoes. I believe that this

photograph is evidence that Brett has achieved her goal which is to give her bloggers ideas of how to assemble different fashion items together.



Photograph 63: Brett having fun with photographic images

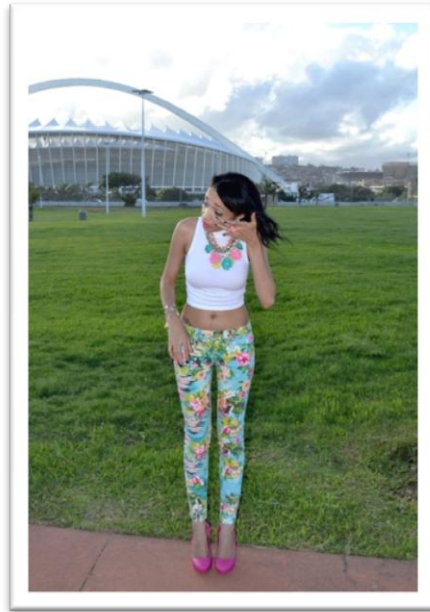
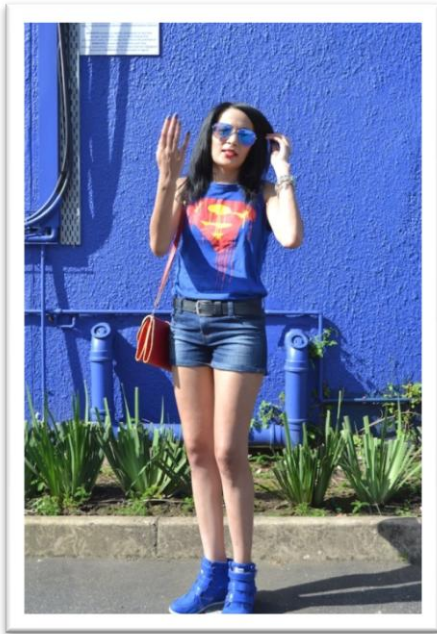
In photograph 63, Brett has yet again in the above image arranged the background to highlight the fashion statement that she wants her bloggers to look at. The lime green bush on the pavement matches her lime green beret and the play on different shades of blue compliment the entire fashion look.



Photograph 64: Brett showing a more sophisticated serious look

In photograph 64, I observe a more serious person. My interpretation of the above photograph is to take Brett seriously as a fashion blogger because to me she is portraying her authenticity as a person who loves and understands fashion, therefore I will read what she has to say about fashion.

My interpretation of pictures three to seven is that Brett has the ability to arrange a photograph, making use of cleverly chosen backgrounds to enhance the fashion look she is providing her bloggers to view and copy if they want to.

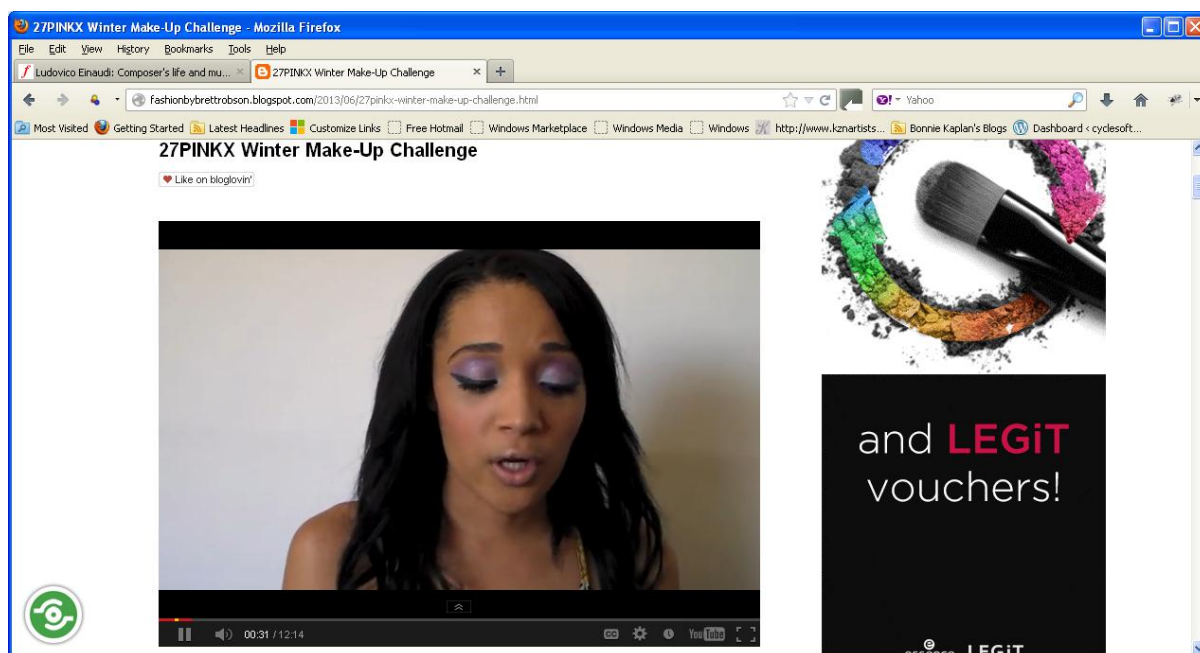


Photographs 65 a and b: In the two photographs above Brett showing behind the scenes photographs

In Photographs 65 a and b above, I believe that by showing her fun personality in one of her blog posts using some behind the scenes photographs. Brett is sharing a holistic view of her blogging character which is playful as well as serious.

Brett started to use videos to advise her followers about how to apply makeup when a beauty product supplier invited her to participate in a challenge for bloggers. Brett posted:

27 PINK X challenged myself and a few other awesome blogging girls to a Winter Make-up Challenge where we could choose our favourite winter make-up trend and translate it on a budget of R350. We also had to use pretty pink brushes from 27 PINK X. The inspiration behind my look was the Jill Stuart Fall runway makeup: Lilac Smokey Eyes. I won't lie, shopping on a budget of R350 was not the easiest thing to do. I had lots of help from lovely sales girls and although I wish I had gotten more, I think I did a pretty decent job with what I did have😊 (3rd June 2013).



Photograph 66: Brett using videos to advise her followers

Photograph 66 is an image from the video. I observed Brett in the video to be comfortable in front of the video camera and in a professional manner described to her viewers how to apply the Lilac Smokey Eyes she has chosen to demonstrate.

Brett tells her blog followers where everything in each picture can be purchased. She also describes the outfits in her fun way as described below in photograph 67:



Photograph 67: Brett's description of the above photograph

How hot is this dress!! Oh my word guys, this dress makes me feel so damn sexy I kid you not. It's not that obvious sexy, but rather that **grown up sexy feeling** you know. Hot !gloo has some other pretty cool pieces that you can check out [here](#). Today is just a beautiful day in **Durban** as well, so perhaps that is helping my mood along. There was a slight drizzle as I got in the car & headed

to work after shooting these, but still the sun was shining. I hope you all are having an amazing day just like me! (Monday 3 June 2013).

Brett also regularly asks her viewers to let her know what they think by commenting on her blog.

In June 2013 almost five hundred thousand viewers had visited Brett's blog. I believe Brett is aiming at a market who is aged from 18 to 30 years of age, from middle to upper income in South Africa.

What can I add to my theory because of Brett? What can I add to my practice because of Brett? What are my critical reflections of Brett? What remains unresolved about Brett?

I believe that encouragement, support, caring and listening can motivate people to be self aware, self driven, passionate and, more importantly, to be joyful and have fun. I believe that through listening, supporting and caring while lecturing to Brett and building a relationship with her, I encouraged her to believe in herself. I observed that Brett was reserved, and remember feeling concerned about her because she appeared to be tired, worried, disheartened. Because of my concern, I struck up conversations with her at different times during tea breaks and after class. At that stage I did not see the quirky fun side of Brett. When I met Brett on Dec 9 2012, I felt as though a different person was sitting in front of me and as the conversation unfolded I realised that Brett did listen to my lectures. By asking the FEP group to write in their doodle pads, Brett wrote that she was going to sleep less and do more. The doodle pad was used for reflection and therefore when she put into practice her reflection, she became responsible for her changed attitude and demeanour. I saw a self motivated, enthusiastic self confident person who was not at all proud or conceited.

Brett encouraged me too. My encounters with her have filled me with renewed joy, enthusiasm and passion for the people I coach to become creatively economically independent. I am also encouraged from writing the story about Brett because while writing about my reflections on Brett I remembered that when I taught marketing to the BMEP at UKZN, I explained how to use action research (McNiff 2007) and living theory methodology (Whitehead 2009) in the marketing of their business. By giving them a doodle pad, explaining how to use it, I influenced Brett in her creative

economic independence because she, reflected then wrote that she was not going to sleep so much and by acting on her reflection, she has become economically independent.

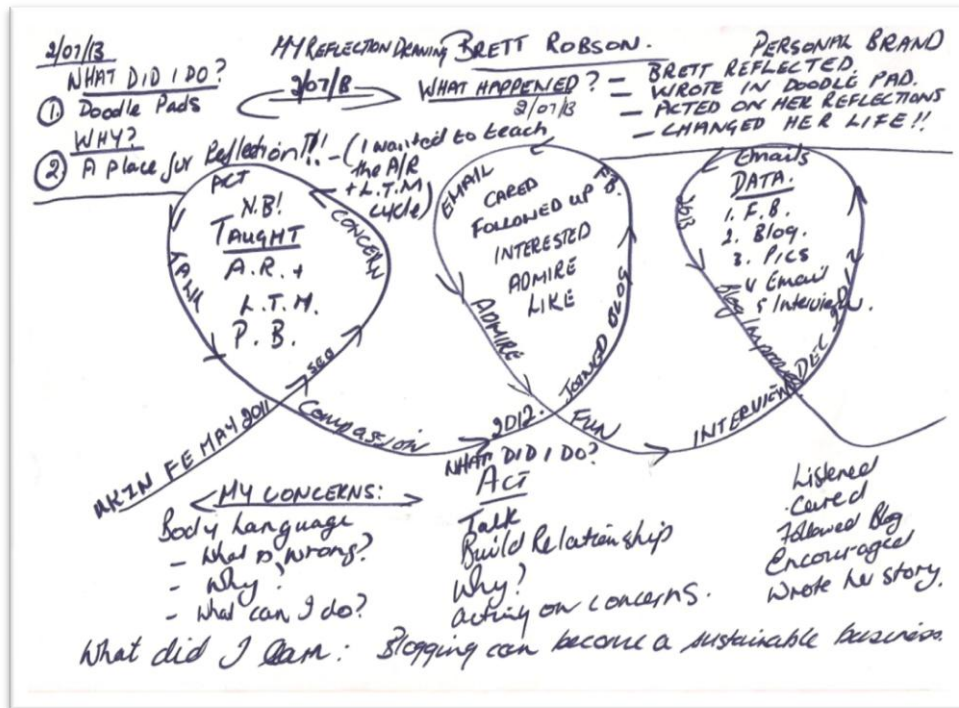


Figure 9: Graphic representation of my reflections on Brett's story

I have also come to realise while critically reflecting about Brett's story that by encouraging those I teach and coach to develop a personal brand, I have influenced Brett's creative economic independence because as Brett began to develop her personal brand so did her economic independence improve through the effect her personal brand had on her business. The effect of her personal brand on her business is that I believe, Brett is being taken seriously by advertisers, fashion event organisers and her followers. By being taken seriously as a fashion blogger Brett is improving her creative economic independence.

Brett's blog and Twitter can be found at fashionbybrettrobson.blogspot.com, and her Twitter account is twitter.com/BrettRobson³².

32 http://fashionbybrettrobson.blogspot.com/2012/11/prett-little-things-mr-price.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+FashionByBrettRobson+%28Fashion+by+Brett+Robson%29
 Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BrettRobson>

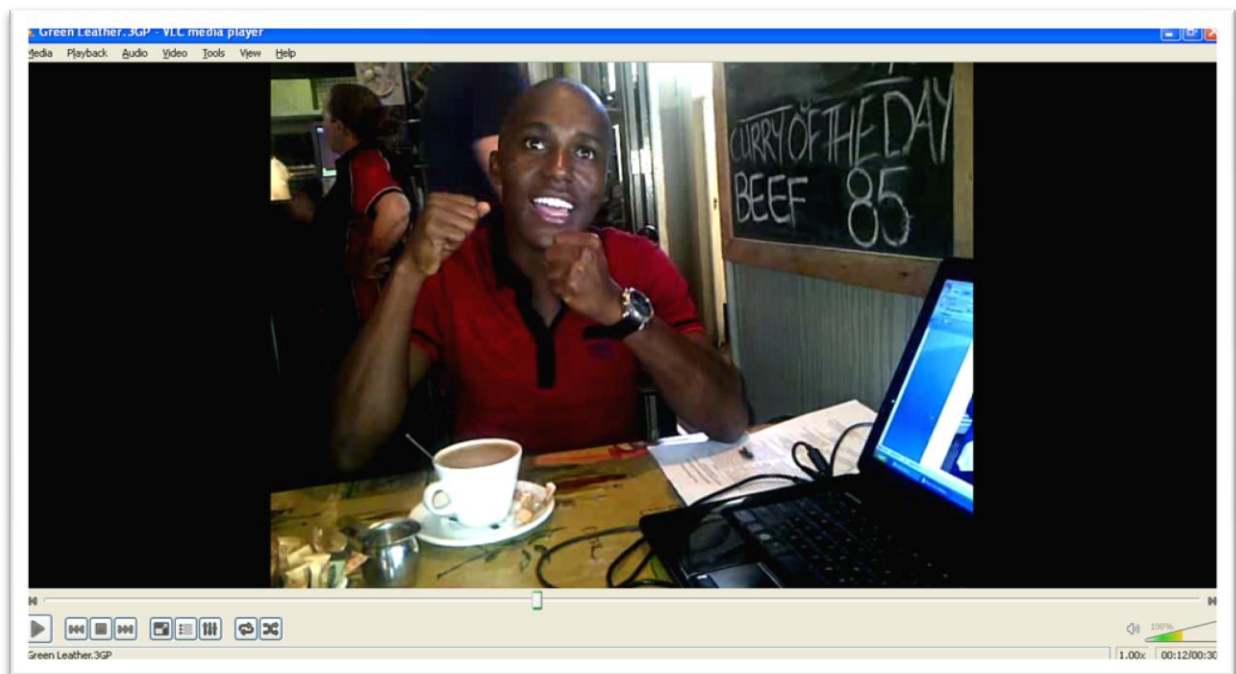
Chapter 9

What evidence do I have of how I influenced the emerging creative economic independence in the work of Ntokozo Ncwane?

Introduction

The story of Ntokozo Ncwano needs special mention. Ntokozo's story shows how my influence of creative economic independence is a living influence which I believe is growing and improving.

In July to September 2012 Ntokozo was a participant in the group learning upholstery and entrepreneurship with Injiya Trading and Projects at Umkhumbane. Ntombi and I noticed Ntokozo because of his ability to learn very quickly, participate fully in class and be creative. Before the end of the course in September 2012, Ntokozo showed Ntombi and me a very attractive handbag he had made out of leather. Ntokozo told me that one day in August 2012 as he was walking along a road in Durban, he saw a homeless street child with a large piece of green leather covering him while he slept. Ntokozo woke the child up and offered him the R40 he had with him for the leather covering.



Photograph 68: Ntokozo describing how he acquired the green leather

The child agreed. Video 4 is Ntokozo describing how he acquired the piece of green leather. Ntokozo cut the leather and made a hand bag using seat belts, from an abandoned damaged vehicle he found in a dump yard, as the straps for the handbag. I was impressed because when I questioned Ntokozo, he told me that he had never been taught to sew and only managed to make the handbag because he had watched his grandmother sewing. Ntokozo told me that he had been given a domestic sewing machine by someone who worked with him at the funeral parlour where he worked.



Photograph 69: Ntokozo seated on space saver he made during the upholstery course with his first green leather handbag on his lap

Photograph 69 is of Ntokozo seated on the green leather space saver he made while learning upholstery skills with Ntombi in July to September. He is holding the green leather handbag that he made.

In September 2012, I observed in Ntokozo a determined person whom I believed had vision and strength and I wanted to influence his creative economic development. I spoke to Ntombi and Mandla about Ntokozo and both told me that they had noticed his creative talent and exceptional ability while being trained to upholster furniture. Mandla said:

Ntokozo is all over the place. He wants to learn everything all at once. He is very creative and talented and is also very willing to help the rest of the class when they need help. I can see that Ntokozo is very special. (p.c. Mandla Luthuli, September 2012)

After discussing Ntokozo, Ntombi, Mandla and I agreed that we assist Ntokozo as a candidate in our ADD project. Ntokozo's story follows.

Context

Ntokozo was born on 31 August 1986 in Umlazi³³ outside Durban KwaZulu-Natal. Ntokozo was brought up by his grandmother MaNokosozana Nsibande and his grandfather Magadla Nsibanda. His grandmother was a machinist in a clothing factory and his grandfather worked from home as a shoe cobbler. Ntokozo has one brother, Asande Magadla. Ntokozo and his Asande lived with their grandparents. Ntokozo's grandmother retired from working in 2006 and passed away in the same year. Ntokozo told me that even though his grandfather was drunk most of the time he loved him very much and when he was growing up, liked to help him to repair shoes for customers.

Ntokozo told me that as a child of about ten years old he made wire cars as toys for his friends. He said he also started to draw at about the same age and also realised at about that time that he had an inner feeling that God had given him his creative ability. Ntokozo matriculated from Umlazi High School in 2006. After completing his schooling, he found a casual job with his neighbour who made bed bases in her back yard in Umlazi. He worked for her making bed bases, until he started studying at DUT in 2008, where he had registered in the Department of Architecture. His mother

33 uMlazi is a township on the east coast of [KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa](#). The township is located south-west of [Durban](#).

According to legend, the name uMlazi comes from "umlaza" ([Zulu](#) for the sour acid produced from fermented milk or sour milk). It is believed that when [King Shaka](#) was passing through the area, he refused to drink from a local river claiming it had the taste of "umlaza", from that incident, the area has been called Umlazi.

uMlazi, like many townships in the urban areas of [Cape Town](#), [Port Elizabeth](#), [Durban](#), and [Johannesburg](#), is witnessing increased private and government investment, as witnessed in the construction of new shopping complexes, [primary](#) and [secondary](#) schools, [Universities of Technology](#) and libraries[citation needed].

The new educational infrastructure is particularly important, as an affordable[citation needed], easily accessible quality secondary education is valuable for many children in uMlazi, particularly with regards to their search for employment following school (most do not attend [tertiary institutions](#) due to their families financial resources)[citation needed].

uMlazi is the second largest township in South Africa, the first being Soweto. The township is the only township in S.A that has its own registration plate, which is NUZ. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umlazi>

and father had agreed to share the cost of financing his studies at the DUT. But, he told me he could not complete his first year because his father failed to adhere to his promise to finance half of his studies. His mother was working as an HIV and Aids counsellor in the eThekweni Health clinic in Cato Manor and could not afford to pay his DUT fees on her own.

In 2009 Ntokozo then found a job with Doves Funeral Parlour in Durban, cleaning floors. In mid 2012 Ntokozo went to live with his mother because his friends in Umlazi, who were unemployed and had no funding to study after school, started to drink alcohol heavily and were beginning to become involved in crime and he did not want to have a life of alcohol and crime. Ntokozo told me that he made friends in Cato Manor when he moved there and became concerned when he saw these friends from Cato Manor also staying home all day with no jobs and no finance to study.

Because he knew how to make bed bases he told his two friends, Jimmy Nomabonga (24 years old) and Sanele Luthuli (25 years old), to try and find a place where they could make bed bases and Ntokozo offered to teach them the bed base making skill. Ntokozo told me that Jimmy had never worked. Jimmy and Sanele found Injiya Trading and Projects in 2012 at Umkhumbane. When they approached Ntombi to tell her they were looking for premises to start a bed base making business, Ntombi and Mandla offered to include them in the upcoming upholstery and entrepreneurship course in July to September 2012. Ntokozo, Sanele and Jimmy completed the upholstery and entrepreneurship course in 2012. Ntokozo told me that he knew the upholstery and entrepreneurship course would help him to move forward in his life.

What did I do to collect the data to discover the evidence of how I have influenced Ntokozo's creative economic independence?

After I wrote about Ntombi I created a folder on my computer which I called Ntokozo Photographs, where I collected all the photographs in which Ntokozo appeared. I started to write a short story about Ntokozo, because I had realised that his story was connected to Ntombi's and my story. On 18 May 2013 I went to see Ntokozo at home in Cato Manor on to ask him if I could include him in my dissertation Ntokozo agreed.

While interviewing Ntokozo, I took photographs to capture his life making handbags at home living with his mother and the community in which he lived. After the interview on 18 May 2013, I wrote Ntokozo's story and reflected on the photographs that I had taken. I realised I needed to clarify details, so I interviewed Ntokozo again on 24 May 2013, this time also taking a video of Ntokozo. I added the photographs from 24 May 2013 to my file about Ntokozo and critically reflected on all the photographs as a collection, including the video about Ntokozo and my writing about Ntokozo. I made a drawing of my reflections about Ntokozo to assist me with the timeline and my memories about how I have influenced Ntokozo's creative economic independence, see figure 1 below.

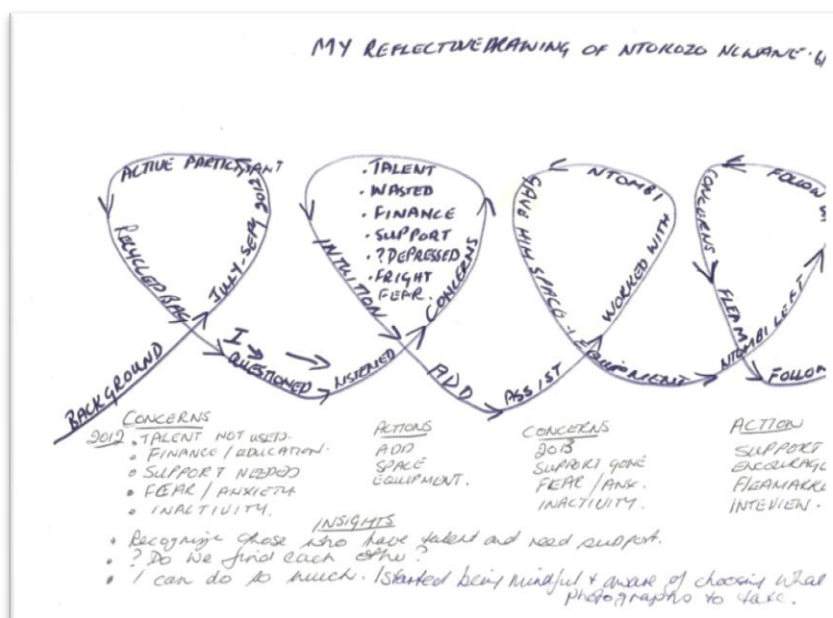


Figure 10: Graphic representation of my reflections on Ntokozo Ncwana

What were my concerns about Ntokozo? Why was I concerned? What evidence did I have for my concerns? What action did I take to address my concerns for Ntokozo? What evidence do I have of how I have influenced economic independence in Ntokozo?

In September 2012, I became concerned about Ntokozo when he told me that in 2008, he had been an architecture student at the DUT and had to abandon his studies at the end of his first year because of a lack of finance. I was concerned when Ntokozo told me he was working for R1000 per month as a floor sweeper at a funeral parlour. I was concerned because his transport to and from work, a distance of 10 to 12 kilometres, was a minimum of R250 per month. I was concerned because

Ntokozo told me that his mother was anxious because she needed him to assist her with their monthly financial costs for rent, food and telephone. I was concerned because I knew R1000 per month would not be enough for Ntokozo to contribute adequately to his and his mothers' financial basic needs. I was concerned because when I saw the green leather handbag that he made I believed that his creative talents were being wasted sweeping floors at a funeral parlour. I knew that Ntokozo was earning R1000 per month at the funeral parlour cleaning floors. Ntokozo is able to make one handbag in three hours, he could produce a minimum of 40 handbags per month. I believed that Ntokozo could sell his handbags for R250 to R350 per handbag. To earn R1000 per month, he needed to make and sell only four handbags per month. I believed he could sell more than one handbag per week, which would earn him the R1000 he was earning at the funeral parlour. I explained my idea to Ntokozo. In October 2012 I advised Ntokozo to resign from the funeral parlour. In early November 2012 on his last working day at the funeral parlour, I fetched Ntokozo from work and took him to Umkhumbane where Ntombi and Mandla had made space for him to make his bags.

The following day Ntombi and I took him to a supplier in Durban where we purchased thread and needles specifically to manufacture leather handbags. Ntombi gave Ntokozo a roll of grey leather that had been donated to her by Toyota Motor Vehicle Plant in Isipingo³⁴, South of Durban. Ntombi showed Ntokozo how to thread the industrial sewing machine and left him to get on with her own work. He said he had never used an industrial sewing machine before.

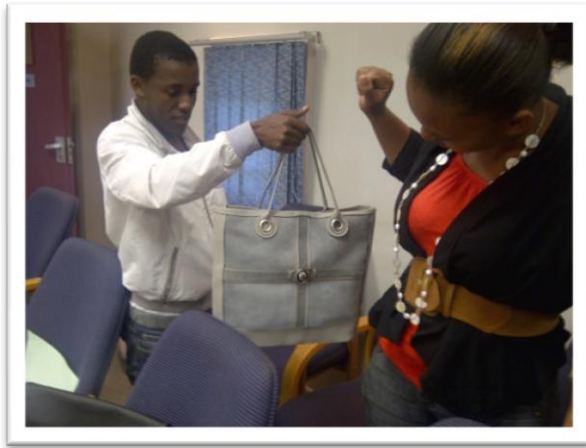
³⁴ **Toyota Plant**, Motor Vehicle Plant located in [Isipingo, Durban](#) which is a place in [KwaZulu-Natal](#), a province of [South Africa](#), a country on the continent of [Africa](#). <http://www.mbendi.com/facility/f20z.htm>



Photograph 70: Ntokozo with bags he made from suede Ntombi had given him. Ntombi's first motor car she purchased in 2008 is in the background at Umkhumbane



Photograph 71: Ntokozo on the steps of Umkhumbane training centre in January 2013 with new and improved style bags he has made



Photograph 72: Ntokozo in December 2012 showing one of his bags to a potential customer



Photograph 73: A more detailed bag made in December 2012

Photographs 70, 71, 72, and 73 are of the first handbags made by Ntokozo during November and December 2012. Once Ntokozo had space and access to an industrial sewing machine, he started producing many different styles of handbags which all sold very quickly. On 18 May 2013, Ntokozo told me that he remembered being relieved when Mandla told him not to worry because he would learn to sew on an industrial sewing machine very quickly. Ntokozo did learn to sew on an industrial sewing machine very quickly. He was able to sell his handbags to people who went to Umkhumbane. Photograph 72 is a photograph of Ntokozo showing a handbag to a potential customer at Umkhumbane in late 2012.

In February 2013 when Mandla and Ntombi left Umkhumbane, Ntokozo had to work from home on his domestic sewing machine. Ntombi and Mandla offered him space at Mariannhill. Ntokozo told me he did not go because Mariannhill was 20 kilometres away from Cato Manor. He said he would have to get a taxi to the taxi rank in central

Durban and from there a taxi to Mariannhill and the taxi fare of R60, four times per day would be too expensive.

When I realised Ntokozo faced new challenges to set up a business, I realised I would have to answer the questions to a new set of concerns for him.

What were my concerns about Ntokozo? Why was I concerned? What evidence did I have for my concerns? What action did I take to address my concerns for Ntokozo? What evidence do I have of how I have influenced economic independence in Ntokozo?

On 18 May 2013, Ntokozo told me that moving away from Umkhumbane had been very difficult for him because he no longer had access to an industrial sewing machine. He told me that most of his customers had also been visitors to Umkhumbane. He told me that since then, he often became very depressed and because of feeling depressed he could not make any handbags. He told me that in March, April and May 2013, he had often spoken to his pastor at church. Ntokozo told me that his pastor Timothy Omotoso encouraged him and said to him:

Your pocket may be empty but do not let your mind be empty (p.c. Pastor to Ntokozo, April 2013).

I became concerned for Ntokozo's emotional wellbeing when he told me how terrified he gets at times when he feels helpless. Ntokozo said to me

When things are not moving forward, I get terrified (p.c. Ntokozo 18 May 2012).

On 18 May 2012, when Ntokozo told me he sometimes feels terrified, I remembered how from the time I met him in July 2012, I would observe Ntokozo and thought his body language looked very sad at times. I knew at the time I was concerned about his emotional wellbeing, but I did not know why I was concerned or exactly what my concern was. On the 18 May 2013, I had an understanding of the nagging feeling that I was not sure of about Ntokozo's emotional wellbeing in mid to late 2012.



Photograph 74: The road where Ntokozo lives in Cato Manor, 18 May 2013

On 18 May 2013, when I arrived to interview Ntokozo, many children playing in the street in photograph 74.



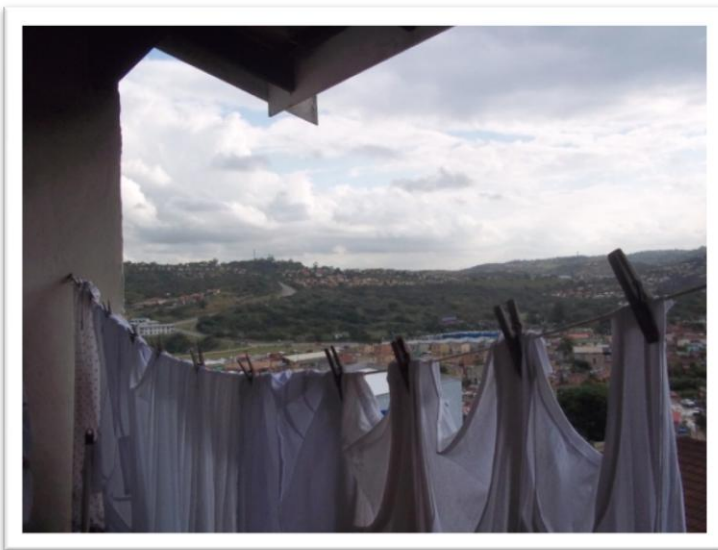
Photograph 75: Ntokozo walking up the stairs to his flat, 18 May 2013

Photograph 75 of Ntokozo on the stairs leading up to his mother's flat on the second floor, with the children below who were curious to look at his visitor.



Photograph 76: The entrance through the open plan kitchen to the small 55 square meter one bedroom flat where he and his mother live, 18 May 2013

Photograph 76 was taken at the entrance of the small one bedroomed flat where Ntokozo and his mother live.



Photograph 77: The small veranda off the lounge, overlooking Cato Manor, 18 May 2013

Photograph 77 is the small veranda off the lounge overlooking Cato Manor, surrounded by the clothing his mother had washed and hung on the line earlier that day.



Photograph 78: Ntokozo working at his domestic sewing machine on the veranda, 18 May 2013

Photograph 78 is Ntokozo working on his domestic sewing machine on a small veranda with no windows. The line to hang clothes out to dry is behind his head. Some of fabric (unseen) Ntokozo uses to make handbags is stored on the floor next to the sewing machine. He told me that because he no longer had access to Ntombi's industrial sewing machines, he found it very difficult to work with leather on a domestic sewing machine. He also complained that production was slow on a domestic sewing machine and now he could only manage to make about five to six handbags per week. He also complained that because he was working from home, he had little access to customers because many of his customers at Umkhumbane had been visitors and local workers.



Photograph 79: Ntokozo in the entrance passage with recently manufactured bags, 18 May 2013

Photograph 79, taken on 18 May 2013, Ntokozo is in the entrance passage with recently manufactured bags for sale.



Photograph 80: Ntokozo at the front entrance of his flat, 18 May 2013

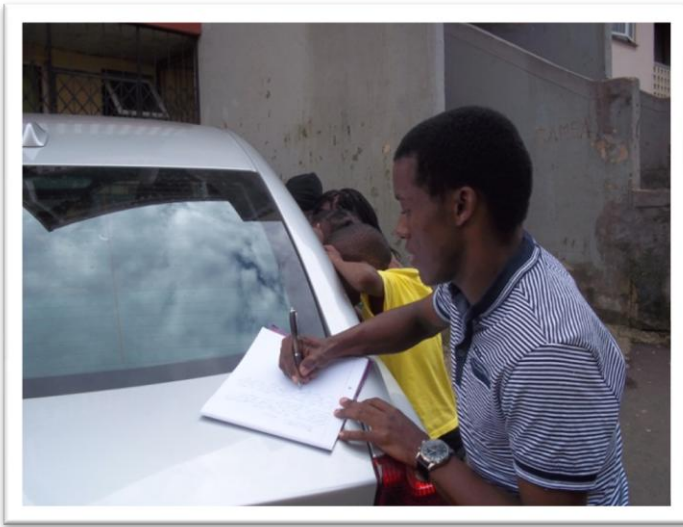
Photograph 80: Ntokozo is at the front entrance of his flat with a bible cover in his hand which he had made. The fabric for sewing his bags are in the packets at his feet in front and behind him.



Photograph 81: Ntokozo telling me his story outside in the street, 18 May 2013

Photograph 81 shows Ntokozo at my car after being inside his flat. Ntokozo was answering my question which was, Where do you see yourself going with your emerging business? I remember seeing Ntokozo thinking deeply before he told me

that he knew he would succeed in business. I then asked Ntokozo to write down in Zulu how he thought I had influenced his creative economic independence.



Photograph 82: Ntokozo using the boot of my car to write, 18 May 2013

I took Photograph 82 while Ntokozo was writing his answer down, see figure 11 below:

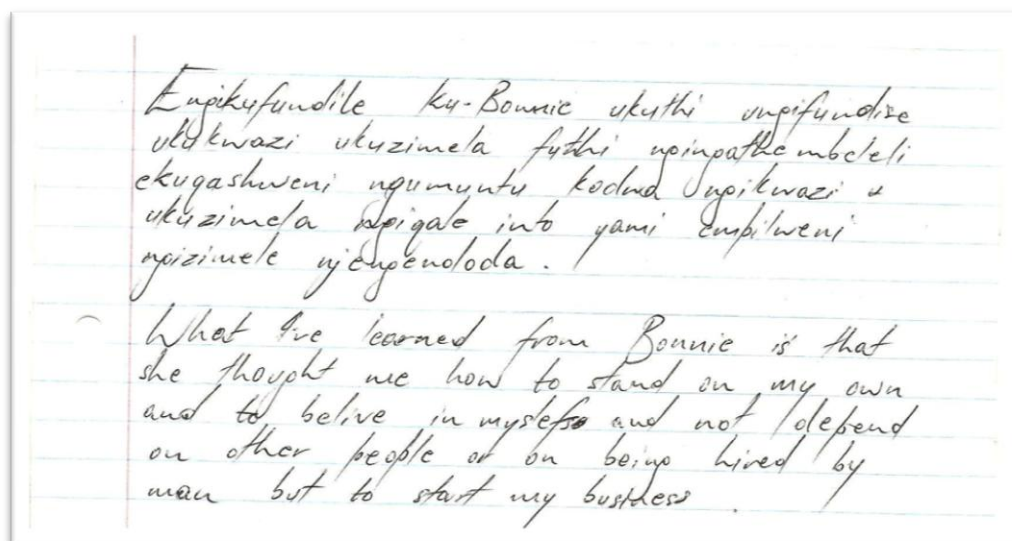


Figure 11: Ntokozo's writing in Zulu and English

On the 18 May 2013, I told Ntokozo about my experience starting my small business from home and about how selling my clothing at the Essenwood Craft Market in Essenwood Road, Berea, Durban had given me the space where my business grew. At the end of our meeting on 18 May 2012, I promised to take Ntokozo the following

Saturday to the Essenwood Craft Market and introduce him to the owners and show his bags which we hoped could be sold at the market every Saturday.

Before I left on 18 May 2013, Ntokozo told me that he had sent Jimmy and Sanele to look for premises where he could work from. He told me that he still felt the need to assist his two friends because he realised that they needed his leadership and help. He said that he had observed that they did not have the creative ability that he had, therefore he had the idea of teaching them how to sew and they could assist him to manufacture his handbags. Ntokozo did say that he wanted to rather encourage them to be self-employed and have more ambition than to follow his lead. He told me that it was hard work for him to keep encouraging them, but he felt he had the strength within to keep trying. At the time, I did not think to ask him why he wanted to help his friends.

On 25 May 2013, I took Ntokozo to the Essenwood Craft Market³⁵, to show his bags and ask for a stand at the flea market where he could sell his bags. The owners of the craft market were impressed and immediately agreed to accept him as a stall holder at the Essenwood Craft Market.



Photograph 83: Ntokozo at Essenwood Craft Market, 25 May 2013

³⁵ Essenwood Craft Market is a craft market where crafters sell their products every Saturday. Essenwood Craft Market is also on the Tourism Durban website

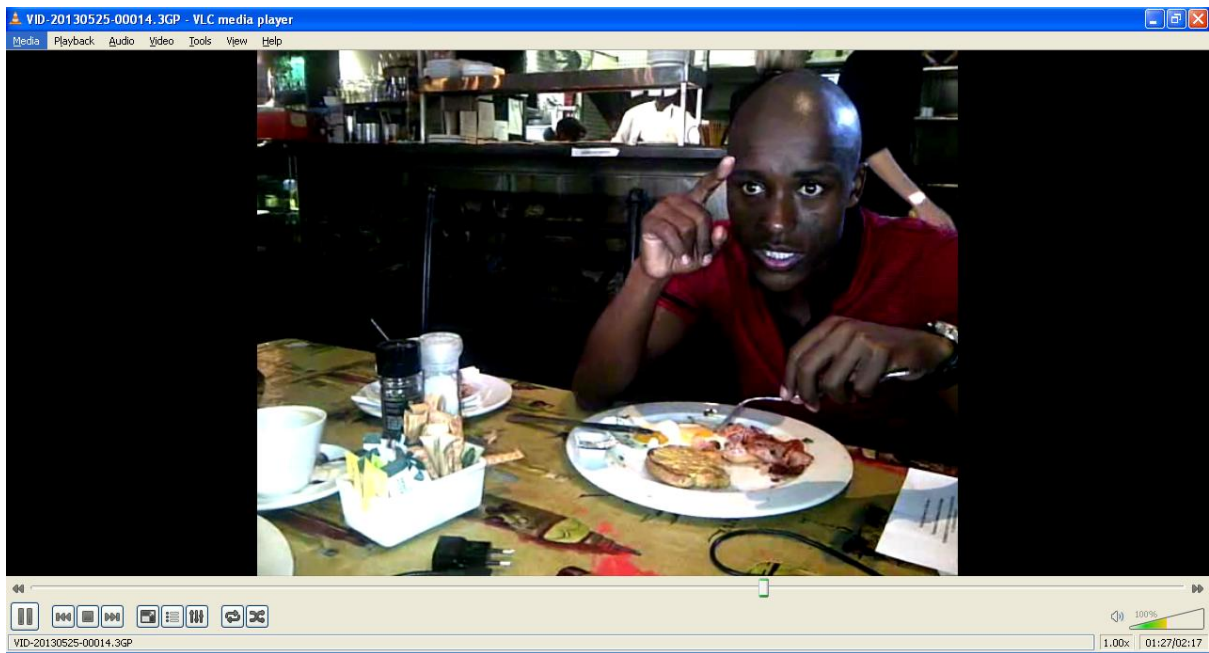
Photograph 83 was Ntokozo showing his handbags to the owner of Essenwood Craft Market. I observed that Ntokozo is nervous or anxious while waiting for a reaction to his product. The owner also offered to give him the first two weeks rent at no cost, in order to give him a chance to start making enough money for the full rent which is R400 per Saturday.

After the meeting with the owners of Essenwood Craft Market, we had breakfast together at a nearby restaurant. I wanted to interview him again. I wanted to clarify my interpretation of the notes I had made the previous Saturday. On the 18 May 2013 Ntokozo had told me that he wanted to help his friends, Jimmy and Sanele to become economically independent. On 25 May 2013, I asked him why he wanted to help his friends and Ntokozo answered:

If I go to the top and prosper, I want to take my friends with me. I don't want them to work for me. I want them to have their own business as well one day. I know they can do it and I want to help them to do it. It is the same with my girlfriend, she is an albino and she is beautiful and dresses beautifully. Her family and community reject her because she is different. I believe in people and the skin does not matter, what is inside matters. I will also help her to get to the top. (p.c. Ntokozo Ncwane, 25 May 2013)

Ntokozo told me that it was important to support his friends and his girlfriend because of all the support he was receiving in his quest to become economically independent.

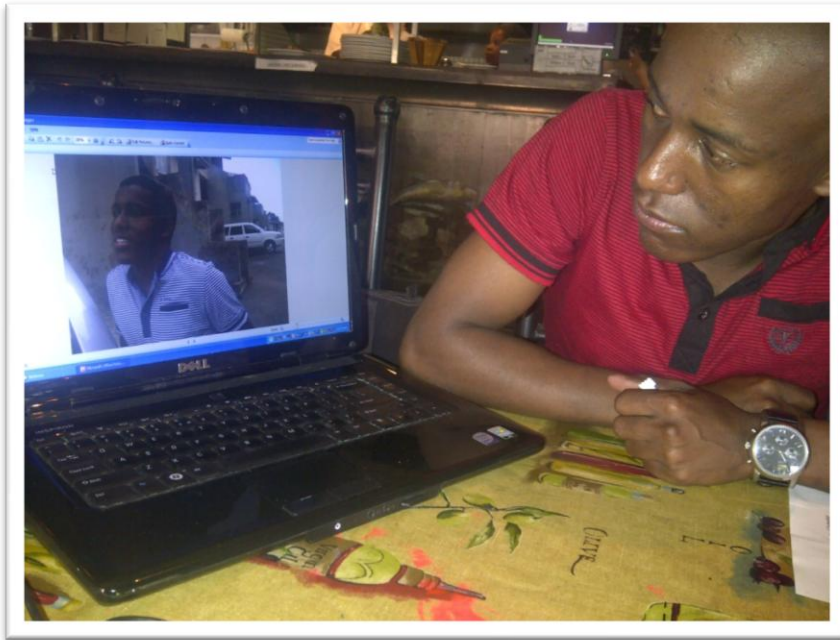
Ntokozo told me that he had not received support from anyone to help him reach his dream until he met Mandla, Ntombi and me. He told me that his family pressurised him to find a job, any job, to help with finances.



Photograph 84: Image from video of Ntokozo, 25 May 2012

Photograph 84 was taken from the video I took of Ntokozo while he was describing how he instinctively knew that he wanted to create beautiful shoes, bags, purses, belts. He said he looked at pictures of Italian shoes and had a strong desire to make very good quality leather items. He said that the quality of his work was very important to him and he would save to buy the correct sewing machines for manufacturing leather. Ntokozo told me that now that he had support he would definitely succeed as a business man.

Ntokozo also told me that he has a strong faith and believes that his creator gave him his talent to be creative (Video 5 and 6).



Photograph 85: Ntokozo looking at photograph 77

Before we left to go home, I asked Ntokozo to tell me what he saw in photograph 85. He said:

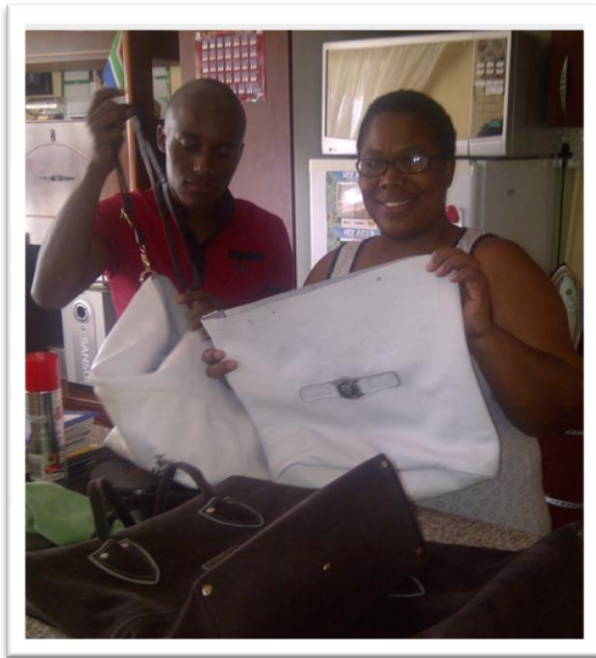
I see in that picture that I am looking forward and seeing my future as a successful business man with a big business making the best quality leather handbags, shoes, belts and purses. Good quality is going to be my most important thing in my business. I see that I will take all the difficult steps to get there but I will get there (p.c. Ntokozo, 25 May 2013).

I took Ntokozo home after breakfast and met his mother for the first time. Ntokozo's mother told me immediately after meeting her, that she was very angry with Ntokozo when he stopped working at Doves Funeral Parlour because she believed that by working there he at least had a little money to assist her with each month. She said she had not believed that he could make handbags. She told me that it was only when he started working from home in February 2013 that she realised the bags were really produced by her own son. She said she believed he should still get a job and make bags part time because she did not understand how he could start a small business with no finance or no factory.

Ntokozo explained to his mother that Ntombi was giving him leather and working from home was a way of keeping expenses down so that he could use the money he earned from the sales of bags to buy zips, thread, studs and lining for the bags. His

mother told him that she needed him to earn enough to buy their food every month and pay for electricity.

But, Ntokozo's mother told me that she was very proud of her son and believed that God had given him the gift to be so creative and that he must use the gift to the best of his ability.



Photograph 86: Ntokozo and his mother Mrs Ncwane after Essenwood Craft Market, 25 May 2013

Photograph 86, of Ntokozo with his mother who I observed to be very proud of her son's ability to design and make beautiful handbags. She proudly showed me how good the quality of his handbags was, in spite of having to use an old domestic sewing machine.



Photograph 87: Ntokozo at Essenwood Fleamarket, 1 June.

On 1 June 2013, I took Ntokozo to the Essenwood Craft Market with his handbags, photograph 87. He sold one handbag on his first day. Ntokozo is currently still making handbags from home, selling them at the Essenwood Craft Market and the last time I spoke to him in July 2013, he told me that he was also selling directly to people who were coming to his home to buy a handbag because they were hearing about his beautiful handbags.

What can I add to my theory because of Ntokozo? What can I add to my practice because of Ntokozo? What are my critical reflections of Ntokozo? What remains unresolved about Ntokozo?

I believe my influence on Ntokozo's creative economic independence began when I noticed his creative ability and took action to assist him to use his talents by asking Mandla and Ntombi if we could assist him in the ADD project.

I believe my influence on Ntokozo's creative economic independence continued when Ntombi and I provided him with the materials and the space to make handbags.

I believe that I have also influenced Ntokozo's creative economic independence because I spent time having conversations with him and listening to him from July 2012 to the current date. Because of the many conversations with him since 2012, I knew that he would become an entrepreneur. I believe that because I have shown

interest and support, I have assisted Ntokozo to overcome the times he feels terrified because he knows that he can call me to help him when he feels terrified.

What remains unresolved about Ntokozo for me is that he still has many obstacles to overcome while becoming economically independent. I believe the obstacles for Ntokozo are, learning to manage finance, accessing a little finance (as little as R2000 for example), buying industrial sewing machines, renting small premises, paying workers to assist him to increase production, understanding about employing others, managing employees, registering his business are a few obstacles that come to mind.

I believe that Ntokozo should be able to go back to university to study something in the creative field while he continues to manufacture handbags. I don't know how that will be possible because he would have to pay for his own university fees. Because I personally know the effort it takes to establish and sustain a business and the effort it takes to be a student at a university of technology, I don't know if it would be possible to manage to do both at the same time.

Chapter 10

Conclusion

Consulting human experience is an identifying mark of virtually all contemporary theology, as indeed has been the case at least implicitly with most of the major articulations in the history of Christian theology. Listening to the questions and struggles of the people of an era, their value systems and deepest hopes, gives theology of the most diverse kinds an indispensable clue for shaping inquiry, drawing the hermeneutical circle, revising received interpretations, and arriving at new theological insight (Johnson 1992:61).

Why did I want to improve my practice as a practitioner researcher? How did I develop my own living theory? What happened? What did I plan to do in my study? What did I actually do in my study?

Once I began my study, I realised that there was so much more than what I had set out to do. I realised that I had to begin by reflecting critically Schon (1983) on my lived experiences (Whitehead 1989, 2000, 2005b, 2012) that influenced why I did what I did. Therefore, I had to include self-study (Hamilton, Smith and Worthington 2008; Mitchell, Weber and Pithouse 2009; Mitchell and Moletsane 2009; Pithouse, Mitchell and Moletsane 2009; Scholes-Rhodes 2002; Tidwell, Heston and Fitzgerald 2009), in my study of how I influence others to become creatively economically independent. Once I began the self-study, I had to let go and allow my research study to get a life of its own. There were times when I felt chaotic and out of control of the process. I had to learn not to be too controlling of the process because, in retrospect, I realise that there were issues from my past that had to come to the fore. I had to deal with those issues before I could move to the next step of my study. I had to let go and at times that was extremely difficult because I wanted to be in control, but my study had other plans for itself.

The structure of my study changed because I had so much data to choose from that I had to decide which data would best show evidence of how I had influenced creative economic independence in others.

I did not realise before I started my reflection drawings and diagrams, that I had discovered significant aspects of my study relevant to me and the people whose creative economic independence I want to continue to influence. I did not realise that

new questions would surface to use in my work and in further study. One of the questions was: What did I discover in my study?

The improvement of my research practice has been an “emerging experience” (Denzin 2006:422; Pithouse Mitchell and Moletsane 2009; Conolly 2002). I have had to “clearly articulate and critically, thoughtfully develop my methodology” Hamilton and Pinnegar (2009:26), in order to understand my self-study (Hamilton, Smith and Worthington 2008; Mitchell, Weber and Pithouse 2009; Mitchell and Moletsane 2009; Pithouse, Mitchell and Moletsane 2009; Scholes-Rhodes 2002; Tidwell, Heston and Fitzgerald 2009), autoethnography (Denzin 2006; Duncan 2004) and living theories (Whitehead 1989, 2007, 2008, 2012). From a completely chaotic beginning, I believe that my self-study has become increasingly careful and rigorous. As it has done so, I believe that it has helped me to reveal multiple layers of consciousness so that I understand myself, the work I do and why I do it with more insight and awareness (Scholes-Rhodes 2002; Whitehead 2012). I have attempted to have “clarity, application of good research practice, an ethical commitment and attention to detail” which according to Hamilton and Pinnegar (2009:25) are all components of self-study.

I agree with Chandler and Torbet that action research can become “the guiding method, by which we organize our everyday enquiries and actions” (2003:134). I believe that I have sincerely used my narrative to provide a scholarly and justifiable and authentic (Coghlan 2008) interpretation of my data as evidence.

What did I do to reflect on my conclusion?

I followed the same process for my conclusion as I did for each chapter and section of my study. The following diagram is my first graphic representation of many rough drawings which I did while reflecting on my conclusion.

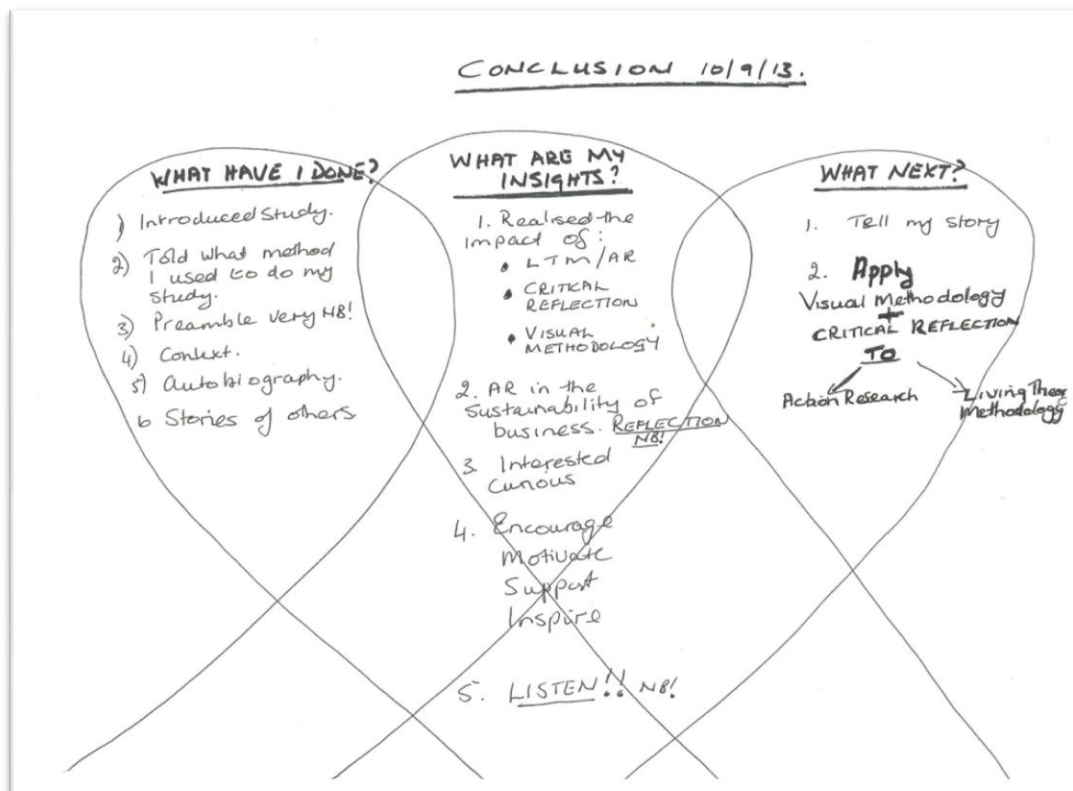


Figure 12: First graphic representation of my reflections on my conclusion

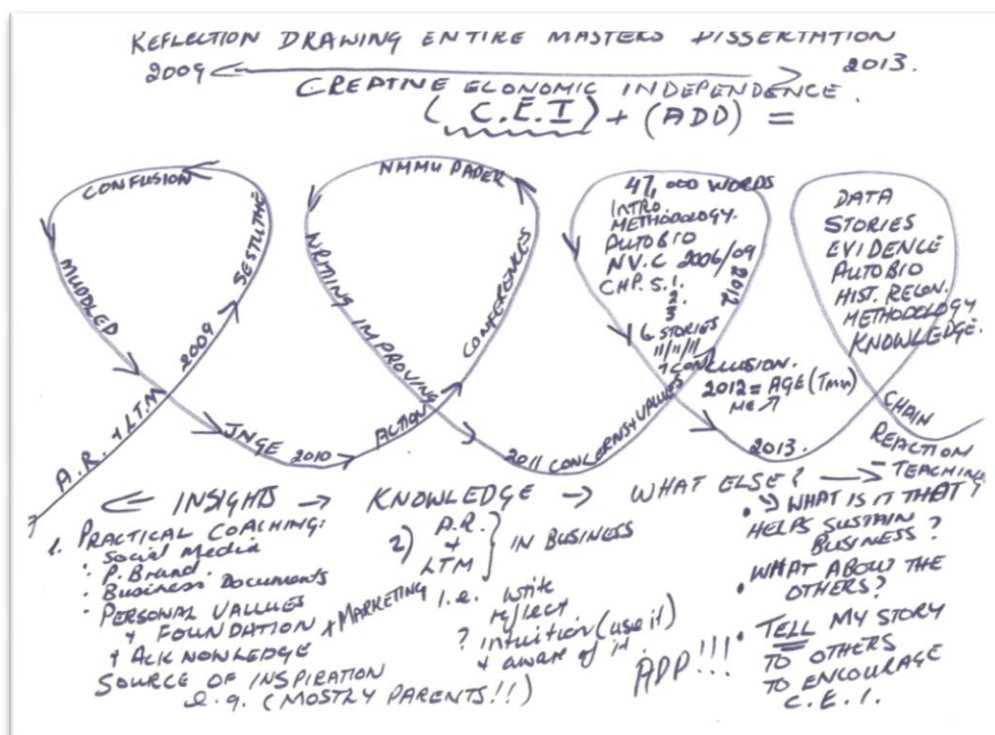


Figure 13: Final graphic representation of my reflections on my conclusion

Figure 13 is my final graphic representation of my conclusions.

What are the insights/realisations I have gained through my dissertation?

My graphic representations of my reflections show the main themes of insight I have gained through my dissertation.

1. Through critical reflection, I have come to realise that I was curious enough about the participants of the NVC programmes to discover more about their lives than what I observed on the surface. I wanted to know about their history, families, communities and challenges. My curiosity led to more critical reflection of each person which led to taking action on behalf of certain individuals or groups of people, like the DFW group. I believe the action I took influenced a progression and improvement in the creative economic development of those I assisted.
2. Because of using living theory methodology (Whitehead 1989; McNiff and Whitehead 2006) and action research (McNiff 2002a) for my dissertation, when critically reflecting on my life, I realised that when I was eight to ten years old I was already curious and concerned about an imbalance of equality and justice amongst people. Even though I was not aware of my concern consciously, the work I have done in my life has been driven by these two major concerns for justice and equality.
3. The methods I developed for my dissertation were a result of reading and reflecting intensively on critical reflection (Schon 1989), living theory methodology (Whitehead 1989), action research (McNiff 2002a) and visual methodology (de Lange *et al.* 2006; Lister and Wells 2001; Mitchell 2008; Mitchell *et al.* 2008; Mitchell, Weber and Pithouse 2009; Moletsane *et al.* 2009).

4. I realised through critical reflection (Schon 1989), how I can influence creative economic independence in others, by using living theory methodology (Whitehead 1989) and action research (McNiff 2002a). Without critical reflection I would not have been aware of how I influenced creative economic independence in others. To influence creative economic independence I encouraged, motivated, supported and inspired the participants in the NVC programmes and others who came into my life as a result of the NVC programmes. I also took action when I supported the NVC participants as in Ntombi's story and Ntokozo's story.
5. As my study progressed critical reflection (Schon 1983) took a major role before action for me in my work with the NVC participants.
6. My photographs and videos have become very important for me, in my study, because of the concerns I had when I first started the work of influencing economic independence of others in 2006. Taking photographs and videos of the people in my work has had an impact on me, because by reflecting on my use of multi-media I have shown that I have influenced creative economic independence in others. I have discovered the importance of life affirming energy (Whitehead 2012) in the multi-media presentation to present the data and evidence. I am thankful for the gift of my camera because the creative visual representation of my work has not only assisted me with memory recall, but, the visual representation has allowed me to observe the progression to creative economic independence of the people I wrote about. I was thus able to see the evidence of my influence on others to become creatively economically independent. I may have made incorrect assumptions and perceived my efforts to be a failure, if I did not have the photographs to show

me the success stories of those I have influenced to become economically independent.

7. Taking photographs and video's assisted me to "see things differently" (Mitchell, Weber and Pithouse 2009:119) and more accurately. I was able to see myself differently because I realised after I had used the photographs that I had influenced creative economic independence in others. I had acted on my concerns. In the process, my chaos and vulnerability changed to innovation and creativity while bringing about change. Mitchell, Weber and Pithouse, ask: "Do we recognize change when it happens?" (2009:120). By making use of visual methodology in studying my own practice, I have been able to see and discover changes for the better in other people's lives (Mitchell, Weber and Pithouse 2009).
8. I have come to realise through writing my dissertation that living theory methodology (Whitehead 1989) and action research (McNiff and Whitehead 2006) can be applied for the establishment and sustainability of business.
9. Through critical reflection (Schon 1983), I have come to realise that I listened carefully, mindfully and compassionately to the participants in the NVC groups and the others who came into my life as a result of the NVC programmes. For me listening mindfully with compassion led me to motivating, encouraging and inspiring the person I was listening to.

What impact did making use of Critical Reflection (Schon 1983) have on me for my dissertation?

The process I developed for my reflections while writing my dissertation has had a strong impact on me. I realised that critical reflection takes time. I also realised that I was not wasting time staring into space doing nothing, or what appears to be nothing. My quiet, deep critical reflection has become very important to me in my life

now as a result of my dissertation. I value the method I have discovered to critically reflect (Schon 1983). Walking in nature, being quiet is followed much later by active drawing and writing while standing. Finally I sit down to write my more structured reflections.

What impact did making use of the stories of others have on me for my study?

Writing the stories of others for me was the most inspiring part of writing my dissertation. Listening to and writing about each person inspired me because of the determination and perseverance each person had to start-up and sustain their own business. I also realised through writing the stories of each person that they all had passion for their work and business. I also learned that each person I have written about had faith in God to assist them through their process of having a sustainable business. I recognized a strong faith in each one of them that I observed assisted them to have confidence in their ability to start-up and sustain their business.

I have admiration for each person I have written about. I believe that they have each used the support they were given by me with gratitude. In turn I feel gratitude towards each of those I have written about in my dissertation for inspiring me and for recognising my support of them.

To sum up ...

I believe that in my dissertation, I have encouraged and recorded the “outpouring of personal feeling and thinking to the public domain to make a new public possible” (Ndebele 2011), in South Africa. I believe that my dissertation contributes to the understanding of the new public in South Africa, and especially to the clothing and textile industry in KZN.

I believe that my dissertation reveals the courage, resourcefulness and determination of a particular small group of entrepreneurs who have focussed and are forming a better life for themselves and others (Whitehead 2012).

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