

## **Journey to Living Theory Development of a Black African (Zulu) Male Educator: The Challenges of Doctoral Research**

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### **Abstract**

This article is an outcome of my doctoral journey and the challenges of developing my living-theory. The aim of the article is to give my readers insights into the journey I undertook. I look at the incommensurability between cultures, i.e. the oral versus the literate, and seek to demonstrate how the differences in culture can be seen as a development of new epistemologies.

I discuss some of the influences of cultural translation (Whitehead, 2016, p. 91, after Santos, 2014) and the links to be made between cultural perspectives. These recommend a movement away from the abstract universalism currently embedded in western-centric philosophies. I show how the development of new hybrid forms of cultural understanding would have helped with the difficulties I encountered as a doctoral student. It is my contention that each culture produces unique and valuable knowledge, which can itself become the means for solving diverse problems. I argue that cultures need what Sienaert (2000) refers to as a 'humble awareness' of our own lack of understanding as a means for solving problems, that cannot be solved if we stick to established but irrelevant theories in terms of the individual challenges being faced (Gumede, 2000 p. 33).

**Keywords: Living contradictions; Living Theory; Development; Cultural Influences; Induku (stick-fighting); Critical Cross Field Outcomes (CCFOS); Mimism.**

## Introduction

This article is a product of my doctoral research-journey and my development of my living-theory based on *ubuntu* (humanity) and *ukuhlonipha* (respect). This paper deals with reflections on what transpired during and after the research-process. It does not deal with the actual research-process of auto-ethnography, narrative, living-theory and self-study as methods that were employed in my research enquiry: *An Auto-Ethnographic Enquiry: Critical Reflection on the Influences in the Development of a Black African Male Educator*. Instead, the emphasis is on the challenges of doctoral research.

My research, as well as this paper, are the offspring of uncertainty as, 'apparent certainty discourages searching' (Bigger, 2016 p. 5). Uncertainty is sometimes viewed as negative but it is necessary for transition and breaking the long-held views in life. 'But for Turner we should focus our attention on transitions, ambiguities, and change' (Bigger, *ibid.*).

Bigger (*ibid.*, pp. 7-8) refers to what I did as a, 'contemplative process [that] involves reflection and reflexivity. *Reflection* means looking at ourselves as in the mirror, as others see us'. Reflective practice requires feedback and honest dialogue. Turner notes (1988, p. 24), '[T]he article is an observation-in-reflection of my challenges as I think about the journey of my research'.

In this article I write about the challenges I faced in the course of my research (Gumede, 2011). Each challenge provided an opportunity for change, for learning, for transformation and as contributions to the development of my personality as a Black African Male Educator. I consider the doing of my research within the context of the HIV and AIDs pandemic to be a singular and significant challenge.

## Challenges within the Doctoral Experience

My use of the word 'challenges' might have a negative connotation, but to me the challenges were encounters and experiments that spurred me towards conducting my research. A condition that Jousse (1990) refers to as *mimism*, is the tendency of people:

[t]o receive, register and replay the actions of the universe ... man is ím(in)-pressed by the activities around him – that is, he responds [by] taking in the impressions because of his capacity for *íntussusception* (suspire - to amass, to gather. Intus - by an interior movement).

The anthropos – man's internal environment and therefore the 'real' – is changed by impressions that he receives voluntarily and involuntarily. Man then expresses his *mimisms* (my encounters, experiments, challenges). The challenges motivated me to do my research. They were a reflection of a replay of my received and registered mimismic observation.

The challenges within the doctoral experience were:

- trying to developing self-belief at the beginning
- learning patience
- developing technology skills

- living with 'living contradictions'
- growing my English – an opportunity for me to improve my English
- being accepting of factors beyond my control
- fear of doing doctoral research
- the emotional roller-coaster of doctoral research.

When I started to work on my research, I struggled to find my own voice in writing my thesis, even though I had done it successfully for my Master's degree. I think the fact that I was now doing Doctoral Studies caused me to become confused and even lost. My writing at the start of my doctorate consisted only of quotations and ideas from other authors. When I read that writing, I felt ashamed because there was nothing of my voice. I had to rediscover my personal voice in the writing of this account of myself, as a Black African Male Educator. I believe all the experiences I have been through were necessary for me to develop self-belief and independence as aspects of my doctoral journey.

Upon reflection, I understand my failure to find my voice was due to my 'subaltern position' as a developing researcher and to the influence of the use of the second-person singular in research. I was also introduced to auto-ethnography, narrative, Living Theory, and self-study research-methods that would allow me to be an authority on my own work, rather than hiding behind forms of speech, such as, 'the researcher says', as I had learnt was the accepted standard.

## Learning Patience

I was a Governance and Management Coordinator, responsible for over five hundred schools. There were two of us in the whole Ugu District dealing with School Governing Bodies, School Affairs, Learner Affairs, Home Education, School Safety and Independent Schools. I had to attend meetings for my sub-directorate and be away from home for a minimum of four days a week in busy months. I did all my own administration. Sometimes assistance was provided by students from Universities of Technology doing Work-Integrated Learning modules, but they could not be held ultimately responsible for any mistake that involved money, so their usefulness was limited. There simply was not enough time to do everything that needed to be done in the way that I would have liked.

Consequently, I am a person who regards time as precious beyond price. I use every minute of every day. I considered watching television to be a waste of valuable time, and did not even have time to read a novel. So, when I had to spend hours waiting for my research-participants because they were engaged in matters beyond their control, I learned to be patient and philosophical about the 'waste of time', and also learned to put that time to good use by thinking and reflecting about my past experiences that were helping me in the development of my own personality.

I learnt to be patient, and realized that in Zulu culture the use of time and its recognition is not the same as the Western way I had learnt at school. My participants had a

different concept of time, based on changes in the sun or activities, such as those of herding cattle.

These times are:

- *Kusempondo zamnenke*, that is when snails are retreating to their shelter in the morning/at dawn.
- *Sezibuya inhlazantshe/inhlazane*, when the herd-boys bring the cows for milking before midday.
- *Emini bebade*, when people's shadows are long at midday.
- *Seliya ngomtsha wendoda*, like a man's beaded belt, to which is attached a decorative beaded apron, called an *isinene* when worn by males, and an *isigege* when used by females; this signifies sunset like the *umutsha* that hides the private parts of adults.
- *Selimathunzi*, in the evening, when only the silhouettes of objects can be seen, and *Kunqundeke amehlo*, when eyes can no longer see as expected.
- *Phakathi kwamabili*, midnight that separates two days/day and night, towards *Kusempondo zamnenke*, dawn.

I can further attribute my patience to my understanding that I was the beggar (as a researcher seeking knowledge from my interviewees/informants) and as such could not determine things or command my participants, because they were giving me their time and knowledge freely.

In Zulu culture patience is revered: people rushing about are looked down upon as discourteousness, more especially in the workplace, but also during times of pleasurable activities such as in commanding Zulu dancers when their leader's harshness is tolerated as normal. This is due to the fact that Zulu dancing is actually derived from military training, as is the case with the marching of the soldiers. This knowledge about time is based on my Zulu cultural understanding and teaching as a Zulu child.

I learned to be patient when Ros Banezu (one of my informants) with his failing eyesight struggled to see a photograph, and I reminded myself again of my good fortune. I learned to be patient with participants who took a long time to respond to my questions directly, due to the Zulu custom of *ukwendlalela* (a preamble), or their suspicions of me, their excitement, and/or their memories. I learned to be patient and appreciative of their time and contribution.

### **Developing technology skills, loss of valuable and critical video footage**

I write about these technology-challenges from the perspective of a person who spent the first 37 years of his life excluded from learning about sophisticated technologies by

an oppressive regime. I had spent most of my life-time in Port Shepstone, and in Murchison, which is a rural area. I am from a family that wasn't able to afford most of the things that some families could afford for their children. For example, I do not remember my parents ever buying me toys. The first time I had a wristwatch was when I passed Standard Nine (Grade 11) in 1975, almost twenty years before the Republic of South Africa's democratic elections. The first time I used a telephone was after completing matriculation in 1977 when I worked as a clerk at Izingolweni Magistrate's Court when I was 20 years old.

Therefore, you will understand my position when it comes to the use of technology. I am 'technophobic', not through choice but through the political, socio-economic, and geographical contexts. Reading my paper or thesis, you will have a better understanding of my challenges as a part-time doctoral student.

When I started my research I knew nothing about computers. Since then I have learned a great deal, not only to use the computer to write my thesis, but also that the cheapest printer is not the cheapest printer when the ink cartridge costs more than the printer. I have also learned that ink solidifies, that each and every part of the computer has a collapse-point, and that all of these instances are very expensive. I have also learned that 'air-time' and 'data-bundles' are not the same thing, and that 3G cards work in some localities and not in others, despite what the service-providers tell us. And all those passwords have to be written down or they are forgotten. I have also learned that camera batteries go flat, and that there is a special battery for every type of camera. I now know what people mean by 'Education is expensive but ignorance is more expensive'. My ignorance about technology has cost me a lot, in time, money and self-esteem. A small technology problem can make a grown intelligent human being feel foolish (Gumede, 2011).

In the course of my research, I lost two sets of critical video-footage through no fault of my own. The first was when the person responsible for the video-footage left South Africa without giving me it, and the second was when the technology inexplicably failed. I learned that I needed to accept that sometimes things would go wrong, yet can be a means to offer a lesson in accepting disappointment as part of the development of my own personality and living-theory.

On the day of my third visit to the tribal court (where I was to conduct my research interviews) – the second had been for the purposes of filming – there were signs that it might drizzle. In addition (to try my patience), there were also visitors from Germany. The cases were tried, and we had lunch. After lunch one of the councillors suggested that we go to a hillock about 500 metres from the tribal court to do the recording. I remember how excited I felt. As we arrived at the selected spot, a strong south-easterly wind started blowing and clouds gathered. It became dark and brooding and I anticipated that it would rain soon. But then the wind stopped. It thundered for a bit and then it too stopped, but the sky was still dark. The men gathered and started singing and performing *induku*. The camera rolled as the men moved towards us. When the men were about 20 metres from us, the wind blew faster, the thunder rolled, the clouds closed in and it started to rain lightly. We held umbrellas over the cameras. The men sang and danced, right up to the cameras. Even when the camera stopped rolling, the men sang and danced on. This had all turned out so

much more effectively than I had imagined. The visitors from Germany were also excited for what they saw was new to them, as one of them commented. I went home hugely excited.

Two weeks after the recording, I went to Durban for lectures as usual. The video-recording was played for the research group. To my acute distress, we discovered that only one third of the performance had been recorded. The photographer explained that a foreign object had interfered with the recording and spoilt it. I was totally devastated but hid my feelings from my colleagues. I could feel the tears burning and a lump in my throat and behind my eyes. I held back my tears, as I was driving my colleagues back home.

I have also reflected deeply and I think there may be two ways in which the 'failure' of the video footage can be explained, that is the *oralate* manner and a *literate* manner. In literate terms, the failure of the recording of the footage can be attributed to failure of technology. In orate terms, *induku* is a cultural activity or performance that was performed by my ancestors. Coetzee (2002) records that Mandela, my ancestor, is believed to be the founder of *induku*. I believe the ancestors were angry to see technology – something that they never saw in their lifetime – used in recording what they had sweated to develop. I think it is significant to remember that *induku* was used to defend their pride and belongings against invaders. I can see the possibility that the use of technology can be perceived as an invader.

I view my thinking about my disappointments and failures with the technology as a display of how intercultural translation assisted me to accept mishaps and alleviate my pain, as Whitehead (2016, p. 92) avers that, 'for Santos, the work of intercultural translation enables us to cope with diversity and conflict in the absence of a general theory and a commando politics'.

I realised that I needed to learn acceptance of what I could not change. However, nothing can obliterate my memory of the two occasions when the footage was made, particularly on the third visit.

### **Living with 'living contradictions'**

For my fourth visit to the court, I made an appointment with the *inkosi* (chief) and councillors for a Wednesday. I arrived at 10 o'clock in the morning. I hoped that I would see my research participants when the cases were finished, but to my disappointment the *inkosi* announced that on that day they were going to Bhubhoyi, an area 14 kilometres from the Tribal Court, because sites for building houses were to be allocated to the community members on this day.

I had used my van to travel to the court. When the *inkosi* saw the van he asked me to accompany them to the sites at Bhubhoyi. I could not refuse because it would have been impolite, and it would have compromised my rapport with the research participants. According to the Zulu culture, all that is within the *inkosi's* area belongs to the *inkosi*, that is, its people and their belongings. It is also an honour to be asked to perform any task for the *inkosi*. So, I could not refuse as I was doing my community service, in terms of the beliefs and values of the people.

At Bhobhoyi, sites were allocated to people, and umqombothi Zulu beer, chicken and dumplings were served, as is the local custom. Dumplings with chicken is my favourite meal, so the event was not without pleasure, but my patience was being tested. As the handing-over took place, men were singing and held their induku up and danced. The atmosphere was a jubilant one. Women from the neighbouring houses started ululating. Ululating of women in Zulu culture has a profound influence, as it signals acceptance and blessings on proceedings.

While I was still waiting for the men to finish eating, one of them came up with a sheep held by a rope. I was asked to open the cabin of the van and the sheep was loaded. After the handing over of the site, we then drove to the Tribal Court. When we arrived, the sheep was off-loaded, slaughtered, skinned, dissected and roasted, and we feasted. All my hopes of conducting interviews disappeared.

My feelings about the living contradictions (Whitehead, 1999) between orate and literate ways of doing things came in. The manner in which the site was handed over on the day of my visit to the tribal court made me realise the contradictions between orate and literate ways of doing things.

In the orate culture, the contractual agreement between the owner of the site and the one to whom it is handed over is not a dry activity but an agreement that is emotionally imbued with feelings and which develops a lasting relationship between the one who gives the site and the one to whom it is handed. So significant is this act, that even future generations are made aware of it. This causes a lasting relationship between families, and the act of generosity serves as a motivation to the generations to come because they are told who gave their family the land. Land to me is the most precious gift that one can receive from anyone and it is an everlasting gift that can be passed from generation to generation.

In the literate worldview, an agreement is signed through the lawyers – in most cases, in the absence of the buyer and the seller of the property. Such an undertaking has no emotional undertones and that is why I say the agreement is dry. In my saying so, I do not purport that one is better than the other but I view the orate way of land- transfer as involving personality.

In the end, my research intentions for the day became irrelevant. My understanding of the 'living contradictions' between our orate and literate selves were well informed.

## **Growing my English – Language and Punctuation as Barriers**

My home language is *IsiZulu* and I only started using English as a medium of instruction when I was 15 years old, and I started to teach using the language at the age of 22. I find it hard sometimes to express my thoughts because I have to think in my home language and then translate or transfer to English before writing, which to me is a time-consuming exercise.

I have written things that sounded good to me when I wrote them, but when my supervisor commented, I could hear/realise that they were not saying what I wanted them



to say. I had to think hard in order to express my logic in plain English. For example in isiZulu, I use the word *uma* for both 'if' and 'when'. I find it difficult to distinguish when if or when should be used in English. If I use them inappropriately, I write sentences that mean something quite different from what I intended.

Words that start with a 'di' or 'de' posed a problem for me, because in IsiZulu these are pronounced differently, while in English, they sound the same to me. Words that have 'ei' or 'ie', such as 'believe', or 'receive', give me a problem because in isiZulu vowels do not follow each other. Words that have double consonants such as 'collect' also pose a problem as well as words such as 'rhythm', as a word with no vowels does not exist in isiZulu except idiophones such as Mh! – for concern; or Sh! – Keep quiet. In IsiZulu there are no articles such as 'a', 'an' and 'the' in isolation of the noun and I have noticed the remarkable change they cause if they are not used correctly. For example *ingane* (a child) would occur as one word, but has to be written in English as 'a child'. Similarly, the absence of the use of prepositions in isolation of the words also poses a challenge as these do not occur in IsiZulu; for example, *emfuleni* (at the river) is one word. The use of tenses is another challenge as IsiZulu tenses are not as they are in English. In IsiZulu there are three major tenses (past, present and future), whose variants are created by the insertion of formatives. For example *Ngahamba* (I left/went): *Ngangizohamba* (I should have left/gone). I have also noticed that the inclusion or exclusion of a comma, a colon, a semicolon or a hyphen can make a remarkable change in what I intend saying but that is not the case with isiZulu.

The challenges mentioned above have caused me to be more alert when writing or speaking, to the extent that I sometimes doubt whether I have said or written what I intended saying. This challenge has been an opportunity for me to improve my English.

### **Accepting factors beyond my control**

Accepting that there are things beyond my control has always been my philosophy but this study has intensified that belief. During the preparation and writing of my thesis I had to face sickness and death in the family. My elder brother Ngani, my mother, and my half-sister were sick. I had to help in transporting them to health institutions while I was attending to my studies. This was very cumbersome but I now see it as having contributed to my development and part of my living-theory. I thus feel I need to include some of the challenges that sickness and the deaths posed to me. In my conclusion I also include a poem that demonstrates my experiences.

#### **Deaths in the family in 2005 and after**

Before 2005, I had had two experiences of being in the mortuary. In 1978, I accompanied Makha, a family friend who had to go and identify his mother who had died at the age of 33 years. I also had a similar experience when my cousin Mluli and I had to identify and dress our uncle Isa when he passed on in 1999.

Of all the deaths since 2005, that of Ngani traumatised me the most. He died when I was in England for a one-week educational tour. I came back to bury him on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July 2005, a Saturday. I had to go to the mortuary to dress him, before putting him in the coffin. I



was alone in the mortuary to dress him. I stood for some time and said a short prayer. Ngani lay prostrate and quiet as if he would wake and say: '*Mfowethu! Namhlanje usele wedwa*'. ('Brother! Today you are on your own.')

I then asked one of the mortuary employees to help me dress Ngani. As this was happening, it seemed as if it was a dream. My herd-boy experience helped me to face this very difficult time. Praying, taught to me by my mother and aunt Mangwa, has also helped me to endure the pain and the suffering of losing my loved ones.

Ngani's death tested my *ukubekezela* (patience), my *isibindi* (bravery), my *ukunyamazela* (resilience/self-composure), my wilfulness that I learned as an induku performer and herd-boy. These attributes were also tested when all other deaths after Ngani's death occurred. Though the deaths were agonising, they intensified my ability to identify and solve problems using critical and creative thinking (Smith, 2006 – CCFO1), my ability to work effectively with other members of the family more especially when my mother died because I then took over the leadership of the family (CCFO2). I have learned to organise and manage myself with no one to consult, with more and more people in the family consulting me for advice and direction in dealing with family matters. I learned to participate fully in family matters and this has helped me to realise that as a citizen I need to acknowledge and take my share of responsibility.

My involvement in family matters has helped me to be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts (CCFO10). The visits to graveyards had no meaning to me before my father's death, but the deaths of my loved ones recently have assisted me to understand the meaning behind visits to graveyard/cemeteries. I have found a healing effect in talking my troubles through at the family graveyard.

The death experiences have made me realise the visual communication that one sends by visiting the bereaved and what showing responsibility towards other people means. Visiting a fellow herd-boy, who had lost a loved one, was common, although it had no full meaning then. I now understand the idea behind the visit.

When Nnto died, she had no funeral insurance, and I had to cover all her funeral expenses and, in addition to that, I had to conduct the funeral. I also had to talk on behalf of the family. From conducting her funeral, I realised and appreciated my years of staying at Betania where I learned management of my finances as well as caring for other people selflessly.

On the day of Nnto's death I had a tough time convincing her son, who demanded that I drive about 130 kilometres just to see him as a way of showing that I was his uncle. He would not understand that I needed to travel again over the weekend for the funeral. I have had the experience of losing a parent, and understood my nephew's unreasonable insistence. From that incident, I understood the emotionality of bereaved people and what pain does to their thinking.

On one evening in June, 2007, while Ti and I were going to a video hire shop, Ti suddenly and simply said: '*Bhuti Jerome mina angisezukuphila isikhathi eside*' ('Brother

Jerome, I am not going to live long'). I did not know what to say. Ti died of diabetes and XDR tuberculosis<sup>1</sup> a month after having said that he was not going to live long.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2007, when Ti died, he asked me to go and fetch his three children. I fetched his children to pay him a visit, sat on his bed at Hibiscus Hospital, shaking and tired though I still had to take a 700 kilometre drive to and from Ngeni to transport learners who were attending a workshop for a week. As is my normal behaviour, I said *The Lord's Prayer* and bade him farewell, as something in me told me that he was about to pass on. When I came back to pay him a visit in the evening, there he was prostrate and quiet like my elder brother Ngani had been before him. I heaved a long sigh, and wholeheartedly and inwardly, said, 'let the Lord's will be done on earth as it is in heaven'. I fully accepted my fate of seeing my last brother leave me.

As is customary, an adult male in my family has to be *khashwa* (accompanied) by a beast that is slaughtered for him when he dies. When Ti died the family bought a beast from a farm in Paddock about 10 kilometres from Murchison. On its arrival the beast became wild and ran away. The men in the family tried to shoot it, but failed, and it was brought back in the evening after having run more than five kilometres from my homestead. In the evening before it was slaughtered it broke the rope that tied it and ran away. People started asking me to do something.

Ti's coffin was then in the home lounge as we normally bring the corpse in the afternoon of the day before the funeral. I simply went to the coffin and asked Ti – as if he were still alive – '*Uthi asithini ke Ti uma ungafuni sikwenzele izimfanelo zakho?*' ('What do you want us to do if you deny us the right to give you your rites?') I then went to where the beast had run and talked to it, and beseeched it to go home. The beast responded positively and it was slaughtered the evening before the funeral. Ti was buried on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 2007. My loss was deep but I knew that the only pillar of strength was my *Mlenzemunye* (God).

Even though so many family-members have passed on, I am still blessed with a big extended family of 49 people. I am the breadwinner and the eldest in the family at the age of 52 years (Gumede, 2011, pp. 116-119).

I also view my orality as a having had control in my research as a bread winner. Not attending family funerals is taboo in Zulu custom and culture and it is believed that it might cause bad luck, more especially if you are a bread-winner. I had to apologise to some of my extended family members for not attending some ceremonies as well as funerals. My apologies were not fully acceptable to some families who saw me as avoiding an encounter with them. I was also the first person to do doctoral studies in my family and my extended family. Not attending joyful ceremonies was acceptable compared to not attending funerals and wedding ceremonies. I now realize that developing one's personality or living-theory comes with a price.

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<sup>1</sup> This is an extremely drug-resistant form of tuberculosis.

There were also instances when sessions with my supervisor had to be cut short, as my other relatives accompanied me to my supervision-session and we left thereafter for a funeral. I could learn from their comments that to them the supervision was not learning that they knew. I fully accepted their view because I thought explaining to them would seem as if were undermining their intelligence. I am still unpopular with some of my relatives who see me as unsympathetic and aloof.

All my family members are Christians but there are contradictions in the influence of Christianity versus cultural beliefs. I have learnt to differentiate between what I believe in and what popular belief is and in most cases choose what I believe in. Had I succumbed to family demands, I would have not completed my research.

### **Fear of Doing Doctoral Research**

Another challenge I have faced is the fact that there are no people in my family who have done a doctorate before me. I am the first person to go beyond a junior degree in my immediate and extended family, so I have no-one at home to guide me as to what doing a doctorate entails.

I have had fears that my writing is not 'academic' enough. Brown (1994, p. 103) points out that it is only at a superficial level where the student worries more about whether the work is good enough and whether there is enough of it to get the degree. The two people with Ph.D.s, with whom I work professionally, have tried to explain to me how to write. None of this has actually helped me. Only in January 2011, did my supervisor comment on the presence of my 'voice' in my writing. I then began to feel the flow in my writing.

When I think of my doctoral journey, I am amazed at what has emerged. For my doctoral studies, I initially wanted to study karate from the perspective of Rudolf Laban and Martina Sprague. Then in 2004, my karate student Win Vunma, who was a Brown Belt, and I, as a Black Belt, did a demonstration on both induku and karate. After the demonstration, my supervisor asked me about induku, and I realised that my karate practice was embedded in my induku practice. I decided that I should research induku as a personality-developing performance. As this study progressed, it became clear that as an influence in my life and the development of my personality, induku had not operated in isolation of herding – looking after livestock in the 'veld' which is the oralate school/education for growing boys before the inception of the Western type of education and that herding happened because of my carer.

Reflecting on my parents and siblings led me into exploring my naming and my origins. My living-theory is strongly influenced by knowing my origins and my naming. According to my naming, I am *Muntukababa Jerome Lehlohonolo Thamsanqa Gumede*, but very few people know all my names. It was normal before 1994 for children of Black people to be given names by different people, which was in line with age-old traditional cultural behaviours.

Why Muntukababa? This means 'my father's person'. This name was given to me by my father but it never became popular like my other two names (Jerome Thamsanqa). Muntukababa is my *igama lasekhaya* (home name), and I later learnt that the name *Muntukababa* was the name of one of my ancestors. To me this name means that I am a simple person who is a replica of my father. The word *Baba* (father) is also used to address God/ the Lord, as, 'Our Father which art in heaven', in the Lord's Prayer of the Christians. I believe that as *umuntukababa* (my father's person) God or my father, I need to be selfless and be fatherly in my dealings and be sensitive to other people in the ways that my heavenly and my earthly fathers are/were to me.

Why Jerome? At the beginning of my study, I knew only that the name Jerome means 'holy' 'sacred' or simply 'that is how God is called'. Jerome is my *igama lesikole* (a school name) and means that I should at all times fight evil and strive for a holy life. This has caused me to have faith in the Lord and believe that I have a mission to fulfil in life and, therefore, that I must have *ukuzihlonipha* (self-respect) and *hlonipha* (respect) for other people. When I asked my mother why they named me Jerome, at first she was quite vague. At the time, she was more than 70 years old, her memory was failing, and she had cancer of the colon. Perhaps she could not see the importance of my question, or perhaps she simply did not remember. My father had already passed on and thus I had no-one to ask about my name Jerome.

Why Ignatius? Ignatius (from the Latin 'igneus', i.e. of fire, fiery, ardent) is my *igama lesonto/lomqiniso* (church name/confirmation name) as a Roman Catholic Church member. My father gave me this name when asked what I should be called during confirmation and he wanted to record how zealous, committed and passionate I am by nature. My fiery nature has helped me to take risks such as writing my thesis as a part-time student while working full-time as a Governance and Management Coordinator at Ugu District in charge of 513 public schools, as well as in home education sites, school-safety and independent schools with no administration clerk and only one supervisee to help me.

Why *Lehlohonolo Thamsanqa*? I asked my mother why they named me *Thamsanqa*, and she said in actual fact my name was *Lehlohonolo*, which means 'luck' in *Sesotho*. *Lehlohonolo* is my *igama engalinikezwa ugogo*, my name given me by my grandmother *MaFilipi*. *Lehlohonolo* is *inhlanhla* (luck) in isiZulu, but *Lehlohonolo* was then changed to *Thamsanqa* which is *isiXhosa* for luck. *isiXhosa* is an Nguni language that shares characteristics similar to isiZulu. My name-givers believed that the isiZulu speakers would find my *Sotho* name funny and queer, and it would be easier for Zulu people to pronounce my *isiXhosa* name rather than my *seSotho* name.

Why the sensitivity among language groups? In the 1950s when I was born, Apartheid was rife in the minds of Black people. The Apartheid government had, by decree, separated not only the major language-groups from each other, but also the 'dialect'-groups from each other, persuading them that they each had their own identity to be proud of. So it was that the Ngunis (Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi and Ndebele speakers) considered Sotho, Tswana and Pedi peoples as their enemies. And the Zulu, Xhosa, Swazi and Ndebele were encouraged to regard each other as different races! Having a *seSotho* name among the Zulu

people would cause me to be discriminated against by the Zulus. My Sotho mother seldom used two of my names, Thamsanqa and Muntukababa – the Xhosa and the Zulu – in full. My mother would often call me Thami, a shortened version of Thamsanqa. But the name that she used the most was Muntu, the shortened form of Muntukababa, more especially if I had done something that pleased her such as polishing her shoes or passing a test or my school examinations.

Gumedede is my *isibongo* (surname). In full, I am *Muntukababa Jerome Lehlohonolo Thamsanqa Ignatius Gumedede*. My full name is accounted by my genealogy as follows:

*Muntukababa*  
*kaMpandlana*  
*kaMpambane*  
*kaWata*  
*kaMafayinda*  
*kaGcizane*  
*kaMusi*  
*kaMmeseni*  
*kaPhakathwayo*  
*kaKhondlo*  
*kaMncinci*  
*kaLufutha*  
*wakwaSimamane*  
*wakwaKhuzwayo*  
*kaSidinane*  
*wakwaMahlobo*  
*wakwaQwabe*  
*kaMalandela,*  
*wakwaGumedede*  
*kaNdaba*  
*kaLuzumane,*  
*wakwaMnguni*  
*kaNtu.*  
(Gumedede, 2011)

*Ka* means 'son of', and *wakwa* means 'of the surname', as all IsiZulu surnames originate from the ancestral names to make it easy to trace kinship.

Most of my forefathers had praise-poems. I was blessed to find (Cope, 1968) those of *Phakathwayo* – who was said to have pulled/extracted his own teeth when angry and is presumed to have died of anger after his defeat by Shaka, whom he despised as a child born out of wedlock – and Khondlo, who was a tactful ruler. I have noted even bad characteristics among offspring, as reflected in their praise poems. As insights into my origins, naming has influenced the development of my personality and living-theory that is based on *ubuntu* and *inhlonipho*.

### **The Emotional Roller-Coaster of Doctoral Research**

During the past seven years, I have attended a number of conferences and presented papers on my topic. These experiences have taken me on an emotional roller-coaster ride. On reflection, I realized that I would have done myself some good by writing papers based on my conference-visits and presentations. My advice to up-and-coming researchers would be that they write journal articles as they do their theses. My assertion is based on the challenges that I encountered after my doctorate, as I tried to apply for jobs as well as post-doctoral fellowships.

I had to spend more than two years compensating for my inability to write while I was doing my doctoral research. I do not say this out of regret but offer it as advice to others undertaking doctoral research. I know it was not always possible for me to write with my busy work-schedule as well as my part-time studies. I advocate the writing of journal articles or inquiries about them, as both would eventually be beneficial to the researcher.

In 2003, before my study had been formalised, one presentation that boosted my confidence was the Research Day at Durban University of Technology, where I won a prize for the best presentation of the day. I was excited by the interest shown in my work at the SAFOS conference in 2004. The 13-hour trip to Potchefstroom and the Education Association of South Africa Conference in January 2005, together with the strangeness of a foreign, and potentially hostile, environment, will be forever ingrained in me. 2005 was a most important year in my doctoral journey as it was then that we staged two research reports to the communities we were researching, and I presented a paper at the SAADA conference. 2007 was also exciting, because I attended a series of Holistic Learning and Integrated Teaching and Assessment workshops facilitated by visiting professors. 2009 was similarly exciting with visits from a number of professors.

However, there have also been demoralising dips in the roller-coaster ride. My research proposal, submitted in late 2005, was only approved early in 2007. It was very hard to keep working when I did not know what the outcome would be. I persevered and I am glad I did. Then in 2007, our education-sector was crippled by a 13-week strike, followed by an exhausting three months of making up lost time and work. In 2008, when I felt that I was making excellent progress in my research, I attended a poster- presentation day for doctoral students in Pinetown, near Durban. Two people came to ask me about my poster. I thought that I was well prepared for the questions as I was developing a deepening understanding of

my topic, my motivation to do the study, the insights of *induku* performers, ways of recording my research experience, and its implications for education. So I got the shock of my life when they asked me what 'stage' I had reached in my research. I was horrified that I could not answer the question. The second question that floored me was about what I would specialise in after completing my studies.

The questions from these two people made me think. After the presentation I told my supervisor how stupid and embarrassed I felt as I failed to answer the questions that were asked. My supervisor saw that I was disappointed as I told her about the experience and the feeling I had after the presentation. We discussed what had happened and focused on what I knew and was doing, rather than on what I did not know and was not doing. I have remembered the questions and can now answer them with confidence. With reference to the second question I now think that, because I was working as a Governance and Management Coordinator with a stable job, I had no interest in any other job or any specialization.

I can now say with confidence that I have developed a philosophy of education and research, multiple research-skills, and now have a number of options for consideration having completed this study. One thought is to become an education consultant, but it is not the only one. I live in a community with multiple needs and I believe that I am here to serve as a *servant leader* (Greenleaf, 2005).

## Conclusion

In this paper I have written about the challenges in my research. Each challenge has provided an opportunity for change, for learning, for transformation – as contributions to the development of my personality as a Black African Male Educator, whilst helping me to develop my living-theory. My living-theory is based on *ubuntu* (humanity) and *inhlonipho* (respect). My *ubuntu* was honed by my experiences as a herd-boy, in which the South African Proverb – *Umntu umuntu ngabantu* (people are people because of other people) – was central in all our activities. As a student I spent my primary and school years in areas where poverty was rife and sharing half a loaf of dry bread among eight or more learners was normal practice. As a pensions- clerk serving the destitute, I learnt to appreciate people and their resilience. The destitute people (recipients of disability-grants and old-age pensioners) shared the little they had and respected each other greatly. I received a lot of respect from them, which taught me more about respect than I was taught by my family, Sunday school and other schools.

As a student-teacher at training school, I learned about the management of human-resources when I was a dormitory-prefect. The respect I got from my dormitory- mates furthered my respect for other people. I learnt what it was to be a leader and about the mentality of followers, as well as understanding more about their needs. My involvement as



a teacher and headmaster, and through various governance and management-roles my ubuntu and inhlonipho were intensified. I wrote in my doctoral thesis that, 'my anthropology gravitates around two poles: respect for life and respect for the individual' (Jousse, 2000, in Gumede, 2011, p. 39).

I consider ubuntu as vital in my life. I understand it as a respect for God, people, self, animals, plants, nature, law and more. It is similar to what Luke, Chapter 6, verse 31, says, 'do to others as you would have them do to you', and what Karen Armstrong (2009) calls 'The Golden Rule'. I believe that an equivalent exists in most, if not all, of the major religions and cultures of the world.

My passion for ubuntu is informed by my pain of oppression under the Apartheid Regime in South Africa. I love ubuntu because it does not allow any form of discrimination in terms of race, creed and considerations about being a 'have' or a 'have not'; I value inhlonipho (respect) as part of ubuntu. Respect begins with self-respect. If I feel the joy of self-respect, I am able to respect others. I thus present a poem that I wrote (Gumede, 2011) about my view of people, more especially those who do not occupy any fully-recognized positions in society. My view is we need to reconsider our vision about the so-called destitute.

The 'Unemployed'

*The 'unemployed' sisters, aunts, grandmothers are the pillars of the community  
In the absence of the employed  
They dress, feed and take care of the sick  
They pray for all indiscriminately  
Both the weak and strong*

*They give the alarm about any mishap / suffering in the village  
They pass on the baton of the tougher tasks to the... brothers, uncles and grandfathers  
The despised brothers, uncles and grandfathers are sometimes referred to as  
Amalotha/ Oqhwayilahle  
(those that scratch the ashes to obtain burning coal so as to light their tobacco)*

*The 'unemployed' brothers, uncles and grandfathers are the ones that report the sick to  
neighbours.*

*They wake up in the middle of the night to look after the groaning, serve them in their need.  
In the absence of money and transport they uncomplainingly push the sick to pension pay-  
points and medical clinics using wheel barrows.*

*When a member in the community dies the 'unemployed' are the ones to hear his/her last  
breath, then close his /her eyes before the employed come home exhausted.  
The 'unemployed' brothers, uncles and grandfathers are the ones that give the alarm about  
the death.*

*They clear the ground for the grave to be dug.  
They measure the size of the grave using the so-called primitive ways such as that the Width  
of the grave should be one and half,*

*Length be two spades  
And depth of two-and-half the size  
of the normal South African Bureau of Standards spade.*

*They toil and sweat wholeheartedly expecting no pay but gratitude  
And  
the smiles of the bereaved seem to be their pay.  
Those who despise the 'unemployed' should mourn the death of their 'decaying minds'.  
Not only do I respect 'the unemployed' but mostly I respect their:  
Ubuntu (humanity) of not wanting any monetary gain for their toil  
Inhlonipho (respect) for the sick and invalid  
That is displayed by  
Ukuzithiba (delayed gratification) in forfeiting their sleep as they dig the grave the whole  
Friday evening till Saturday morning  
Ukubekwezela (endurance) in all kinds of dismal weather, wintry cold, summer the and the chill  
of the morning dawn  
Ukungacwasi (non discrimination) as they go to help both the rich and the poor  
Ukunakakela (care) for the orphaned as the employed are away  
Unkulunkulu nomthandazo (God and prayer) that they bring to the most needy*

*Amancoko (jokes) they share as they dig the grave  
They sooth the heart by their presence and humour  
Ubuqotho (sincerity) nokuzithoba (humbleness) in their dealing with issues of the bereaved  
family*

*Ukuthula (peace) that they display and bring to the family  
Ubuchwepheshe (professionalism)/nokuqikelela (meticulousness) that they conduct their  
unpaid work of digging the grave or skinning a goat or a beast  
Ukukhuthaza/ukugqugquzela (motivation/motivating) each other as they feel the fatigue as  
they labour tirelessly to completion of their charge  
Ukuphana (sharing) the little they have such as bits of tobacco or snuff  
Ukuboniswa (willingness to be advised) nokubonisa (advice)  
as mistakes are respectfully indicated and corrected  
ngokubambisana (with cooperation).*

*What will happen when the 'unemployed' become 'employed'?*

I see the 'unemployed' as the true bearers of the value of *ubuntu* and *inhlonipho*.

I believe each one of us is responsible for all humankind. We need to think of each other as true brothers and sisters, and to be concerned with each others' welfare. We must seek to lessen the suffering of others. Rather than working solely to acquire wealth, we need

to do something meaningful, something seriously directed towards the welfare of humanity as a whole (Hopkins, 2005, p. 5).

My Ubuntu and inhlonipho, I believe, are enhanced by the values and beliefs I have learnt. These belief and values are:

- *ukuzithiba* (deferred/delayed gratification),
- *ukubekezela* (perseverance/endurance),
- *ukungacwasi* (non-discrimination/equity),
- *uNkulunkulu nomthandazo* (God and prayer),
- *ukuzivocavoca* (physical training and training the mind),
- *amancoko nokutekula* (jokes and humour),
- *ubuqotho* (integrity),
- *ukuzihlola* (introspection),
- *ukuthula* (peace),
- *ubuchwepheshe/ubungoti* (professionalism),
- *nokuqikelela* (perfection/being meticulous in doing things),
- *ukukhuthaza* (motivation),
- *ukuphana* (generosity),
- *ukubonisana* (advice giving)
- *nokuboniswa* (and receiving/ listening to advice), and
- *ukwaluleka nokwalulekwa/kanye nokubambisana* (cooperation),

Gumede, 2011 p. 46.

The post-colonial and post-apartheid era require new hybrid forms of cultural understanding and intercommunication and an understanding that brings forth the notion of a people shaped by a myriad of influences, for example, people who understand – as I concluded in my thesis (Gumede, 2011, p. 305) – ‘I am not alone. I believe there are many Black African Male Educators who share my beliefs, values, hopes and dreams for a better future for all humanity’.

My African-ness is – culturally – richly informed due to my:

- *Zulu-ness*, as my father is a Zulu
- My *Sotho-ness*, as my mother is a Sotho
- My *Swazi-ness* as my grandmother is a Swazi
- My *Xhosa-ness*, as I grew at Murchison among some of the Xhosas that lived with us, and I am married to a Xhosa woman

- *My Afrikaner-ness* from the learning of the Afrikaans literature at school, being taught by Afrikaner educators, university tutors, my relationship with Sensei Cas and working with them
- *My English-ness* from the influence of being taught in English, being taught by English teachers, learning English literature and studying through the medium of English at both undergraduate and post graduate levels
- *My Christian-ness*, as a confirmed Roman Catholic Church Member and now a Methodist Church member
- *My Indigenous-ness*, as I believe in the ancestral guidance in life as well as the relevance of indigenous knowledge in my life.

I subscribe to the notion that we carry in us memories of our ancestors in our genetic code as well as the water from conception.

In addition to my belief in *ubuntu* and *inhlonipho*, I see my doctoral research as having played a major role in refining my *ubuntu* and *inhlonipho*. My research has taught me humility in accepting that I need to be relearning a new way of learning and listening. I have grown to know that living theory development is not an activity that has an end but it is always renewed as I do what is set for me to do.

What I learned about my personality is: reflecting on/upon my beliefs and values has helped me to know myself and my personality. I believe that I have *ubuntu* and *inhlonipho* for others, the environment and the ancestors that is based on the respect for God (Gumede, 2011, p. 301). This is the basis of my living-theory and my belief in what makes me who I am as a Black African (Zulu) Male Educator.

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