Practices of Self-Directed Professional Development of Teachers in South African Public Schools

Rosaline Govender

Abstract—This research study is an exploration of the self-directed professional development of teachers who teach in public schools in an era of democracy and educational change in South Africa. Amidst an ever-changing educational system, the teachers in this study position themselves as self-directed teacher-learners where they adopt particular learning practices which enable change within the broader discourses of public schooling. Life-story interviews were used to enter into the private and public spaces of five teachers which offer glimpses of how particular systems shaped their identities, and how the meanings of self-directed teacher-learner shaped their learning practices. Through the Multidimensional Framework of Analysis and Interpretation the teachers' stories were analysed through three lenses: restorying the field texts - the self through story; the teacher-learner in relation to social contexts, and practices of self-directed learning. This study shows that as teacher-learners learn for change through self-directed learning practices, they develop their agency as transformative intellectuals, which is necessary for the reworking of South African public schools.

Keywords—Professional development, professionality, professionalism, self-directed learning.

I. INTRODUCTION

THIS study focuses on exploring the self-directed professional development of five teachers in this study and the particular learning practices that they adopt as professionals amidst what [1] describes as the turbulence and turmoil of governance and curriculum change that characterises the South African schooling system.

Within the South African public school system, professional development is externally driven by the Department of Education. According to [2] the Department of Education's initiative to introduce Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers adopts a top-down approach and the needs of individual teachers are not taken into consideration. One of the aims of continuing professional teacher development (CPTD) is to "provide teachers with clear guidance about which professional development (PD) activities will contribute to their professional growth" [3].

The Department of Education has given the responsibility for the implementation and management of CPTD to the South African Council for Educators (SACE) [3]. Teachers receive points for engaging in PD activities which are classified into four types: school-driven programmes; employer-driven programmes; qualification-driven programmes and other programmes such as those offered by NGOs, teacher unions, community-based and faith-based organisations, or private

R.Govender is with the Durban University of Technology (e-mail: rosalineg@dut.ac.za).

companies [3]. This policy views professional development as a top- down process and doesn't take teacher agency into consideration.

Literature shows that teachers engage in different ways of developing themselves as professionals. They improve their qualifications through registering for post-graduate studies, attending short courses or in-service training [4]. Teachers also choose alternative social learning spaces where they acquire knowledge, skills and procedures which they use in their teaching practice, which [5] terms professionality. Teacher-learners who seek alternative spaces to improve their professionality construct themselves as transformative intellectuals [6], [7]. As noted by [6], teachers are transformative intellectuals because they are thinkers: they ask questions about how and what they learn, and challenge the dominant discourses within their schools as they create spaces for their learning.

As transformative intellectuals, teacher-learners are also "reflective practitioners" who make particular decisions regarding their learning [6], [7]. They take responsibility for what they learn, how they learn, where they learn and with whom they learn. In order for teachers to function as transformative intellectuals, conditions at schools should allow teachers to "reflect, read, share their work with others, produce curriculum materials, publish their achievements for teachers and others outside of their local schools, etc." [6].

In an attempt to develop themselves despite prevailing constraints, some teachers initiate learning activities and pursue professional learning and development goals and are able to take ownership of the learning process [8]. In this study, teachers as "initiators of change" take responsibility for their own learning as they identify sources for their learning [9]. In analysing the data collected from the five teachers in this study, the researcher shows how these teachers adopt particular self-directed learning practices which take place both within and outside of their professional schooling community. In this study the *professional schooling community* refers to the physical and social space within schools and the alternate spaces within which professional learning (learning that teachers engage in order to improve their practice as teachers) takes place is referred to as the *professional learning community*. These professional learning communities can exist within and outside of the schooling community.

II. USING NARRATIVE INQUIRY TO EXPLORE TEACHERS; LEARNING AND CHANGE

This study is located within the critical paradigm which

allowed for an exploration of the identities of teachers as being fluid, multiple and in a state of flux, through their stories. Working within the critical paradigm helped the researcher to "uncover myths/hidden truths that account for particular social relations" [10] given the social backgrounds of teachers and the current context in which they work. In this study, teacher-learners are viewed as "creative, adaptive beings with unrealised potential" [10]. In attempting to articulate how teacher-learners are empowered through their learning as they become agents of power within their schools and societies, the researcher was drawn to narrative inquiry.

Teachers "not only possess knowledge; they can also be creators of knowledge" [11]. The narrative inquiry approach is useful in exploring the lives of these teachers who learn, change and become creators of new knowledge. It is through their stories of the past and the present that we are able to understand their self-directed learning and change.

Using "stories as portals" allowed the researcher a glimpse into teachers' lives and their fluid identities [12]. Teachers live "storied lives" and various social contexts shape their lives. Through stories we can enter into the otherwise private worlds of teachers and have an insider's view of their learning and change. This research takes cognisance of the fact that teachers share only what they want to share and present particular pictures of themselves, "Yet this telling gives access to lives as told and these acts of telling are an act of creating one's self" [13]. As [14] adds, "The life as told may be different at different times, with a different audience, or when told with a different purpose." Through narrating particular critical incidents in their lives, teachers give us a sense of who they are and we get glimpses of their identities as dynamic, partial, fragmented and context-dependent.

III. THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

This research entailed a three-year study of teachers located within the Durban area in South Africa. Purposive sampling was used when selecting research participants. Principals, teachers and members of the community directed the researcher to potential research participants. The research participants were selected because they were information-rich subjects. Teachers teaching in the Durban area were selected because the sample was representative of the teaching fraternity in KwaZulu-Natal in terms of the composition of teachers' qualifications, gender and race as identified by the Department of Education [15]. Only five research participants were selected because "data saturation," was reached and common patterns emerged from the data and no new information was being presented [16]. Most teachers shared similar backgrounds and were involved in analogous activities in their professional learning and development.

Table I presents details of the final sample. Participants in the sample differed in terms of the number of years of teaching experience and levels of teaching. Labels of race, class and gender are used in this study as South Africans are still classified according to these categories and theorists have identified race, class and gender as being important in the development of identity.

TABLE I
THE FINAL SAMPLE AND THE SELECTION CRITERIA

Sample	Race	Gender	Type of School and Phase	No. of years teaching	Position at school
Mbeje	African	Male	Combined school: Further Education and Training (FET) Phase	11	Level 1 teacher
Shabeer	Indian	Male	Primary school: Senior Phase	23	Level 2-Head of Department
Carolina	Coloured	Female	Combined school: Senior and FET Phase	22	Level 1 – teacher
Shakila	Indian	Female	Secondary school: FET Phase	25	Level 2 – Head of Department
Tasneem	Indian	Female	Primary school	32	Principal

IV. A MULTI-LAYERED FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In order to analyse the narratives the researcher linked the theoretical ideas from social identity theory, [7] concepts of professionality and professionalism' Bell and Gilbert's model on professional learning (1996) and the socio-cultural theory on learning. As [17] notes, teaching is personal and in order to understand teachers' learning we have to understand who the teacher is. In studying teachers' lives, it is important to note that the teacher's identity is linked to the meanings that they give to their learning and that these meanings shape their practice as teachers [17]-[20]. Teachers' attitudes to self-directed learning are influenced by various factors, such as their previous learning experiences, being given the opportunity to choose what they learn and their previous "knowledge, experience and expertise" [21].

The researcher developed a Multi-layered Framework of Analysis and Interpretation to analyse and interpret the narratives using three lenses (see Table II). By using this framework to analyse the field texts the researcher was able to present a more complete picture of self-directed learning of teachers in this study.

Table II illustrates the layers of analysis and interpretation used in this study.

TABLE II
MULTI-LAYERED FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Lens 1	Restorying of field texts – the self through story	A reconstruction of the teachers' critical moments
Lens 2	The teacher-learner in relation to the social-cultural contexts	Race, class and gender discourses
Lens 3	Practices of self-directed learning and change	Learning: - Within the schooling community - Outside the schooling community

V. FINDINGS

Teachers in this study take up various sources of learning within the *professional learning community* of the school where they learn with and through others. Learning with others takes the form of professional dialogue whilst learning through others takes place through organising and/or attending workshops, and mentorship [18], [22]. Sources of self-directed

learning outside the professional schooling community include: formal studies; learning through debates; learning through involvement with the teachers' union; learning through research, and community engagement.

As teachers in this study develop themselves, they also develop others. This "attitudinal development" as recognised by [7] includes becoming more knowledgeable and thinking about one's practice, and creating ways to improve one's practice as a teacher. Teachers like Shabeer and Shakila are passionate about learning and as they engage in personal learning they create learning spaces for themselves and other teachers. As transformative intellectuals they create enabling spaces within their schools and districts for learning.

A. Learning with Others

Teachers' everyday experiences within the *professional schooling community* are an important source of their professional learning [23]-[25]. It is within this social setting that learning with others contributes to teachers' professionality [5], [7]. The engagement of teachers in this study in professional learning communities at their schools directs us to particular learning phenomena.

1. Learning is Social

Learning is a social phenomenon, as teachers learn with others. Learning is meaningful when it happens with others. As teachers engage in professional learning communities, through dialogue they "feel a sense of belonging and of making a contribution to a community where experience and knowledge function as part of community property" [26].

"Professional talks" is an important component in bringing about "educational change" [27]. As teachers engage in professional talks – which take place incidentally in school corridors and staffrooms – about pertinent issues related to teaching and learning, they "discover who they are and what they stand for" [28]. It is through this "everyday learning" that teachers are developing themselves as professionals [25].

Through "everyday learning" teachers learn from their colleagues and implement these ideas in their practice as teachers. Teachers obtain "inspiration for their most effective lessons from talking to colleagues…they engage in knowledge-sharing conversations" [29]. For teachers, learning is reciprocal and they become more confident in their self-directed learning as they begin to share their knowledge with others.

2. Learning is Dialogical

Another phenomenon of professional learning communities within the school that this study identified is that learning is dialogical. Learning is "dialogical…learning does not occur in only one direction (from experts to non-experts) and learning is sharing of knowledge" [30]. This sharing of knowledge provides teachers in this study with clarification regarding the planning and teaching of their subjects. As [31] note, "Knowledge is created as it is shared, and the more it is shared, the more is learned."

According to [32] unplanned teacher interactions include "casual conversations, multi-conversations, collisions or bumping into each other." Carolina states, "*At school I've learned from my colleagues and my Head of Department…I believe that learning is a two-way process of giving and receiving. I always share what I am learning with my colleagues and in turn some of them share their knowledge and expertise with me.*" It is this unplanned sharing amongst teachers about their practice as teachers that is fundamental to their learning and change. Through the sharing of "knowledge and expertise" teachers begin to change their practice as teachers since learning becomes personally meaningful as it is acquired in an informal context.

When there is collaboration amongst teachers then there is sharing of resources and learning experiences. According to Shabeer, "*Committees are important for the professional development of teachers so we can learn from each other and share our resources... I also share information with my colleagues and I find that this is very effective because it gives me a different perspective on the topic.*"

Tasneem and Carolina also view sharing with others as being an important part of their learning. Tasneem says, "*I have a few colleagues with whom I interact on a constant basis and I am always learning from them... Every person is a 'think tank' on their own and they are full of knowledge. When you interact with others there is always something that you learn…My educators, colleagues and learners are an important source of my learning.*" For Tasneem, learning with others is crucial to her learning as a teacher. It is through these daily interactions with other teachers and managers of other schools that she is able to deal with the constant challenges at her school. For Carolina, the professional sharing with her colleagues is used to learn about the new curriculum. She states, "*I have learnt from my colleagues and my Head of Department. I interact with my colleagues regarding the new curriculum.*" In the absence of adequate professional development opportunities being provided by the Department of Education and her school managers, Carolina uses the sharing with her colleagues as a vital component of her self-directed learning.

Learning through dialogue is critical for teachers' self-directed learning as it creates opportunities for learning and is a powerful space for the impartation of critical knowledge.

3. Learning is Open-Mindedness

This study highlights another phenomenon located within the professional learning community of schools which is learning is open-mindedness. In order for teachers to learn with others there has to be an attitude of "openness of mind" to new learning experiences [33]. Teachers as "intellectual adventurers" [34] make choices about their learning and are open to new learning opportunities; they must demonstrate an "open-mindedness and a passion for wanting to learn from other teachers […] about their aspirations, intentions, experiences and previous preparations as teachers" [35]. By displaying open-mindedness to learning, teachers in this study show that they are reflective teachers as they can critique their practice as teachers, thereby determining what they need to learn. It is through being open-minded that teachers embark on

"learning adventures" where they are constantly rediscovering themselves as professional teacher-learners.

Shakila states, *"Working with colleagues who are passionate about teaching has played a key role in shaping who I am as a teacher and a professional. There are always new things to learn. As teachers we must have an open mind and an open approach."* Teachers who are interested in improving their practice will be open to suggestions on how to do so. This open-mindedness implies a willingness to dispense with the old and embrace new ways of learning as teachers. This open-mindedness also suggests that the environment at schools should be conducive to openness if teachers are to be learning with others.

B. Learning through Others

Within professional learning communities teachers also learn through other teachers. Teachers in this study identified learning through workshops and mentorship as important learning spaces for their professionalism.

1. Learning through Workshops

Teachers in this study identified workshops as spaces for their learning and change. It is within these spaces that teachers share knowledge and skills and have opportunities to join learning networks. Teachers revealed that workshops held at their schools were important to their learning and change. As teachers, they were not just recipients of knowledge but also contributed to the process of knowledge creation. Workshops provide a space for teachers to share their knowledge and this has immense value in improving their practice. Workshops are learning spaces where teachers can reflect critically on their practice and find new ways of being and doing.

2. Learning through Mentorship

Teachers in this study cited mentorship as being an important space for their learning. There is a shortage of qualified teachers in South African schools which results in schools employing unqualified staff [36]. According to Shabeer: *"The Department of Education sometimes places unqualified or inexperienced teachers to teach at our schools."* In order to ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is not compromised at his school, Shabeer adopts the role of mentor to newer members of staff: *"As a Head of Department, I also mentor other teachers. I guide my teachers to teach in any learning area."* It is through mentoring other teachers that Shabeer is compelled to evaluate his own practice, knowledge, values and beliefs as a teacher. Mentoring provides a space for him learn and change his practice as a teacher.

Mentorship also provides new learning experiences for Tasneem in her position as a principal: *"The SEM [Senior Education Manager] has twinned me with another school so that I could mentor that principal. I am also mentoring a number of primary school principals which provides new learning experiences for me*." Tasneem is identified as a successful manager in her district. As she shares their experiences and mentors them she learns new skills for coping

with the difficulties at her own school. This shows that the mentoring process involves much more than supporting teaching and learning.

3. Learning through "Buddy Teaching"

Due to the shortage of qualified teachers and the consequent employment of unqualified teachers in South Africa as discussed earlier in this paper, Shakila identifies a way in which she can help the teachers at her school. She says, *"Buddy teaching" (when you pair a new teacher with a more experienced teacher) is a strategy that has worked for me. The orientation of new teachers to teaching is an area that is often neglected...If we don't invest in those types of professional development then we are going to reap the harvest of what those teachers are going to get into."* The "buddy teaching system" offers a non-judgmental space for all teachers involved in the process. "Buddy teaching" is effective when teachers feel confident about sharing their classroom space with someone whom they trust and respect. This system of learning allows teachers to share teaching, learning and assessment strategies in a non-critical environment which becomes a space which enhances their learning and development.

C. Learning through Self

Teachers in this study identified learning-through-self as an important source of their professional development. They exercise their agency as they take responsibility for their learning and change. By learning-through-self, they identify sources for their own learning.

Carolina's professional schooling community is restrictive which results in her being unable to access the necessary sources for her learning needs. She also experiences financial constraints in pursuing formal studies. She feels that she is underprepared for the new subjects that she is expected to teach and the lack of adequate training further compounds this problem. She therefore seeks new knowledge through reading and self-study. *"In order to prepare myself so that I can do justice to my learners and the subject, I read! I have to read to extend my knowledge."* By learning through self she is able to make decisions about what and how she will learn. She identifies her learning needs and sets her own targets for learning. Through reading and self-study Carolina exercises her agency as a teacher and transforms herself as a professional.

As "intellectual adventurers," teachers direct their learning towards attaining new skills, knowledge and attitudes in order to improve their practice as teachers. Teachers identify their learning needs through introspection. Learning-through-self allows teachers to gain fresh perspectives on their roles as teachers within the context of the latest developments in education. Through researching various topics related to their teaching and professional improvement, teachers are better informed about educational issues and subject-related matter. Teaching becomes exciting as they constantly search for new ways of teaching. By learning-through-self they stay up to date on the latest developments in teaching and learning,

which has an impact on their learners. In this way they nourish the teacher-self as they become empowered and affect the teaching and learning ethos at their schools.

D. Sources of Self-Directed Learning outside the Professional Schooling Community

Teachers in this study also identified learning sources outside the professional schooling community for their self-directed learning. These sources of learning were varied and sometimes were an extension of activities within the professional schooling community. This learning also takes place with others, through others and through the self.

1. Learning through Organising Debates

Shakila identifies debating as a creative learning space that opens up many learning opportunities for herself and her learners. She believes that the power of debating could "*create this positive lifestyle amongst the learners.*" She recognises the positive influence that debating had on the local schools and she takes on the mammoth task of setting up the Phoenix Debating League (PDL).

The PDL is the largest debating league in South Africa and was introduced to schools in the Phoenix area as a means of encouraging learners to read. Debates as a learning space helps Shakila to "*look at issues in a more knowledgeable way*" and she is "*learning new things all the time.*" Her dedication to her learners and to debating is reflected in her willingness to sacrifice her time, effort and even her own finances. All the debate training and coaching is done after school and on weekends, and Shakila sees this as "an extension" of her work as a teacher.

2. Teacher-Learning through the Union

Shabeer's leadership position in the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) provides him with numerous opportunities to develop himself and others. He says, "*I have a thirst for knowledge and to impart whatever I learn to others and this helps me to be a success in whatever I do.*"

His active involvement in SADTU provides many learning opportunities for his learning and change: "*It has given me exposure to different sources of professional development which has contributed to my professional development.*" He is elected to serve as the Education Convener of Ethekwini North. This position gives him a particular agency as he uses his influence to bring about educational changes in many schools. He convenes regular meetings to capacitate teachers regarding the latest curriculum changes: "*It was exciting and rewarding being in a position where I could make a difference to the knowledge and practice of educators.*"

3. Teacher-Learning through Research and Reflection

Tasneem creates new learning spaces for herself and the teachers at her school as she learns through research. As Tasneem engages in research at her school and in her community she learns how to become a better educational manager. As the Principal, Tasneem is concerned about the factors that affect teaching and learning at her school. She investigates and addresses problems with the members of her staff and together they decide on the plan of action. Tasneem also includes outside agencies to assist her learners if there is a problem that she and her staff cannot cope with: "*I conduct simple investigations in order to help my learners and teachers. I act on the findings of my research and if I am not equipped to handle particular problems, I get assistance from outside agencies like the Psychological Guidance and Support Services, police services and social workers. If there are medical problems with the learners I work with the form teacher and we write letters to the nearest clinic or the hospital.*"

By conducting research Tasneem is able to make informed decisions regarding the changes she can make at her school in order to make teaching and learning more effective. "*Being a catalyst in education I constantly conduct research to understand the backgrounds that my learners come from…In one of my investigations I also found out that many parents were HIV-positive and didn't know how to cope with this virus, so I contacted Save our Souls of Suffering, who are now helping the parents.*" Through the research she conducted she became more knowledgeable of the problem areas at her school. The research resulted in her setting up a homework centre at her school and this improved the throughput of her learners.

Her research helped hundreds of children at her school improve their reading level, thus impacting on their academic results. Through research, Tasneem learns more about herself and the way she learns. She is able to make connections with various outside agencies so that they can assist her in resolving problems that her research has uncovered. As a manager of her school, she teaches the members of her staff the value of finding solutions to the teaching problems that they encounter on a daily basis.

4. Learning through Community Engagement

Teachers in this study identified community engagement as an alternate learning space. They use professional learning developed from their community engagement to become reflective teachers.

Shakila's "social work" in the community also shapes her as a teacher-learner: "*I think it helps me to understand the community we come from.*" She uses her learning gained from working at Phoenix Child Welfare to identify signs of abuse and other social problems in her learners. She strives to develop learners into responsible adults, who have a sense of self-worth and a non-violent approach to life. She engages problematic learners with personally rewarding work at The Rainbow Cottage, a shelter for abused women and children located in Durban. She attributes the behavioural problems displayed by some of her learners to the problems they experience at home and at school, "*Every child has a story to tell. We just don't make the time to listen.*" She affirms that she witnesses changes in these learners, as they work at the Rainbow Cottage. It "*teach[es] them important values like being non-violent and that there are other ways of resolving problems.*"

Community engagement is an important learning space as it contributes to the professional learning of teachers. Through community engagement, teachers can reflect on their practice as teachers to critique the theoretical assumptions underpinning their teaching and how their teaching can be related to the contextual realities of their learners. This reflective practice provides impetus for teachers' ongoing self-directed learning and change as it enriches their professional lives.

E. Teachers' Continuing self-Directed Professional Development and Change

South African schools have been racially desegregated for more than a decade now. This study shows how teachers in this study engage in self-directed learning and negotiate the changing school settings which fall within the two broad areas of professionalism or professionality as described by [5], [4], [7]. This study also shows that schools are racialised spaces and professional learning communities are created for self-directed teacher learning.

The broad categories of professionality and professionalism allowed the researcher to understand the link between teachers' socio-cultural contexts of the schooling community and the learning practices that they take up. As teacher-learners they respond to the normative systems in place at the schools in which they work. Teachers in this study adopt particular practices of learning to disrupt the status quo of what it means to be a teacher-learner in a South African public school. Some are change agents engaging in developing their professionalism and/or professionality to enrich their work as teachers.

1. Learning for Professionalism

Mbeje and Carolina engage in formal professional development by improving their qualifications through registering for postgraduate studies, or attending short courses or in-service training, and their professional development is enhanced by professionalism. Carolina and Mbeje are constructed in particular ways as South African teachers; both experienced othering as school-learners and later as teachers. They embark on particular practices of learning to elevate their status as teachers. Their need for professionalism drives their learning and change as they adopt particular learning practices. Both of them received education that was considered inferior in apartheid South Africa and were subjected to race and class discrimination. As teachers in public schools they experience discontent with the lack of professional-development initiatives at their schools and districts and seek out formal spaces for their self-directed learning. As Mbeje and Carolina elevate their status as teachers through formal learning, they become resources for their learners and other colleagues.

2. Learning for Professionality

Shabeer, Shakila and Tasneem, as part of the historically dominant teacher grouping (Indian) at their schools, choose social learning spaces within and outside of their professional schooling communities where they acquire knowledge, skills and procedures to improve their practise as teachers. They seek alternative spaces to the externally driven professional development initiatives to deepen their professionality and construct themselves as transformative intellectuals [6], [7]. Such teachers, according to [7], [5] take "an ideologically-, attitudinally-, intellectually-, and epistemologically-based stance," in relation to their learning as teachers.

By looking through the socio-cultural theoretical lens we can understand how teachers like Shabeer, Shakila and Tasneem respond to the dominant discourses of professional development which define what self-directed learning is, and what and how teachers learn. Through their self-directed learning, these teachers disrupt these dominant discourses of professional development and make new meanings of what it means to be a South African teacher-learner. They make ideological, attitudinal and intellectual changes as they push for new meanings of teacher-learning. As school-learners growing up in apartheid South Africa they experienced an inferior education and as teachers they see the same scenario being re-enacted at their schools. Through their professionality they strive to make their schools enabling learning spaces.

Through her involvement in debates, Shakila makes teaching "intellectual work" [28] and as such creates a space where learners can think about issues relating to social justice. Her schooling community becomes a site to develop thinkers, something that was lacking during apartheid education. She challenges class reproduction at her school by developing learners through debates and reading. Shabeer, on the other hand, is an activist teacher-learner who wants to bring about social change through his role in the union. As an activist teacher-learner, he wants to change public schooling by transforming the lives of both the learners and teachers through self-directed learning. Whilst Tasneem, in her position as a manager, provides a nurturing environment for both the learners and teachers at her school. Her experience as a school-learner, where she was marginalised because she was from a disadvantaged background, motivates her to transform her school into a nurturing one. She addresses the learning problems at her school through research and deep reflection on how she can resolve some the socio-cultural problems affecting her learners.

3. The Socio-Cultural Context of the Professional Schooling Community

Although [5], [7] address the purpose for teachers' learning as professionalism or professionality, this study reveals that the socio-cultural context of the professional schooling community is a critical dimension that has be considered when trying to understand teachers' learning and change. This study shows that teacher learning within South African schools occurs within the professional learning community. These professional learning communities are learning sites and are found within and outside of the professional schooling community.

The professional schooling community is the context within which teachers work as professionals. South African schools are located within particular geographic communities due to

the apartheid legacy of separate development and racially segregated schools. Professional learning of teachers occurs within geographically defined schooling communities. These schooling communities continue to be shaped by racialised identities and experiences since schools are still racialised spaces of learning. The type of learning that teachers in this study take up is inextricably linked to the professional schooling community that they find themselves in. The residues of apartheid still constrain their learning, as discussed earlier in this paper. The Indian teachers in this study (Tasneem, Shakila and Shabeer) strive to improve their professionality. Their learning choices direct us to their attitudinal, ideological and intellectual intentions. Due to being marginalised, teachers' professional learning (like Carolina and Mbeje) is more functional and they are more inward looking. They choose to improve through learning that is directed towards improving their performance as teachers. They are concerned with subject-related knowledge and strive to become more productive as teachers.

When teachers are in the dominant grouping within the professional schooling community this inspires a more attitudinal, ideological and intellectual stance for rupturing oppressive schooling practices. Their learning is a more public performance of their change and is outward looking as in the case of Shabeer, Tasneem and Shakila. Thus their learning is visible, enabling change in a broader way.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study focused on how teachers within South African public schools, as "initiators of change" take responsibility for their own learning and identify alternate spaces for their self-directed learning as they work within the broader discourse of professional development. This study shows that spaces within public schools/ professional schooling communities can constrain or enable teachers' learning. When the spaces at schools do not allow for collaboration and collegiality then teachers' learning is "functional" [7] and individualistic as teachers strive to be experts in their subjects and engage in learning. When teachers' learning is functional then they transform their own learning and teaching within the dominant discourses of professional development.

As they learn to be experts in their subjects, these teachers are learning how to apply what they have learnt through formal learning in their practice as teachers [7]. The teachers in this study are motivated by a personal need to learn as outlined by [21] and take responsibility to direct their own learning. They also identify learning needs within themselves and in their schools and districts. As they "lead the learning" they develop themselves and others, and demonstrate their agency as teachers.

On the other hand, when teachers are within the dominant racial grouping like Shabeer, Tasneem and Shakila, they are able to use their positions productively to create spaces of learning for themselves and others. Through their learning Shabeer, Tasneem and Shakila position themselves as transformative intellectuals within their schools and engage other teachers through collaboration and collegiality. It is within these spaces that teachers learn from and with each other as they work towards a common goal of improving their practice as teachers. Through these collaborative and collegial spaces teachers are able to engage in learning to enhance their professionality.

This study shows that the self-directed learning practices of teachers take place within and outside of the professional schooling community. Within the confines of the school, the researcher found that teachers were able to learn with and through others and through self in professional learning communities. Learning with others within the professional learning communities contributed to teachers' self-directed learning at schools. Sources of learning within the professional learning communities outside the school were identified as formal learning, and learning through the teacher unions, debates and community engagement.

This study also discusses the particular learning practices that teachers in this study adopt in order to enhance their personal learning or what [7] refers to as attitudinal, ideological and intellectual development in terms of their professionality (what I want to be?) and/ or their professionalism (how I want to function?). As teacher-learners they are change agents responding to the systems in place at their schools and adopt particular practices of learning to disrupt the status quo of what it means to be a teacher in a South African public school.

Given the constraints of professional development, teacher-learners engage in self-directed learning and are able to find alternate spaces for learning.

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