

**Self-constructing a career: Reflection following career  
adaptability as instructional scaffold**

by

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**January 2021**

# DECLARATION

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Exact wording of the title of the dissertation as appearing on the electronic copy submitted for examination:

## **Self-constructing a career: Reflection following career adaptability as instructional scaffold**

I declare that the above dissertation is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

*(The dissertation will not be examined unless this statement has been submitted.)*



21 January 2021

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SIGNATURE

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DATE

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I thank the high school learners who enthusiastically participated in this study and shared their views. You now stand on the eve of a new chapter in your lives after recently completing Grade 12. I wish you abundant success in the world of work.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to Alex, Rainer, Mishkah and Beate.

## ABSTRACT

South African learners transitioning into the world of work are currently lacking adequate career education in schools. It is well documented that preparedness for the world of work sets learners in a locus of control.

The main aim of this case study was to interpret learners' reflections of self-constructing a career with the psychosocial construct of career adaptability as an instructional scaffold. The study leaned on the life design for career construction theory, a combination of the career construction theory of Savickas, and the self-construction theory of Guichard. I utilised interpretivism as a research paradigm and a single case study design. Following purposeful convenience sampling, sixteen Grade 11 learners in a South African public school participated in Phase 1: a workshop comprising five sessions. Phase 2 consisted of a focus group interview with eight learners selected from the original group on their level of contribution and commitment. Data collection included group reflection, reflective writing, observation, researcher reflective field notes, and a focus group interview.

Six themes emerged from the thematic analysis of the data. Learners successfully initiated career planning activities by reflecting on the career adaptability construct. The research results suggest a need for an alternative approach in the manner career education is presented in schools. This study hopes to provide insight into career self-construction initiatives learners employ when using the career adaptability construct as an instructional scaffold.

**Key words:** African proverbs; career adaptability; career construction; career counselling; career identity; career planning; career resilience; employability; instructional scaffold; life design.

## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

|      |   |
|------|---|
| DME  | Dispositional Measure of Employability          |
| EAS  | Employability Attributes Scale                  |
| PEC  | Person-environment Correspondence Counselling   |
| PFG  | Participant in Focus Group                      |
| PGR  | Participant in Group Reflection                 |
| PWR  | Participant Written Reflection                  |
| RAO  | Research Assistant Observations                 |
| RRN  | Researcher Reflective Notes                     |
| SCCT | Social Cognitive Career Theory                  |
| SPES | Self-Perceived Employability Scale for Students |
| STF  | Systems Theory Framework                        |
| TWA  | Theory of Work Adjustment                       |

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

## 1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTER

The figure below provides a visual representation of the content of Chapter 1:

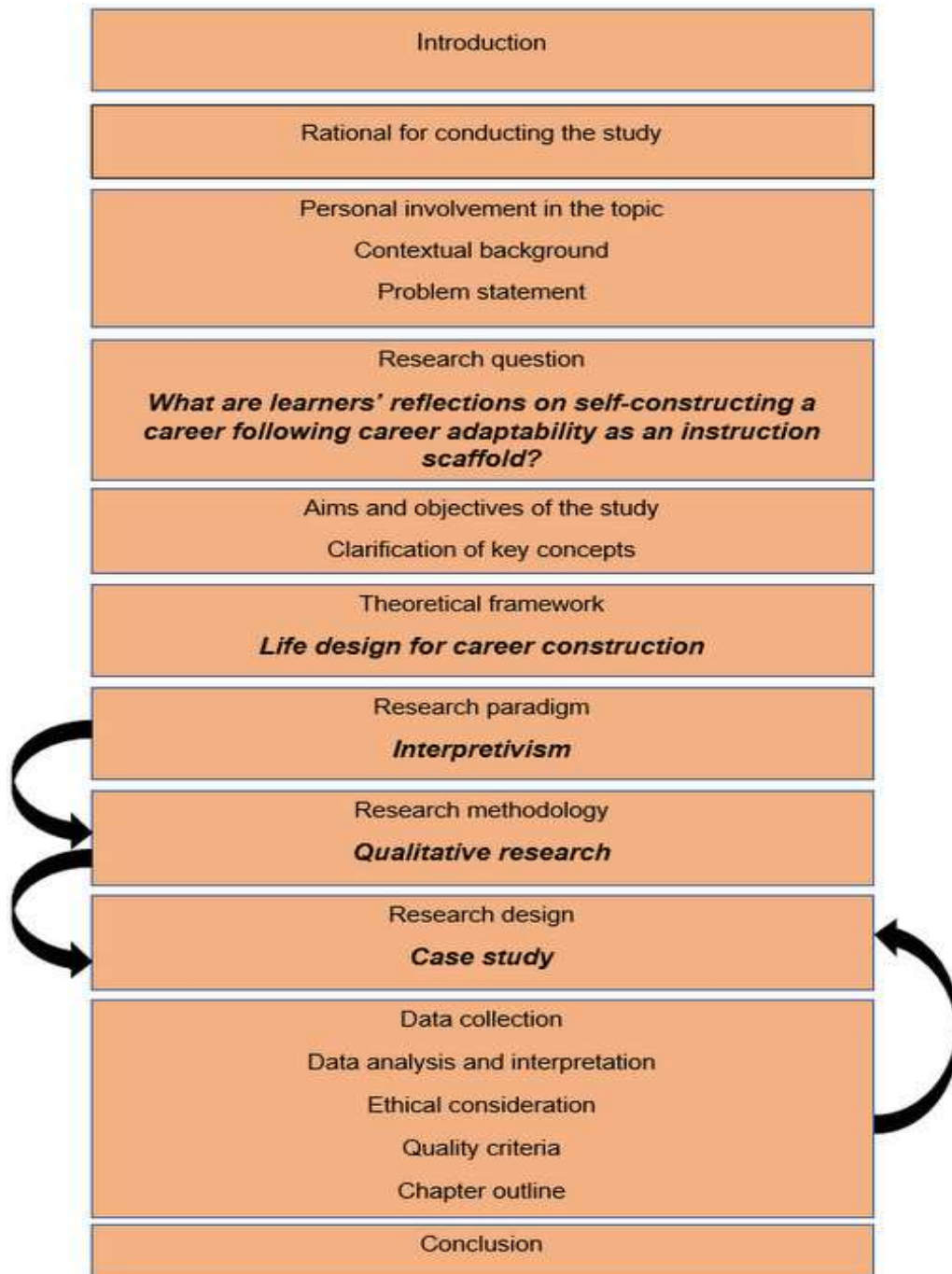


Figure 1: Overview of Chapter 1



## 1.2 INTRODUCTION

The first chapter of this study introduces the research topic that seeks to interpret learners' reflections of self-constructing a career using the psychosocial construct of career adaptability as an instructional scaffold. It begins with an illustration of the overview of the chapter (section 1.1) and brief introduction (section 1.2). The following sections explain the rationale (section 1.3), researcher's personal involvement (section 1.4), as well as contextual background (section 1.5) and purpose of the study (section 1.6), along with the problem statement (section 1.7) and research questions (section 1.8). Thereafter, the aim and objectives are stated (section 1.9), and the key concepts utilised in this study are defined (section 1.10). This is followed by a synopsis of the theoretical framework (section 1.11), research plan outline (section 1.12), research paradigm (section 1.13), research methodology and design (section 1.14), population and sampling (section 1.15), the research process (section 1.16), data collection methods (section 1.17), data analysis and interpretation (section 1.18), ethical considerations (section 1.19), and quality criteria (section 1.20). The penultimate section outlines the forthcoming chapters (section 1.21), followed by a brief conclusion to wrap up the chapter (section 1.22).

## 1.3 RATIONALE FOR CONDUCTING THE STUDY

I was motivated to conduct this study when a request for collaboration was issued in a South African journal to provide original ideas to assist "clients"<sup>1</sup> to improve employability<sup>2</sup>, as opposed to simply assisting them to find a job in one workplace until they enter retirement. The editor of the journal invited academics to propose new intervention procedures, approaches, and practices to transform current practices. The editor further stated (Maree, 2017) that to make successful adjustments from school to work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, learners should be constructing career paths by

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<sup>1</sup> "Clients" in this study refers to learners in school.

<sup>2</sup> For this dissertation, I will use *employability* as defined by Bezuidenhout and Coetzee (2010) (in Di Fabio 2017) as a construct which encompass seven dimensions: personal responsibility for career management, cultural skills, belief in personal ability, job resilience, positive sociable qualities, entrepreneurship, and active involvement.

being inspired to think critically and being able to self-construct, and above all, to make creative, informed, and well-defined career decisions.

Inextricably linked with the capability of constructing a career path, as mentioned above, is the influence of the 21<sup>st</sup> century's Fourth Industrial Revolution which is characterised by considerable changes in technology and significant shifts in economies, industries, and cultures (Alchin & McIlveen, 2017). The career and life paths of our youth caught in the crossfire of these 21<sup>st</sup> century changes and shifts are brimming with uncertainties as they steer themselves through this volatile and complex world (Peila-Shuster, 2018).



**Figure 2: Researcher's Rendition of Career Adaptability**  
(adapted from the career adaptability psychosocial construct)  
(Source: Maree, 2017)

This study comprised two phases: Phase 1 consisted of a workshop and Phase 2 consisted of a focus group interview. The workshop (Phase 1) comprised five sessions that were attended by 18 Grade 11 learners. It capitalised on the psychosocial construct of "career adaptability" (Del Corso, 2017) with its four pillars of *concern*,

*curiosity, control, and confidence*, and served as an instructional scaffold<sup>3</sup> for learners to self-construct careers.

For the workshop (Phase 1), I employed African proverbs to encourage critical thinking and to deconstruct the four pillars of career adaptability. The African proverbs served as an instructional scaffold for learners in the workshop. The benefit of African proverbs will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Phase 2 consisted of a focus group interview that included eight participants (school learners). The aim of the focus group interview was to: (1) obtain data on the way learners experience preparing for the world of work by employing the career adaptability construct as a meta-competency; and (2) incorporate African proverbs to assist with critical thinking and the deconstructing of the career adaptability construct. I supplemented the learners' reflections with the field notes made by the research assistant and myself for triangulation purposes.

The workshop in Phase 1 and the subsequent focus group in Phase 2 served as a case study to answer the research question:


What are learners' reflections on self-constructing a career following career adaptability as an instructional scaffold?

A brief illustration of the two phases of the research which will be expanded on later in this chapter. Table 1 below summarises the research process.

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<sup>3</sup> Assistance supplied by a person or device to allow a learner to meaningfully take part in and obtain competence in an assignment that would not be possible for him/her to complete independently (Belland 2014).

**Table 1: Research Process**



| PHASE 1   | PHASE 2   |
|---|---|
| <p>Workshop consisting of five sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Career adaptability</i> – overview</li> <li>• Career concern – instil a habit of lifelong career concern</li> <li>• <i>Career curiosity</i> – instil a habit of lifelong career curiosity</li> <li>• <i>Career control</i> – the importance of lifelong self-management</li> <li>• <i>Career confidence</i> – the importance of career confidence</li> </ul> | <p>One focus group</p> <p>Focus group interview</p>   |
| Interpretivism as a research paradigm   | Interpretivism as a research paradigm   |
| Learners construct career paths by reflecting on career adaptability pillars: <i>career concern, career control, career curiosity, and career confidence.</i>   | Focus group interview – reflect on the use of the career adaptability construct to assist with creating career paths. |
| <p>Data collection:</p> <p>Reflective writing/drawing</p> <p>Group reflection</p> <p>Focus group interview</p> <p>Researcher's observation and field notes</p> <p>Research assistant's observation and field notes</p>  |   |

## 1.4 PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE TOPIC

I became interested in the manner in which the youth of South Africa prepare for the world of work after interviewing numerous entry-level job seekers for the past twenty years as a former teacher, recruitment consultant, narrative counsellor, and owner of a recruitment agency based in Gauteng. Over the years, it became clear to me that

school leavers, in alarming numbers, have limited knowledge of the world of work, and also exhibit a lack of skills and self-knowledge<sup>4</sup>.

## **1.5 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND**

School leavers are vulnerable to 21<sup>st</sup> century changes and shifts in the job market and find it difficult to make informed career decisions (Peila-Shuster, 2018). The business sector indicates that young people are not ready to join the workforce as they often display a lack of discipline, attitudinal readiness, drive, inquisitiveness, common sense, and that they exhibit a habit of tardiness (Dludla, 2019).

The skills mentioned above, which are required for employment in 2020, as indicated by the World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs published in 2016 (Wilson, Lennox, Hughes & Brown, 2017:275), include :

- Complex problem solving
- Critical thinking
- Creativity
- People management
- Coordinating with others
- Emotional intelligence
- Judgement and decision making
- Cognitive flexibility
- Service orientation
- Negotiation

To emphasise school leavers' vulnerability in school to job transitions, Ismail, Ferreira and Coetzee (2016) affirm that youth unemployment in South Africa has resulted in a grave predicament where young individuals are not developing adequate skills or knowledge to gain entry into the job market. Shirley Duma (2017), former Human Resources Executive at Barloworld Logistics, alleged that these young people

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<sup>4</sup> "Self-knowledge" is defined in the Merriam Webster Dictionary [Online] as "knowledge or understanding of one's own capabilities, character, feelings, or motivations". Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/self-knowledge> (accessed: 12/03/2020).

perceive a job as a way of earning any salary they can acquire for the least effort and that they are therefore not curious in the occupation itself. Perspectives of companies in South Africa claim that first-time employees are behaviourally not prepared for employment (Dludla, 2019) and that young people frequently display a lack of discipline, attitudinal readiness, drive, inquisitiveness, common sense, and tardiness. These young people should be supported in career readiness by focussing on resources to help them prosper and endure and to prepare them for the workplace (Peila-Shuster, 2018).

Mr Panyaza Lesufi (2018), Gauteng Member of the Executive Committee (MEC), blames poor career preparation as one of the reasons for the nonchalant tendencies of the youth towards readying themselves for the world of work. To remediate the above crisis, Mr Lesufi advises that South Africa's youth need help by way of career education to construct careers and prepare for the job market. In order to do this, Mr Lesufi suggests that productive career growth activities should be initiated early in high school and kept up during adulthood.

Peila-Shuster (2018) agrees with Mr Lesufi and states that career construction should be seen as a lifelong approach, offering various methods through which young people can build skills with the aid of career adaptability (*career concern, -curiosity, -control, and -confidence*) to construct wholesome lives and careers.

## **1.6 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is twofold. Firstly, to explore and interpret learners' reflections on self-constructing a career following the career adaptability construct to prepare for the world of work; and secondly, to gain insight into the value of the career adaptability construct as a scaffolding aid to assist learners with career construction.

## **1.7 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

According to Savickas (in Peila-Shuster, 2016), the youth of today are confronted with workplace challenges. Young people set out in an unstable and unpredictable world

where frequent job changes are common. Peila-Shuster (2016) asserts that young people have to take ownership of their career paths and attain career adaptability to be able to construct career paths.

In light of these global developments, a need arises to educate learners in understanding the significance of their future, as well as to instil awareness of the skills required to be successful and satisfied (Wilson et al., 2017). Entry into the job market tends to create a considerable amount of strain and tension, and it is vital to afford learners steadfast and skilful career construction support (Cook & Maree, 2016).

## **1.8 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The primary research question guiding this study was formulated as follows:

“What are learners’ reflections on self-constructing a career following career adaptability as an instructional scaffold?”

In order to create a thorough response to the primary research question, the following subsidiary research questions were formulated:

1. What is the career adaptability construct?
2. How do learners plan and prepare for the world of work?
3. How do learners respond to career adaptability as an aid to construct careers?
4. How do African proverbs support learners with critical thinking and deconstructing the career adaptability construct?

## **1.9 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The research aimed to understand and interpret learners’ reflections of self-constructing a career to prepare for the world of work.

The study further aimed to explore the psychosocial construct of “career adaptability” as an instructional scaffold to aid learners in career construction activities with the purpose to obtain decent work (see section 1.10.12).

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Define the career adaptability construct
2. Explain how learners plan and prepare for the world of work
3. Understand how learners respond to career adaptability as an aid to construct careers
4. Explore how African proverbs support learners with critical thinking and deconstructing the career adaptability construct
5. Provide recommendations for future practice

## **1.10 CLARIFICATION OF KEY CONCEPTS**

### **1.10.1 Career construction**

For the purpose of this research, I have selected the career construction theory of Mark Savickas. “Career construction” is the manner or processes through which individuals shape their careers by creating meaning (interpretive and interpersonal) of employment behaviour and direction (Savickas, 2013a).

By reflecting on career adaptability principles, learners develop behavioural skills to reflect and interpret, thereby building career paths.

### **1.10.2 Life design for career construction**

“Life design for career construction” is a combination of two theories: (1) the self-construction theory of Guichard (2009), and (2) the career construction theory of Savickas (2008). Both theories outline behaviour towards the world of work and its progress. Life design for career construction is designed to be continuous, lasting, comprehensive, context-related, and pre-emptive (Maree, 2015).

The dissertation leans on the theory of life design for career construction of which career adaptability, practiced in the workshop, is a meta-competency for successful career construction (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017).



### **1.10.3 Career adaptability construct**

“Career adaptability” is a psychosocial construct and subset of the life design for career construction theory. It incorporates four principles, namely: *concern* (planning, regardful, interested); *control* (intentional, self-assured, determined); *curiosity* (adventuring, investigating, inquisitive); and *confidence* (aspiring, ambitious, unrelenting) (Maree & Di Fabio, 2015).

The psychosocial construct of career adaptability was used in the five sessions of the workshop in Phase 1 of the study, and learners followed the construct to create career paths and life purpose.

### **1.10.4 Self-construction**

Maree and Twigge (2016) describe “self-construction” as the manner in which people construct themselves (their identities) through the influence of specific events throughout their life-time and in specific cultures. The centre point in self-construction lies in an individual’s ability to self-reflect.

By reflecting during the five sessions of Phase 1 of the workshop, learners could possibly construct the self with the assistance of the psychosocial construct of career adaptability.

### **1.10.5 Employability**

“Employability” is defined by Bezuidenhout and Coetzee (cited in Di Fabio, 2017) as a construct that encompasses seven dimensions, namely: *personal responsibility for career management, cultural skills, belief in personal ability, job resilience, positive, sociable qualities, entrepreneurship, and active involvement.*

For the purpose of this study, *employability* refers to the necessity for the South African youth to comprehend and master the seven dimensions of the construct through the practice of career adaptability, while creating a career path in order to satisfy the needs of the workplace.

#### **1.10.6 Career resilience**

“Career resilience” is the ability to adjust to fluctuating job descriptions and changes within the job market even in adverse conditions, welcoming and eager to engage with diverse colleagues, confident, and prepared to take risks (Pouyaud, Cohen-Scali, Robinet & Sintès, 2017).

Practising career adaptability is the key to developing career resilience and is a possible result of learners empowering themselves through the workshop.

#### **1.10.7 Attitudinal readiness**

In Hartung and Cadaret (2017), “attitudinal readiness” is defined as the vigorous involvement in investigating and preparing for a work-related future.

For the purpose of this study, *attitudinal readiness* implies that learners recognise the importance of career planning and establish behaviour skills to act on it.

#### **1.10.8 Career adaptivity**

A “career adaptive person” becomes concerned about their future as an employee; raising individual control over their future career; displaying curiosity by self-examination, and heightening confidence to follow their ambition (Maree & Di Fabio, 2015).

The learners became concerned about their future during the five workshop sessions and started to proactively consider and self-evaluate the complexities of navigating a career path (Rottinghaus, Falk & Eshelman, 2017).

#### **1.10.9 Grade 11 learners**

In South African schools, Grade 11 learners are approximately between the ages of 16-18 and developmentally viewed as late adolescents. They are characterised with a stronger sense of individuality than younger adolescents, where pubertal changes

are complete with set adult appearance. These individuals are moving toward assuming adult roles and responsibilities (Patterson 2018).

Grade 11 learners were chosen for their capacity to demonstrate mature thinking and take responsibility for future career paths.

#### **1.10.10 Instructional scaffolding**

“Instructional scaffolding” is defined as assistance supplied by a person or device (paper or electronic) to allow a learner to meaningfully take part in and obtain competence in an assignment that would not be possible for him/her to conclude independently (Belland, 2014).

The career adaptability construct was followed in the five sessions of the workshop as an instructional scaffold for learners to understand the psychosocial construct better.

#### **1.10.11 African proverbs**

Asimeng-Boahene (2009) mentions that “African proverbs” assume the role of literal, metaphorical, or psychological stimulant, and generate a safe space to allow for critical thinking. They also tend to generate a creative space, freeing learners’ awareness to search for different viewpoints.

African proverbs were used in Phase 1 – the workshop – to deconstruct the four pillars of career adaptability and possibly trigger learners’ creative thinking skills.

#### **1.10.12 Decent work**

“Decent work” is defined by Di Fabio and Maree (2016) as occupations that:

- Provide a regular income.
- Are considered as a safe place of work.
- Offer employee and family safety.
- Provide prospects for individual growth.

- Promote social inclusion.
- Permit employees to voice issues.
- Provides employees with opportunities to co-ordinate into bodies of concern to participate in life-impacting decision-making and pledging equal chance and comparable behaviour to everyone.

By reflecting and constructing career/life trajectories, learners optimise their opportunities for decent work.

## 1.11 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I followed the psychosocial construct of *career adaptability* with its four pillars of *career concern*, *career control*, *career curiosity*, and *career confidence* in the five sessions of the workshop (Rottinghaus et al., 2017). Career adaptability (Maree, 2017) flows from the Life-Span, Life-Space theory and is a core meta-competency for successful career construction as it helps people to select a career (Maree, 2016). For this dissertation, career adaptability is anchored by the life design for career construction theory as learners have to reflect on the construction of a lifelong career.

### 1.11.1 Life design for career construction

In light of the 21<sup>st</sup> century global developments, a need arises to educate learners in understanding the significance of their future, as well as to instil awareness of the skills required to be successful and satisfied (Wilson et al., 2017). The *life design for career construction theory* in which career adaptability is anchored is followed in this dissertation.

Life design for career construction (Peila-Shuster, 2016) is a combination of the career construction theory of Mark Savickas (2012) and the self-construction theory of Jean Guichard (2015). Both theories define work-related behaviour and its progress, and are designed to endure throughout an individual's work-life; it is interconnected and also pre-emptive (Rottinghaus et al., 2017).

### **1.11.2 Career construction theory**

The *career construction theory* of Savickas (2011) looks at how people reason about choosing and using work. Savickas and Porfeli (2012) perceive “career construction” as a construct that combines psychological and social aspects. An individual uses these resources to master current and foreseeable tasks, adjustments, and emotional stress in the workplace. The theory offers a model to understand work-related behaviour throughout the life cycle, as well as methods and tools that career counsellors implement to aid in constructing careers (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

### **1.11.3 Self-construction theory**

The *self-construction theory* of Jean Guichard (2009) refers to the core issues of personal and career development in a globalised world. The theory identifies the main aspects and methods that influence how people plan their lives to manage the challenges they face. By engaging in events and participating through narratives in diverse situations, individuals use their reasoning throughout their life-span to gain knowledge and build on their identities (Guichard, 2015). Through these practices, individuals have the potential to notice aspects with which they deeply identify and integrate it into the “self”, thereby constructing their self-concepts through discourse and social interaction (Cook & Maree, 2016).

## **1.12 RESEARCH PLAN OUTLINE**

Table 2 below presents a brief synopsis of the study’s research plan.

**Table 2: Research Plan Outline**

| <b>RESEARCH PLAN OUTLINE</b> |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>RESEARCH PARADIGM</b>     | Interpretivism  |
| <b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>  | Qualitative research  |
| <b>RESEARCH DESIGN</b>       | Case study  |
| <b>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</b>    | <p>What were learners' reflections on self-constructing a career following career adaptability as an instructional scaffold?</p> <p>To create a thorough response to the primary research question, the following subsidiary research questions were formulated:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the career adaptability construct?</li> <li>2. How do learners plan and prepare for the world of work?</li> <li>3. What were learners' views on career adaptability as meta-competency to construct a career path?</li> <li>4. How did African proverbs support learners with critical thinking and deconstructing the career adaptability construct?</li> </ol> |
| <b>RESEARCH OBJECTIVES</b>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Define the career adaptability construct</li> <li>2. Explain how learners plan and prepare for the world of work</li> <li>3. Understand how learners respond to career adaptability as an aid to construct careers</li> <li>4. Explore how African proverbs support learners with critical thinking and deconstructing the career adaptability construct</li> <li>5. Provide recommendations for future practice</li> </ol>   |
| <b>DATA COLLECTION</b>       | <p>Reflective practice – group and written reflections, drawings (Phase 1)</p> <p>Focus group interview (Phase 2)</p> <p>Observation and field notes</p>  |
| <b>DATA ANALYSIS</b>         | Thematic content analysis of transcripts  |
| <b>RIGOUR AND ETHICS</b>     | Quality criteria and ethical considerations   |

## **1.13 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

A “paradigm” is a set of beliefs of how the real world is seen; it is a detailed account of reality which cannot be verified. A paradigm is, therefore, the camera lens through which the researcher looks at globally to tell a coherent story by illustrating meaningful, but cultural subjective actions (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b).

### **1.13.1 Interpretivism**

In this study, I followed an interpretivist approach to understand and interpret the learners’ reflections. The interpretivist school of thought (Lincoln & Guba, 2013) explores subjective beliefs which are mutually generated by participants and the researcher. Researchers do not wish to clarify, foresee, or regulate viewpoints, but attempt to comprehend, interpret, and debunk participants’ social reality through their individualistic views (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c).

An interpretive inquiry is carried out in fields where participants’ understandings of events are researched. Various research designs can be used for interpretive research (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Some examples include a case study, ethnography, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, life history, and historical method.

For the purpose of this study, a case study with a qualitative research approach was used. This approach was deemed suitable as I was interested in deriving participants’ meanings rather than quantifying numbers (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a).

## **1.14 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

This section presents the research methodology (sub-section 1.14.1) and design (sub-section 1.14.2) employed in this study, namely, qualitative research and a case study.

### **1.14.1 Research methodology**

I opted for a qualitative approach for this study. Nieuwenhuis (2016c) explains that qualitative research depends on the scientific study of language or words rather than

numerical data, therefore basing the data analysis on meaning and not statistics. Creswell (2014) describes qualitative research as an approach concerning the meaning people assign to a social problem (for this study, the way learners prepare for the world of work) that has harmful effects.

In addition, Denzin and Lincoln (2018) mention that in order for people to make meaning in their life so as to comprehend better, qualitative researchers use a range of empirical material to substantiate their findings: case studies, personal narratives, reflection, individual experiences, interviews, objects, collaboration and observation, historic, interactional, and graphic transcripts.

### **1.14.2 Research design**

Furthermore, this study utilised a single case study design. Case study research is characterised as a qualitative method where a researcher engages with a person, group, organisation, or partnership (bounded unit) in a true to life, multi or single-site location, over a specific period (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher collects comprehensive data by means of diverse sources (e.g., observational evidence, discussions, electronic communication, written information) and reports by using relevant themes and descriptions. According to Bloomberg (2018), a single case study assists to more adequately portray and comprehend a specific issue, problem, or concern.

De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2011) concur with Babbie (2001), who argues that case study researchers, opposed to grounded theory researchers, endeavour to obtain an intensive understanding of the literature before initiating field research, while the converse is true for grounded theorists.

Table 3 reflects the case study factors and signifiers selected for this study:



**Table 3: Case Study Factors and Signifiers**  
**(Adapted from Harrison, Birks, Franklin & Mills, 2017)**

| <b>FACTOR</b>          | <b>DESCRIPTION</b>   |
|------------------------|--|
| Case                   | Group of Grade 11 learners, male and female.   |
| Unit                   | The unit is bounded by two phases over six consecutive weeks, five workshop sessions (one hour each) in Phase 1 and one focus group interview (one hour) in Phase 2.   |
| Context                | An urban government high school during a specific school term in Gauteng, South Africa.  |
| Depth of study         | An in-depth study to thoroughly analyse the reflections of Grade 11 learners regarding career construction following the career adaptability construct.  |
| Sources for validation | Methods of data gathering include:<br><br>Reflective worksheets, drawings, and doodles.<br><br>Audio transcripts of group reflections.<br><br>Researcher reflective journal.<br><br>Researcher assistant observation reflective notes.<br><br>Focus group interview. |
| Design                 | Single case design   |

## **1.15 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

For this dissertation, purposive sampling was utilised to select the research participants. The sampling method is explained in the following paragraph and elaborated on further in Chapter 3.

### **1.15.1 Purposive sampling**

Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) define “purposive sampling” (or purposeful sampling) as a sampling method where researchers deliberately choose (or enlist) knowledgeable individuals (who have experience) of the concept examined in the study.

The “purpose” of purposive sampling is to represent a cluster, occurrence, place, phenomenon, or type. Nieuwenhuis (2016b) lists six main criteria as a basis for purposive sampling:

- relevance to the theoretical framework and research question;
- the probability of creating rich data;
- ability to further transferable conclusions;
- sound and realistic portrayal;
- reflection of ethical prerequisites and achievability with regards to money, time, accessibility, and other practicalities.

For the focus group in Phase 2, eight (8) learners who participated in the workshop were identified and chosen according to their level of contribution and commitment to the workshop (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c).

## 1.16 RESEARCH PROCESS

A summary of the research process is presented in Table 4 below:

**Table 4: Workshop Session Layout and Content**

| PHASE 1 OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS – WORKSHOP                                   |  |
|--|--|
| Five one-hour sessions for five consecutive weeks with 18 Grade 11 learners: |  |
| Session one: career adaptability   | an informative session focussing on the aim and objectives and clarification of the career adaptability construct by using an African proverb. |
| Session two: career concern  |  |
| Session three: career curiosity  | Reflect on a specific topic (career concern, career curiosity, career control, career confidence).   |
| Session four: career control   |  |
| Session five: career confidence  |  |
|  |  |
| Activities per session:  |  |

Small group reflections during each session

Creative writing and drawings after group reflection on the topic

Worksheets collected at the end of each session.

Research assistant writes reflective observation notes during each session

Researcher writes observational reflections before or after each session

All class and group discussions audio-recorded

### **PHASE 2 OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS – FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW**

One session of one hour

Eight learners who actively participated in the workshop were selected

#### **1.16.1 Phase 1 of the study – workshop sessions**

I designed a workshop, consisting of five contact sessions once a week with 18 Grade 11 learners to conduct a case study for Phase 1. The content leaned on the four pillars of career adaptability, namely: *career concern*, *career curiosity*, *career control*, and *career confidence* (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017).

I deconstructed career adaptability into African proverbs to use as an instructional scaffold (refer to section 1.10.10 and 1.10.11). The African proverbs assisted Grade 11 learners to understand career adaptability and functioned as an instrument for discussion and reflection purposes. Traditionally (Babalola & Alu, 2019), African proverbs contain and serve to transfer and educate individuals on sound judgment, morality, social values, prosperity, and advice on all aspects of individual existence. Babalola and Alu (2019) further clarify that the morals and truths contained in African proverbs influence individuals to modify their habits. It is, therefore, a highly effective teaching instrument.

#### **1.16.2 Phase 2 of the case study – Focus group interview**

The focus group interview consisted of eight individuals. Unstructured and open-ended questions were used to obtain the participants' perspectives and viewpoints (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In Phase 2 of the case study, I selected learners to participate in a focus group interview to discuss the use of career adaptability to construct career paths. The focus group interview comprised of eight Grade 11 learners who took part in the workshop. The focus group reflected on the use of career adaptability as an instructional scaffold to construct a career and the use of African proverbs to deconstruct career adaptability and its four pillars. Referring to the support provided by the workshop sessions, Van de Pol, Volman, Oort and Beishuizen (2015) suggest that a significant component in learners' accomplishments is their acknowledgement of support offered. Should support to students have a positive effect, it may lead to increased learning.

## **1.17 DATA COLLECTION**

This section outlines the data collection procedures and instruments used to collect the data. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

### **1.17.1 Observation and field notes**

Phase 1 consisted of five workshop sessions which covered the four pillars of career adaptability. I made use of observation and field notes to obtain rich data sets from observing the learners' behaviour (Creswell, 2012).

I assumed the role of "participant-observer". It was not possible to observe the learners while the session was in progress, but I made reflective field notes before and after the sessions. I became immersed in group activities and experienced what the participants were living out. As a participant observer, one becomes a part of the group and fully engaged in what they are experiencing (Lashley, 2017).

The research assistant was not a participant. She observed the learners and made field notes while the sessions were in progress. A non-participant observer (Creswell, 2012) does not participate in the intervention interaction. The non-participant looks on from the outside (inobtrusive location) to observe and record.

### **1.17.2 Group reflection**

In Phase 1, during the workshops, the learners formed small groups and reflected on the different pillars of the career adaptability construct amongst themselves. The group reflection was audio-recorded during every session and transcribed for data collection and analysis purposes.

### **1.17.3 Reflective writing**

Writing is an aid to reflection where the reflective writer can consider the foregoing learning activity (Walker, 2005). Often, the experience, in this case, the reflection on career construction, brings to the fore a subjective feeling (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018), and by gaining distance through writing, learners focus and obtain clarity of the learning experience.

In Phase 1, the learners were provided with worksheets for data collection purposes and invited to reflect on the topic of the day after group reflection.

### **1.17.4 Focus group interview**

Following the workshop (Phase 1), a focus group interview was conducted forming Phase 2 of the study. The purpose of the focus group interview was to provide insight into learners' reflections on the workshop content, namely, the use of the career adaptability construct to self-construct a career and the use of African proverbs to deconstruct the career adaptability construct.

The focus group consisted of eight individuals chosen for their level of contribution during the workshops. Some questions that were asked during the focus group included:

- What are your feelings about the content of the workshop, focussing on career adaptability principles?
  - What are your concerns about your career path after school?
  - How are you planning for different options after school?

- How did you experience the use of African proverbs to explain the meaning of career adaptability?

According to Carey and Ashbury (2016), the goal of focus groups is to acquire meaningful and comprehensive data. The focus group was video-recorded to capture discussions for transcribing purposes and capturing non-verbal nuances (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c).

## **1.18 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

Qualitative data analysis aids in grouping and interpreting verbal and visual material of the research data (Flick, 2014). It reports on the implied and specific extent and construction of participants meaning-making of the research question, where meaning-making involves either personal or social meaning. Qualitative data analysis is used to uncover and report routine and practice issues (Flick, 2014).

Thematic analysis was used in this study as is commonly applied in qualitative research studies.

### **1.18.1 Thematic content analysis**

Thematic analysis serves to distinguish patterns or themes within a body of data (Miller, 2020). Miller (2020) further indicates that any paradigm can be applied to thematic analysis, irrespective of a specific theoretical framework as it is an independent method.

## **1.19 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The American Education Research Association and the American Psychological Association (APA) have published ethical principles which are pertinent to educational research. These principles include full disclosure, voluntary participation, informed consent, absence of coercion, no harm or risk to participants, and privacy (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

Pillay (2014) suggests the following ethical principles when conducting research on children: that a researcher maintains awareness of the participants' age and development, their capability to give consent and remain independent, and ensure that children are not harmed in any way through their involvement in the research; to provide feedback on findings; and lastly, but most importantly, to contemplate cultural and contextual aspects (Pillay, 2014).

The study commenced after the University's College of Education Ethics Committee approved the ethics application. I completed the research ethics application provided by the University of South Africa. I outlined the research study and provided information on all ethical considerations supported by scientific references. I adhered to all ethical considerations by obtaining written consent by the Department of Education, the school principal, and voluntary consent/assent by the parents and the participants.

## **1.20 QUALITY CRITERIA**

In the 1980's, Guba and Lincoln presented a novel standpoint for rigour in qualitative research. The categories they put forth to measure trustworthiness were *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability* (Morse, 2017). These are described in more detail below:

### **1.20.1 Credibility**

*Credibility* refers to credence that can be placed with regards to the authenticity and plausibility of the research findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Plausibility lies in the researcher's data which correctly interprets the participants' original opinions.

### **1.20.2 Transferability**

By providing thick descriptions, *transferability* refers to the extent to which the results of the study can be carried over to different people, environments, or backgrounds (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

### **1.20.3 Dependability**

*Dependability* refers to the audit trail. The interpretation, findings, and recommendations are reported on transparently from beginning to the end of the study, and all records are preserved (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

### **1.20.4 Confirmability**

*Confirmability* is another means to ensure data quality in qualitative studies. In this regard, the researcher's interpretation should rest on the collected data and should not be based on his/her personal viewpoints or bias (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

When conducting and reporting on research, a vital task for researchers is to aspire towards maximum quality (Cope, 2014).

The researcher followed the eight “big-tent” criteria (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017) to ensure the quality of the research, namely:

- 1) Deserving topic
- 2) Methodological rigour
- 3) Candour
- 4) Plausibility
- 5) Rapport
- 6) Substantive input
- 7) Ethically sound
- 8) Purposeful consistency

## **1.21 CHAPTER OUTLINE**

The chapter outline of this study is as follows:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction and rationale for conducting the study**

Chapter 1 introduces the research topic under investigation. It also specifies the scope and methods used to conduct the research. Included is a brief introduction and rationale, my personal involvement in the topic, the purpose of the study, and the



research questions. The theoretical and paradigmatic aspects are discussed along with the research plan intended to generate data. Also presented are the methodological procedures for sampling, data collection, recording, analysis, and interpretation. The penultimate sections describe the ethical considerations and quality criteria used to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. This is followed by an outline of the forthcoming chapters and a brief conclusion to wrap up the chapter.

- **Chapter 2: Literature review**

Chapter 2 presents the literature review of the study. Herein, I explore the history of related career theories. I explain the importance of career adaptability, employability, and resilience. I touch on instructional scaffolding and how African proverbs support critical thinking. I clarify the developmental phases of adolescence, and finally, illuminate the art of reflective practice.

- **Chapter 3: Research methodology and design**

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology and design employed in this study. Herein, I rationalise the paradigmatic and methodological perspectives. I justify the chosen research design and provide a detailed rendering of the research plan I followed. I validate my choice for the sampling process and data collection techniques. This is followed by a description of the data analysis and interpretation of the data. Lastly, I explain quality assurance and research ethics maintained throughout the dissertation.

- **Chapter 4: Results of the study**

Chapter 4 provides a discussion of the results of the study. Herein, I detail the process I followed to code and categorise the raw data through thematic analysis. I display the results which I determined through themes, sub-themes, and categories, and substantiate my discussions with examples from the data.

- **Chapter 5: Findings, limitations, recommendations and conclusion**

Chapter 5 is the final chapter of the study. Herein, I deliberate the findings premised on my understanding of the results and compare them to existing literature. I discuss comparisons and contradictions and ponder on new insights obtained during the study. I draw inferences and conclude with recommendations for future research.

## **1.22 CONCLUSION**

Chapter 1 served as an introductory chapter to present the topic under investigation. Following a brief introduction and rationale for conducting the research, attention was given to the contextual background and purpose of the study, as well as research questions, aim, and objectives. Thereafter, the paradigmatic and theoretical aspects were discussed, and the methodological procedures for data collection, recording, analysis, and interpretation presented. I briefly discussed the research plan, the workshop conducted in Phase 1, and a focus group interview in Phase 2 intended to generate data. Lastly, I stipulated the ethical considerations and quality criteria followed in the study.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review of the study, which includes an exploration of the history of associated career theories and an explanation of the importance of career adaptability, employability, and resilience. The relevance of African proverbs is also discussed.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The figure below provides a visual representation of the content of Chapter 2.

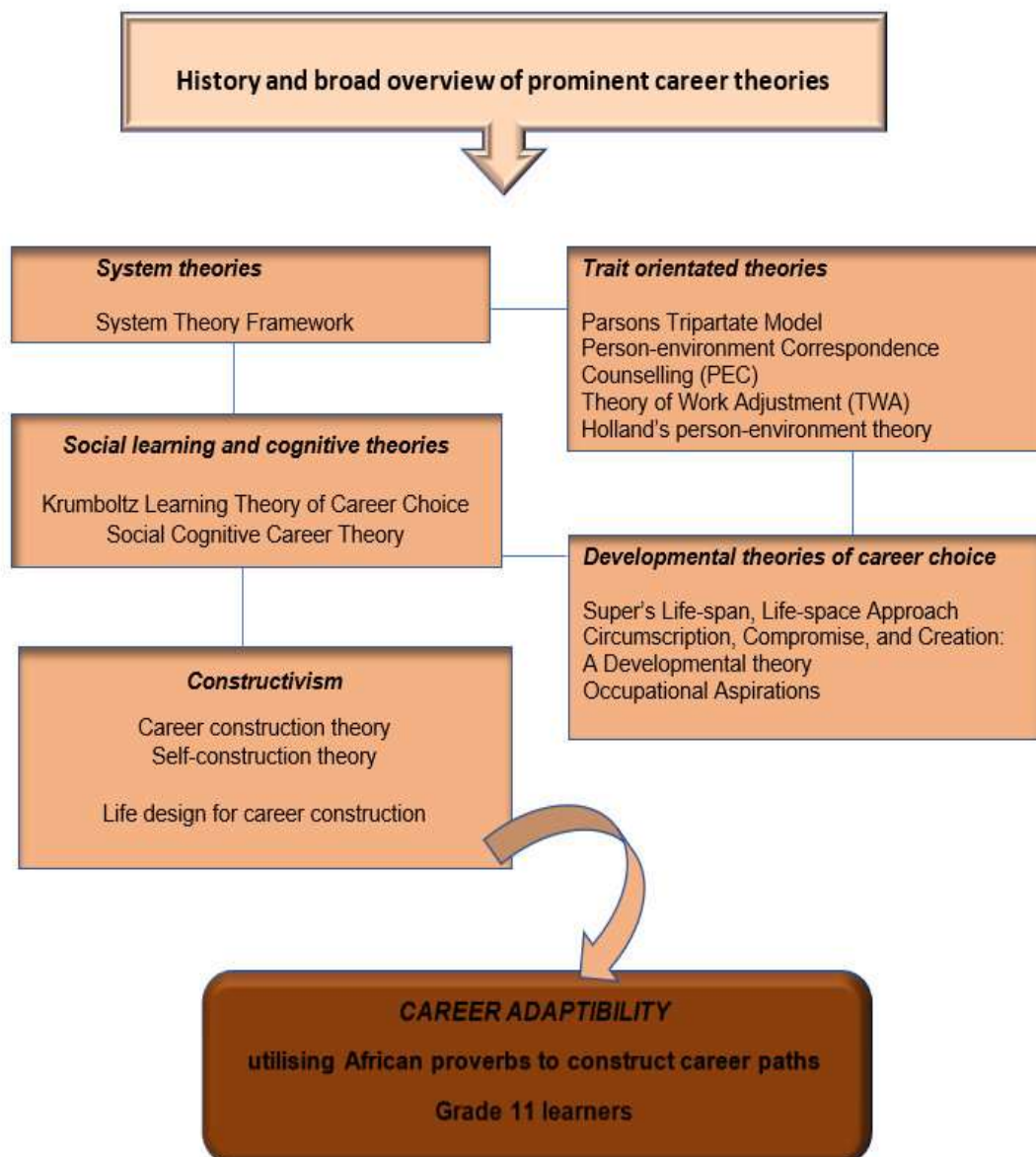


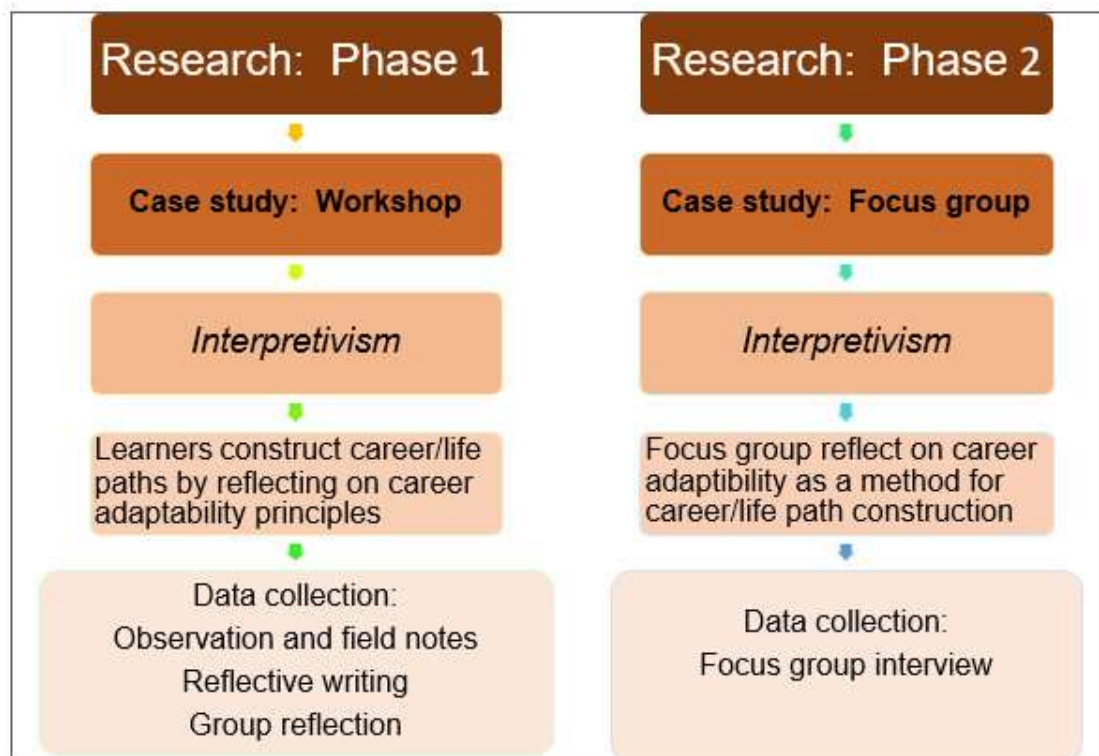
Figure 3. Overview of Chapter 2

## **2.2 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter introduced this study that focuses on learners' self-constructing a career using the psychosocial construct of career adaptability as an instructional scaffold. It also provided the main elements of the research process, including the rationale; contextual background of the study; problem statement; research questions; aim and objectives; research paradigm; methodology and research design; as well as techniques for data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Attention was also given to maintaining the quality criteria to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the study.

The current chapter presents the literature review of the study. This chapter explores existing literature on the historical narrative of career education to contextualise the psychosocial construct of career adaptability (section 2.3). A number of constructs are defined, including the career adaptability construct (section 2.4); employability (section 2.5); career resilience (section 2.6); and instructional scaffolding (section 2.7). The following sections elucidate the role of African proverbs to support critical thinking (section 2.8) and explicate the adolescent phase of development (section 2.9). To conclude, a brief summary is provided to wrap up the chapter (section 2.10).

To recap, the case study comprised two phases. Phase 1 consisted of a workshop for learners to reflect on career adaptability to self-construct a career and prepare for the world of work. Phase 2 included a focus group interview to obtain learners' reflections on the use of career adaptability and African proverbs to construct a career (see Figure 4 below). Both phases served as a case study for data gathering purposes.



**Figure 4: Phases 1 and 2 of the Research**

The workshop in Phase 1 employing the career adaptability construct served as an instructional scaffold for learners to understand and reflect on career self-construction. A discussion on career theories preceding the life design for career construction theory is thus vital to provide a holistic foundation for the career adaptability construct.

## **2.3 HISTORY AND BROAD OVERVIEW OF PROMINENT CAREER THEORIES**

Hartung (2013) states that the history of the psychology of career construction advanced over more than 100 years of developing theoretical aspects of vocational behaviour. Throughout the development of major career theories, an apparent connection exists between the individual's role in the workplace, on the one hand, and other accompanying life roles, on the other hand. These connections prove to have a significant influence on individuals (Zunker, 2008). Zunker further claims that career choice readiness is vigorously magnified in most of these theories. According to Stead and Watson (2006), the notion of "career" has been influenced by shifts in social and

economic settings, which in turn influences people's personal belief systems and values about the self, others, and the workplace. It is impossible to clearly divide career theory into precise decades (Stead & Watson, 2017). To remain within the scope of this study, I will discuss some, but not all, of the most influential theories to date.

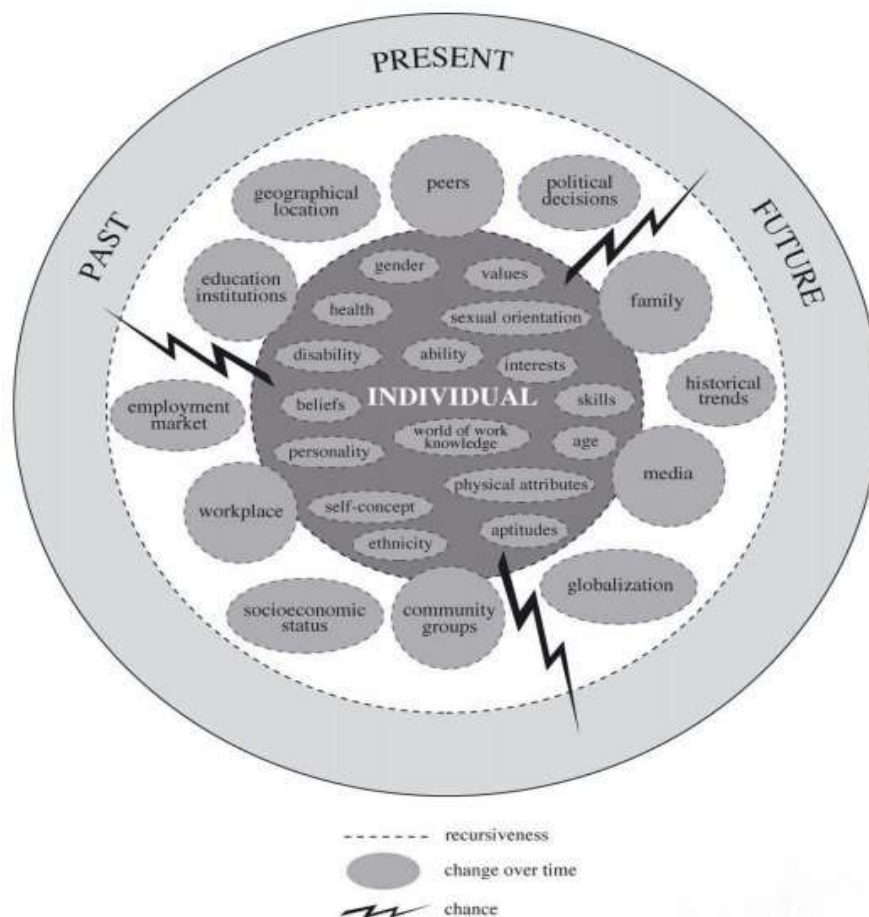
### **2.3.1 System theories**

System theory was popularised by von Bertalanffy after the publication of his book in 1968 entitled *General Systems Theory*. In his book, Von Bertalanffy acknowledged that a system is an intricate, intercommunicating chain of components and that individual parts and methods are unable to produce a holistic view of the key events (McMahon & Patton, 2018). Von Bertalanffy (1972) was especially attentive to open systems, i.e. living systems that are constantly interacting and interexchanging with each other.

Osipow (1983) and Collin (1985; 2006) recognised the value of systems thinking in career development and implemented systems theory as a theoretical career framework (McMahon & Patton, 2018). Systems thinking supports context-related career theories (e.g. career construction theory and career action theory) and takes the multitude of factors people consider when building their work lives into account (McMahon & Patton, 2018).

#### **2.3.1.1 Systems theory framework**

The systems theory framework (STF) (McMahon & Patton, 2018) focusses on complementary structures embedded in the context of time, namely, *personal content influences* (age, health, gender, beliefs, disability, etcetera), *social content influences* (educational institutions, media, family etcetera), and the *environmental-societal influences* (politics, socioeconomic status, employment market, etcetera). The STF is illustrated in Figure 5 below. The process of recursive interaction between these influences are studied and explained against the backdrop of these systems, time, and chance (McMahon & Patton, 2018):



**Figure 5: The Systems Theory Framework**  
(Source: McMahon & Patton, 2018:232)

McMahon and Patton (2018) state that the intention of the STF was not to create a career development theory, but as a basis to be integrated by all career theories with the individual as the focal point.

### 2.3.2 Trait-oriented theories

Since the start of the century, and in different forms, trait-factor theory has taken a prominent role. The survival of trait-factor theory has endured due to the emphasis of “traits” (qualities/characteristics of a person) and “factors” (requisites of the workplace) needed in all career theories (Stead & Watson, 2017).

### **2.3.2.1 Parsons' tripartite model**

Parsons' effort was the foundation of trait-and-factor counselling and developed due to the scarcity of jobs during the Great Depression, and together with the career classification and modification requirements during and following World Wars I and II (Swanson & Fouad, 1999).

Parsons followed three steps to match individuals and jobs effectively:

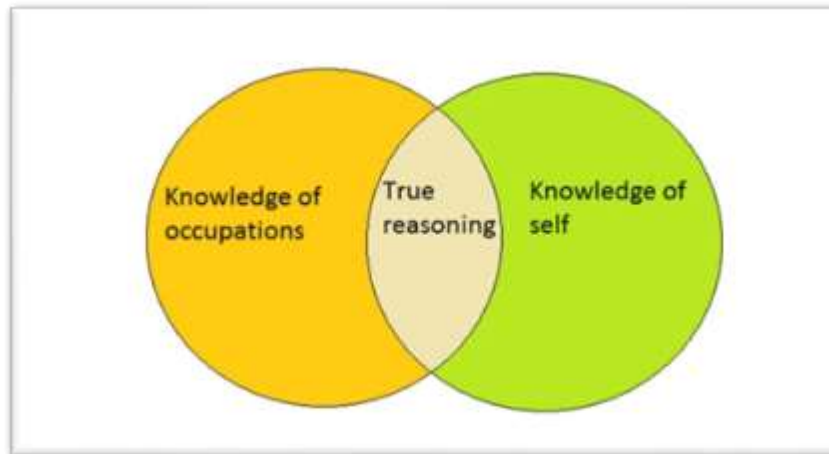
- A well-developed comprehension of the self (attitude, skills, interests, aspirations, and resource shortcomings);
- Information and understanding of successful performance, benefits and encumbrances, possibilities and expectations in diverse types of jobs;
- The deductive correlation by matching the above facts. The greater the connection, the better the match (Stead & Watson, 2017).

The origins of Parsons model can be traced back to differential psychology. The contribution of Parsons influenced psychometric testing in career guidance (McMahon & Patton, 2014).

### **2.3.2.2 Person–environment–correspondence counselling (PEC)**

In the book *How to Counsel Students*, published in 1939 (Savickas, 2015), Williamson introduced the first career counselling theory. Williamson methodically documented the theory and named it the 'vocational guidance paradigm'. For many years it was referred to as 'trait-and-factor counselling' and is presently known as 'person–environment fit counselling'. Below is a visual representation of Parsons Trait and Factor Model:





**Figure 6: Parsons Trait and Factor Model**  
(Athanasou, 2017:41)

### ***2.3.2.3 Theory of work adjustment***

Dawis and Lofquist (1981) theory of work adjustment (TWA) is trait factor theory applied with visibly clear ideas and a specific theoretical model (Stead & Watson, 2017). The theory is based on assumptions about individual requirements, the requirements of the milieu, and the interaction between these two requirements.

Dawis and Lofquist (1981) draw the following hypotheses and implications from the TWA:

- An estimate of job fulfilment can be made between the personal needs of an employee and the reinforcer system of the work milieu; the more competent the employee, the more exact the prediction.
- The possibility to correctly determine the effective reinforcers and patterns in a specific job milieu is dependent on the cognisance of a group of employees' needs and degrees of fulfilment.
- Calculating the needs and values of the employees are likely when the reinforcer patterns of job milieu's and fulfilment levels of established employees in both milieus are known.
- Knowledge of job fulfilment will improve the prediction of employee competence (performance, efficiency) from the symmetry between employee skills (aptitudes) and job skill needs.

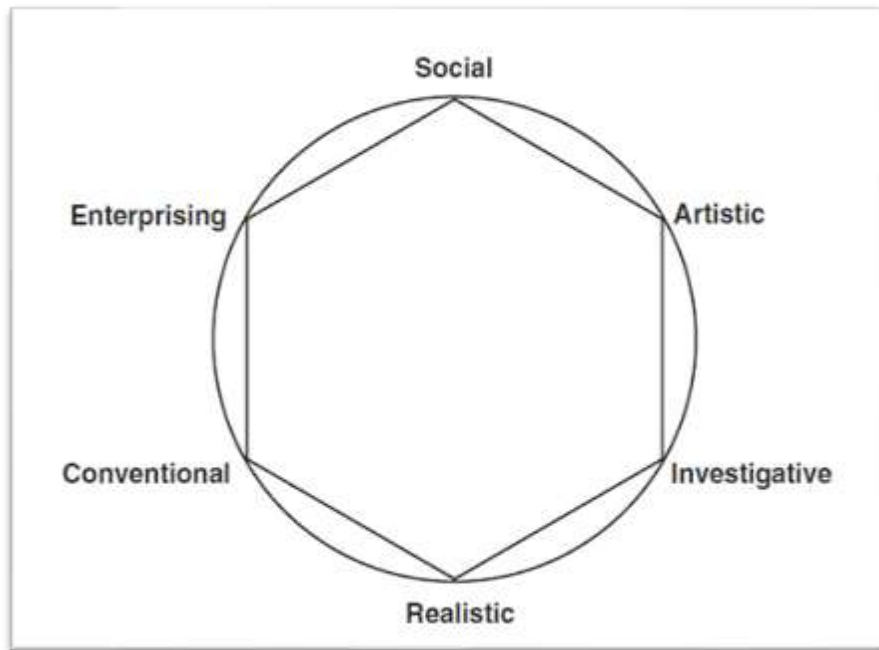
- An estimate whether an employee will remain in a work role can be inferred from measuring the employee's job fulfilment. The inference can be enhanced by knowledge about the temperament–style attributes of the employee and the style attributes of the job milieu.

In other words, the above hypotheses of Dawis and Lofquist (1981) are summarised by Zunker (2008) as:

- Occupational personality and work habitat should be complaisant.
- Individual requirements regulate the work–environment fit.
- Vital conditions of stability and permanency in a job situation are referred to as a correlation linking personal requirements and reinforcing schemes.
- The most successful appointment occurs if the job seekers traits are matched with the workplace requirements.

#### ***2.3.2.4 Holland's person–environment theory***

Quoting Hackett, Lent and Greenhaus (in Stead & Watson, 2017) maintain that Holland's theory was the most discernible and extensively researched theoretical framework since 1971. Holland's theory was shaped around a person–environment framework and incorporated workable praxis into the structure of the theory (Faris, Moya & Spokane, 2017). Holland's 1973 theory assumes that individuals in their culture could be placed in specific groups or environments, namely: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, or conventional (Faris et al., 2017). These are illustrated in Figure 7 below.



**Figure 7: Holland's Circular Ordering of Individual Types**  
(Source: Tao, Gupta & Tracey, 2019:659)

The six background principles of Holland's theory are summed up as follows (Faris et al., 2017):

- Individual personality determines one's career choice,
- Inventories of one's interest are inventories of one's personality,
- Occupational typecasts hold significant psychological and sociological implications,
- Followers of a vocational type have not only comparable personalities but also related histories of individual advancement,
- Due to similarities in vocational groups, difficulties will be dealt with similarly, and characteristically intersocial milieus will be created,
- The harmony between one's personality and the workplace determine job fulfilment, stability, and success.

### 2.3.3 Developmental theories of career choice

Following World War II, the middle class in America grew to a state where they resided in the suburbs and travelled back and forth to their workplace in hierarchical companies (Savickas, 2015). These companies focussed on efficiency and specialised job functions and positions where workers were propelled by promotions and salary increased during a lifetime career. A new approach to career counselling was required from matching people to jobs to individual development over a lifetime. Thus, was born the *career development paradigm* (Savickas, 2015).

#### 2.3.3.1 Super's life-span, life-space approach (Career development theory)

Super's career development model originated with ten propositions. Over thirty years it grew to twelve, and then later to fourteen propositions (Stead & Watson, 2017):

Three propositions underscore *differential psychology* and suggest that people are different (capabilities, principles, personalities); job requirements differ (specific jobs require certain personal traits); that differences in personalities qualify individuals for numerous types of employment.

Two propositions are embedded in *developmental psychology* principles of career maturity (the advancement of individuals concerning career development at the stage of life they are in).

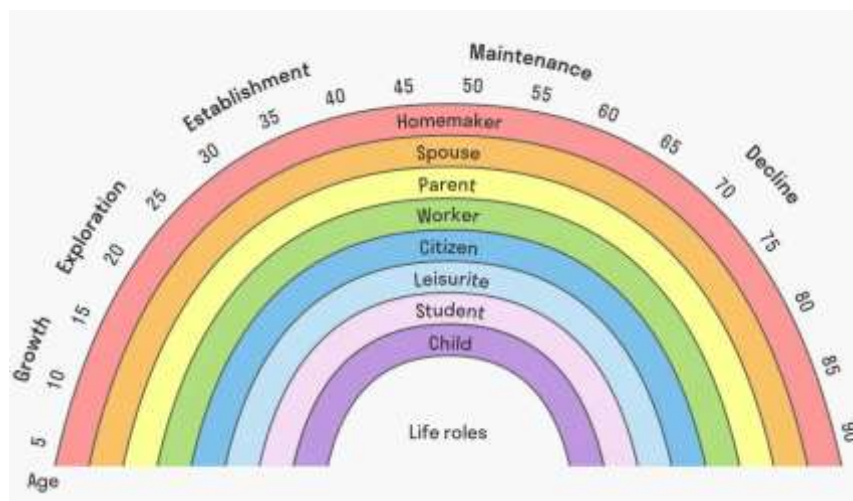
Three propositions define the matters of job and life fulfilment which are rooted in Super's *life roles* concept.

Six propositions focus on the advancement of the *self-concept* and its use in choosing a career. These propositions suggest that a person's vocational interests mould the self-concept and capabilities which will transform (become more constant) with time as interaction with diverse circumstances (social learning) takes place.

The five lifespan development stages are seated in these six propositions: *growth* (ages 4 – 13) with four developmental tasks, i.e. concern with future, growing mastery of own life, persuading the self to succeed scholastically and at work, and obtaining capable job attitudes and values; *exploration* (ages 11 – 24) with developmental tasks

to search for, specify, and effect a career choice; *establishment* (ages 24 – 44) where mature individuals establish, consolidate, and develop their careers; *maintenance* (ages 45 – 65) with developmental tasks of sticking to, keeping pace, and inventing new ideas; and lastly, *disengagement* (ages 65 +), where individuals slow down their job activities and plan for retirement.

Super's approach epitomises the general idea of career development, and according to Hartung (in McMahon & Patton, 2014), the twofold extents of the theory, specifically chronological time and context-dependent space. *Life-span* signifies the direction of career development during a person's life, while *life-space* takes into account the role context plays in the process. The Life Career Rainbow shown in Figure 8 below depicts Super's *life-span, life-space theory*.



**Figure 8: Life Career Rainbow**  
(source: Donald E. Super, in Mulder, 2018)

### **2.3.3.2 Circumscription, compromise, and creation: A developmental theory of occupational aspirations**

Gottfredson's model of circumscription and compromise (Stead & Watson, 2017) portrays the development of a person's vocational goals as time progresses. Gottfredson's theory incorporates both person–environment theory (Holland) and Donald Super's career development theory, but differentiates itself in four prominent ways (Stead & Watson, 2017), namely:

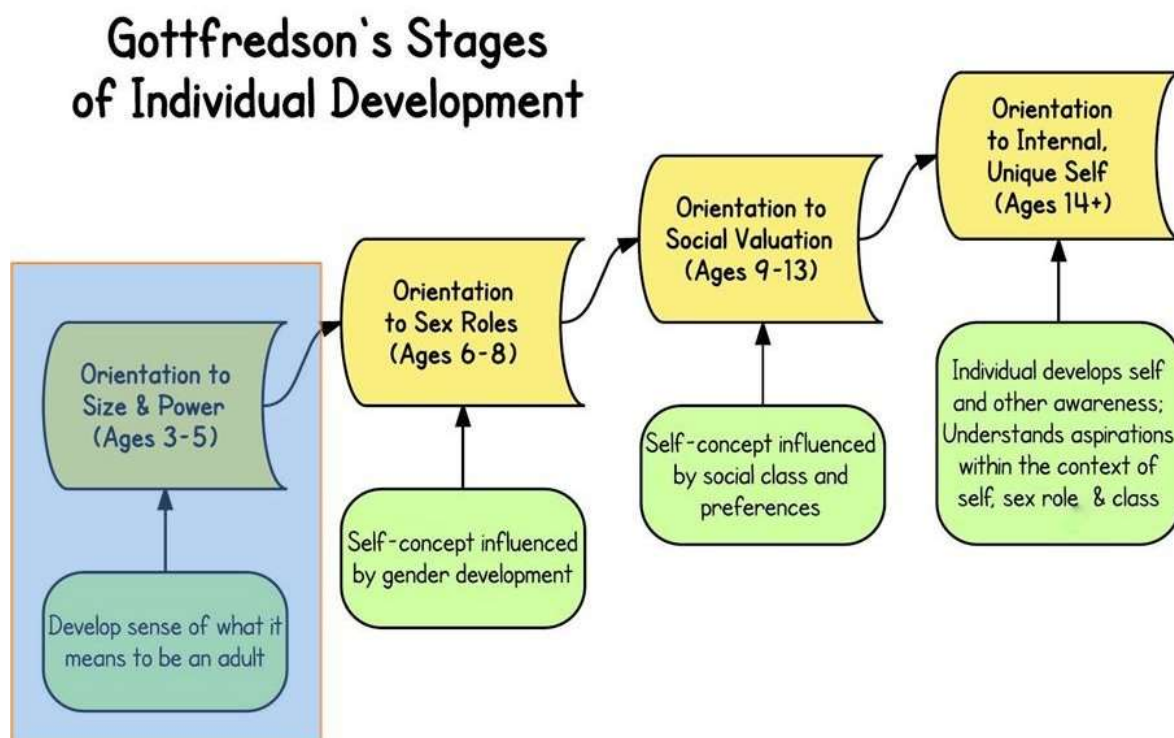
Firstly, career development endeavours to put into practice a fundamental socially determined self-concept and is therefore psychologically determined. Gottfredson believes that psychological factors, namely, values, interest, and personality, are limited, as they are socially determined by gender, social status, race, and intellect.

Secondly, the theory highlights and explores the effect of developmental cognitions between the individual and vocations from early childhood.

Thirdly, choosing a career stems from early childhood and progresses continuously by reducing career options by process of elimination.

Lastly, the elimination process forces people to negotiate their vocational goals and modify their objectives as they become aware of the realities of the world of work, thereby opting for the better choice in place of the best choice.

Gottfredson's theory (Stead & Watson, 2017) suggests four stages that portray both reasoning and self-concept development, namely: *alignment to extent and power*; *alignment to gender roles*; *alignment to social status*; and *alignment to the exclusive innermost self*. These are illustrated in Figure 9 below:



**Figure 9: Gottfredson's Stages of Individual Development**  
(Source: Howard, n.d.)

### **2.3.4 Social learning and cognitive theories**

According to Savickas (2015), social learning and cognitive theories originated from the need to apply social learning, cognitive information processing, and social cognition frameworks to career development issues. Psychological counselling for career development finds its inception in clinical psychology as opposed to the career development paradigm. Counsellors were found to be more engaged in humanistic psychology frameworks which focused on personal viewpoints as opposed to facts. Counsellors assisted clients by depending on their clients' own personal wit to grow and fulfil themselves (Savickas, 2015).

#### **2.3.4.1 Krumboltz learning theory of career choice**

According to Krumboltz, career development is the consequence of four influences, including *hereditary attributes and unique talents, environmental surroundings and incidents, learning encounters, and assignment approach abilities* (Stead & Watson, 2017). These are described in more detail in the paragraphs below. Figure 10 further below illustrates Krumboltz's social learning theory of career choice.

To begin with, Stead and Watson (2017) describe *hereditary attributes and unique talents* as the genetic traits a person is born with. These traits contribute to learning activities, influencing and setting limits to career selection.

In the second place, *environmental surroundings and incidents* affect career decision making (Stead & Watson, 2017). Some of these conditions can be controlled while others are impossible to control. These events prompt individuals to develop skills, and together with the environment they find themselves in, affect their career preferences. This factor is particularly evident in South Africa where a myriad of environmental limitations was enforced on the lives of its disadvantaged population.

Moreover, Krumboltz (Stead & Watson, 2017) determined *learning encounters* as an aspect that influences career choices. Instrumental learning experiences are associated with individuals' responses (to incidents, of others, or witnessing the results of responses). Associative learning experience relates to conditioning, where

individuals learn to have an adverse or constructive response to a previous impartial response.

In conclusion, Stead and Watson (2017) explain that *assignment approach capabilities* are developed skills an individual uses when planning a career. These developed skills encompass problem-resolution abilities and emotional and mental reactions to events. Task approach aptitudes may change as time progresses, and specific skills are experienced positively or less positively.



**Figure 10: Krumboltz Social Learning Theory of Career Choice**  
(Source: Ozyasar, 2017)

#### **2.3.4.2 Social cognitive career theory**

Founded by Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994), the main aim of the social cognitive career theory (SCCT) was to address the topical debate on theoretic overlaps in occupational psychology (Stead & Watson, 2017). The fundamental essence of SCCT is converged with the social learning concept of Krumboltz, Hackett, and Betz's self-efficacy concept, and Bandura's self-efficacy concept. According to Stead and Watson (2017), Bandura's self-efficacy theory, as represented in Figure 11 below, advocates that beliefs about oneself are gained by first-hand incidents of individual achievement or failure (personal accomplishments), watching other people achieve or fail (vicarious learning), prompting from others (social or verbal encouragement), or a result of



internal feelings of angst, which diminishes self-efficacy expectancy (physiological and affective states).



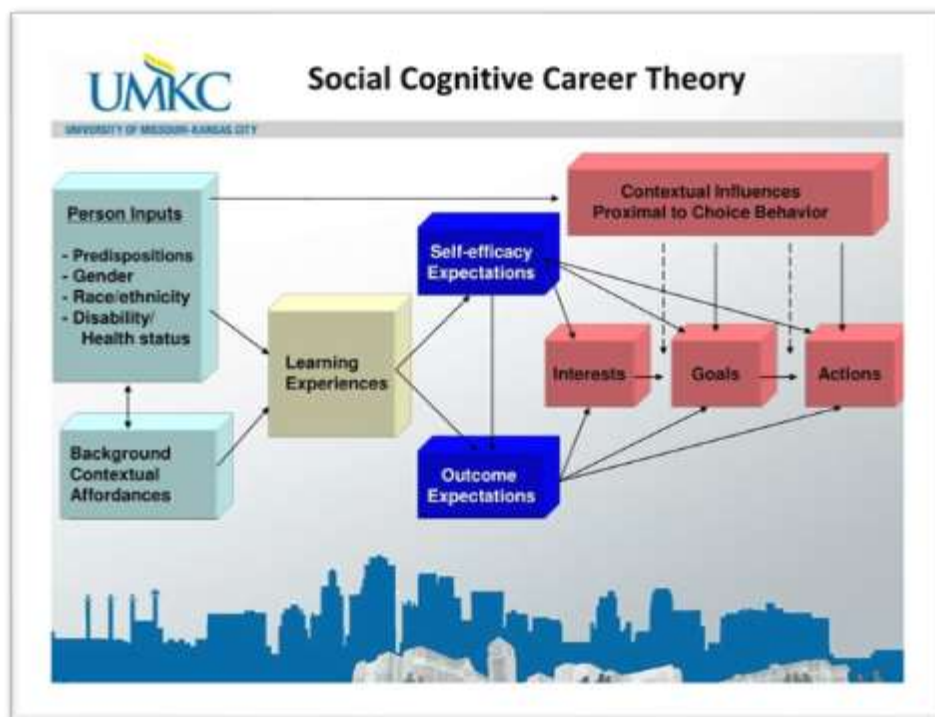
**Figure 11: Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory**  
(Source: Tinsley, 2016)

Sharf (in Stead & Watson 2017) characterises SCCT as a belief system that affects career behaviour. Lent suggests (in Stead & Watson, 2017) the following four ideas of SCCT:

- Triadic reciprocity which underscores associations of the person's attributes (gender, viewpoints, skills, and sentiments), the milieu, and bona fide behaviour of the person, which all interrelate in a bi-directional way.
- Self-efficacy expectations refer to the ideas people have about their abilities to perform specific activities. The more people believe that they can execute tasks, the more likely they will engage with the tasks.

- Outcome expectations refers less to people's beliefs about whether they can accomplish the task, and is more concerned about their beliefs of the outcome of their behaviour.
- Finally, SCCT supports the idea that the more confident people are that they can perform suitably, the more self-assurance they have in developing career interest (Stead & Watson, 2017).

Figure 12 below graphically depicts the core elements of the social cognitive career theory.



**Figure 12: Social Cognitive Career Theory**  
(Source: Hackett, 2013)

### 2.3.5 Social constructivism

Yin (2016) defines “constructivism” as a belief system (alternative worldview or paradigm) that social reality is a duality, shaped by the essence of the extrinsic settings and the individual witnessing and reporting on these settings. The construction of social reality thus implies a relativist, rather than absolute quality.

The context of life design is derived from the self-construction theory of Jean Guichard (2005) and the career construction theory of Mark Savickas. These theories, which are discussed below, are based on constructivism, which highlights a person's relations during contact and discourse with other people (Maree, 2017).

### **2.3.5.1 Self-construction theory**

According to Guichard (2005), when considering personal and career development, the first thing to be considered are the aspects and procedures by which you create yourself on a life-long basis. Guichard refers to three propositions to answer the theory of self-construction, namely:

#### **a) Sociological proposition**

In any specific community, individuals construct and associate themselves (identity). The community provides classifications by which individuals can see themselves and others. These are fluid and evolve due to interaction with other individuals and between communities. This interaction leads to interpersonal and biographical transactions and discourse where individuals adopt other's "identities" (characteristics) and use aspects of these "identities" to construct their own identity. People construct themselves in various identity forms (Foucault's plurality of identity forms) depending on the situation and communication setting they participate in. Individual's self-construction is founded on socially structured content, and the manner they relate to themselves are also socially constructed (Guichard, 2005).

#### **b) Cognitive proposition**

Individuals organise their behaviour, construct themselves, and see others through cognitive schema they build during activities, communication with others, and self-talk. Through these cognitive schemata, individuals use frames (scenes, scenario's, mental representation) to observe others and self-construct an identity form. These identity frames are sublayers of representations, judgments, and actions. The identity frames form the reasoning basis of how others are viewed and how individuals construct themselves following that identity form. An identity form is a view of another person according to the structure of one of the frames. A subjective identity form is a form in which an individual perceives and constructs the self. A definition of "subjectivity" is

thus a system of personal characteristics that belongs to a specific person (Guichard, 2005).

### **c) Reflexivity proposition**

Reflexivity pertains to individuals looking at the self in a mirror and building themselves through what they want to see. The second type of reflexivity encompasses the “I”, “you” and “she/he” which propose a trinity and refers to internal or interpersonal discourse. Reflexivity justifies self-conscience as an ongoing process of self-interpretation through internal or interpersonal discourse (Guichard, 2005).

Blustein, Devoy, Connors-Kellgen and Olle (2014) comment that Guichard’s contribution has provided meaningful lessons in the way social forces influence and mould individuals’ method of self-construction. Guichard’s work provides insight into ways subjective identity frames can be deconstructed towards a more supporting and empowering intervention for people (Blustein et al., 2014).

### **2.3.5.2 Career construction theory**

The career construction theory modernises Super’s life-span, life-space theory by illustrating the processes of individual understanding and social interaction which provide meaning and pathways to their employment demeanour (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013). Savickas (in Watson & Stead, 2017) builds on Super’s career maturity, which holds that career readiness requires the developmental tasks of gaining suitable self-knowledge; proving practical decision-making capabilities; obtaining suitable information of careers; being able to assimilate information of self and career; and having the aptitude to plot a career path. Savickas replaces career maturity with career adaptability, as career development results from continuous adaptation to people’s changing contexts, rather than the maturation of determining career behaviours. Careers are consequently constructed and do not merely emerge (Watson & Stead, 2017).

Further, as stated by Watson and Stead (2017), Super’s maintenance stage is replaced by a management stage, where individuals are compelled to continuously manage changes in the developmental stage. Savickas expands on Super’s 14

propositions by changing and adding to the propositions. Firstly, career adaptability, which is a psychological construct, specifies people's preparedness and means for handling existing and expected responsibilities of career advancement. Secondly, career construction can be aided by discussions that clarify career developmental tasks, practice and reinforce adaptive capabilities, and events that explain and support career self-image at any point.

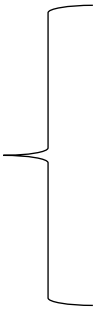
Maree (2015) explains that people generate meaning and construct order by utilising the knowledge gained in their own social environments, language, and culture. Especially for South Africa, the significance of Savickas's theory is the ability for marginalised citizens who are rooted in environments that negatively affect them (physical, social, cultural, race, family, school), to construct themselves regardless of their macro- and micro contexts (Watson & Stead, 2017).

#### ***2.3.5.3 Life design for career construction – combining two theories***

Guichard (2016) proposed that a symbiotic relationship between his self-construction theory and Savickas's career construction theory was needed to allow individuals to endure and thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The life design for career construction theory, therefore, combines the self-construction theory of Guichard and the career construction theory of Savickas, both describing job-related behaviour and its growth. A comparison of the two theories is presented in Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Table of Similarities and Differences – Career Construction and Self-Construction**

(adapted from Nota & Rossier, 2015:8)

| <b>CAREER CONSTRUCTION</b>  | <b>SELF CONSTRUCTION</b>   |
|---|--|
| Weight on the way individuals construct their career.   | Emphasise the way individuals construct their life.  |
| Career construct  | Self-construct   |
| Self-construction as meta-theory  | Self-construction as meta-theory   |
| <p>Knowledge and individual identities are outcomes of societal and mental activities that occur in the context of collaboration and compromise between people.</p> <p>The meaning people assign to human existence is fashioned in a societal, historical and ethnic perspective and through the dialogue through which relations at various levels are developed.</p>   |  <p>Identical to career construction</p>                          |
| Career construction theory places more emphasis on how individuals construct their careers.   | <p>Focus is not on career construction.</p> <p>The aim is more universal and pertains to life construction by individuals in various domains.</p>  |
|   | Model underlines the role of individual identity. Identity described as plural in nature and as a scheme of personal characteristics in evolution. |
| <p>Describes a career from a dynamic perspective based on individual meaning-making, previous recollections, present happenings and future goals.</p> <p>The last three entities blend logically into a life theme that gradually evolves.</p> <p>The subjective career which steers, governs and supports professional conduct develops from a functional practice of meaning-making.</p> <p>A subjective vocation does not emerge from the discovery of pre-existing realities; instead, it comprises of authentic reflexivity produced informally and made effective by behaviours related to vocational guidance.</p> |  |

“Life designing” has expected advantages for learners from sections of society defined by impoverished and volatile schooling (Setlhare-Meltor & Wood, 2016). “Life design for career construction” allows for the self-construction of a career identity and provides enhanced insight for learners from school to occupation changes. In the *Handbook of Life Design*, Masdonati and Fournier (2015) mention four essential procedures that underscore the understanding of the school-to-work transition: the impact of the education and occupational context; the significance of adolescents’ corresponding surroundings; their identity creation in the course of the transition; and their correlation to school and employment.

Life design for career construction focuses on expanding individuals’ capability to narrate their stories and implement their characteristics (Savickas, 2012). Life design for career construction is designed to be life-long, holistic, contextual, and preventative (Maree, 2015). Career adaptability has its roots in these two theories, more specifically, the person–environment fit and lifespan development (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017).

From the life design for career construction theory flows the concept of “career adaptability”, and it is from this construct, that I initiate my research.

## **2.4 CAREER ADAPTABILITY**

The focus of my research rests on four pillars of the *career adaptability* construct. These are therefore thoroughly unpacked and discussed in this section.

Career adaptability originates from the lifespan and person–environment practice and has over the past 40 years developed into a primary idea for understanding occupational behaviour, and an overarching skill for well-planned career construction and life design (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017). In the 1950s, Super, within the life-span, life-space theory, postulated that career maturity was required for life-stage success in transitioning through the developmental phases, in particular, the exploration phase. Career maturity is delineated (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017) as an attitudinal (way of thinking) and cognitive readiness (mental ability) to make informative and occupational choices. To be *attitudinally ready* means to be energetically involved in preparing and

exploring one's work-related future. Career adaptability (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017) emerged in an attempt to complement the *career maturity* construct but has subsequently replaced career maturity to manage a life-career by adjusting the self and the circumstances. Hartung and Cadaret (2017) explain that ensuing empirical research has metamorphosed career adaptability into a meta-competency to support career construction and life design efficiently.

*Career adaptation* and *career adaptivity* are constructs related to career adaptability. *Adaptation* is the end result of adaptivity and adaptability. *Adaptivity* pertains to an individual's pliability (Perera & McIlveen, 2017) and enthusiasm to rethink and adjust efficiently in times of career shifts and upsets. Adaptivity foreshows adapting effects and also adaptation outcomes (Rudolph, Lavigne & Zacher, 2017). To synopsis, *adaptivity* refers to the individual's preparedness to get by, *adaptability* signifies a person's means or reserves to get by, and *adaptation* implies the results that emanate from adaptivity and adaptability (Savickas, 2013a), as indicated in Table 6 below.

**Table 6: A Depiction of the Constructs Career Adaptivity, Career Adaptability and Career Adaptation**  
(Johnston, 2018)

| Adaptive Readiness        | Adaptability Resources | Adapting Responses                   | Adaptation Results         |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Tenacious goal pursuit    | Concern                | Career planning                      | Career satisfaction        |
| Flexible goal adjustment  | Control                | Career decision-making difficulties  | Promotability              |
| Learning goal orientation | Curiosity              | Career exploration                   | Entrepreneurial intentions |
| Proactive personality     | Confidence             | Occupational self-efficacy           | Organizational loyalty     |
| Career optimism           |                        | Entrepreneurial self-efficacy        | Turnover                   |
| Core self-evaluations     |                        | Career decision-making self-efficacy | Academic satisfaction      |
| Proactivity               |                        | Proactive skill development          | Employment status          |
| Hope                      |                        | Proactive networking behaviors       |                            |
| Future work self          |                        |                                      |                            |

Mark Savickas (2013) defines *career adaptability* as a socio-psychological tool for an individual to manage occupational advancement, job changes, and related stress, which influences their social incorporation to some extent. Citing Savickas, Hartung and Cadaret (2017) define *career adaptability* as a person's internal psychological and



social means to deal with existing and future career growth undertakings, job changes, and job strains that will to some extent change their social synthesis.

Hartung and Cadaret (2017) mention that when using career adaptability in research, outcomes explored include improved self-determination conduct, improved school to work changeovers, better-focused job search approaches, and enhanced job satisfaction. Maree (2013) defines *career adaptability* as the capability to foresee changes and perceive the future in a fluid and recurrently shifting context. Emerging youth of the 21<sup>st</sup> century need to acquire career adaptability skills. Career adaptability is divided into four dimensions. These are indicated in Table 7 below.

**Table 7: Career adaptability**  
(Adapted from Maree & Di Fabio, 2015)

|                   | <b>ABUNDANCE</b>   | <b>SHORTAGE</b>  |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Career concern    | Positive about the future:<br>Enthusiastically planning future career.   | Negative and apathetic towards the future.   |
| Career control    | Self-starter – make decisions, take responsibility and ownership for the future career.  | Indecision.<br><br>Uncertainty about the future.<br><br>Wavering.                              |
| Career curiosity  | Inquisitive attitude.<br><br>Productive career investigation.<br><br>Questions about and curiosity in the unfolding job market.  | Limited exploration.<br><br>Unrealistic goals and expectations about the unfolding job market. |
| Career confidence | Develop problem solving and self-regulating abilities.<br><br>Obtain skill to solve difficulties whilst constructing the future. | Feelings about the future:<br><br>Self-conscious<br><br>Fearful<br><br>Inhibited               |

Central to career adaptability rests the psychosocial capability and expertise to change the self and circumstances required for controlling tasks, transitions, and upset which are linked with career search, career decisions, and work adjustment (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017). Savickas (2013) states that people who practice *career concern*, *-control*, *-curiosity*, and *-confidence* tend to react well to environmental transformations and changes, and adapt appropriately to the constant shifting landscapes that symbolise the labour market. While adapting, they utilise work as an instrument for social integration and a means by which to implement their self-concepts.

## **2.5 EMPLOYABILITY**

Hill and Pollard (in Coetzee, Ferreira & Potgieter, 2015) define “employability” as the competency of individuals to obtain and retain employment and the ability to successfully self-manage changing occupational requirements – between companies (jobs) and within the same company (roles).

Neugebauer and Evans-Brain (2016) go even further by saying that once individuals commence on a career path, they should have the ability to reflect on how to find a different role should it become an unanticipated requirement as changes in the workplace may happen unexpectedly. Individuals now entering the job market will in the future do work that does not exist now as jobs will transform and not remain in their current form. Employability on the long haul will be fluid and will require individuals to have the ability to change direction.

To measure employability, Di Fabio, (2017) highlights the evolutionary constructs from various career instruments which were developed by several authors:

- **Employability Orientation Scale (EOS)**

Employability is the mindset of an individual when building a career within a specific company (van Dam 2004).

- **Competence-Based Measurement of Employability**

Employability is grounded in a person’s insight through five elements: work-related skills; expectation and optimisation; individual resilience; business insight; and an

individual's ability to balance divergent employers and own divergent job, personal concerns, and employer concerns (Van Der Heijde & Van Der Heijden, 2006).

- **Self-Perceived Employability Scale for Students (SPES)**

Employability is the competence a person feels to realise suitable, maintainable employment proportionally to one's qualification. Four dynamics are called on: beliefs concerning personal identity; beliefs concerning a person's tertiary institution; beliefs concerning the chosen branch of learning; and personal views regarding situation in the workplace (Rothwell, Herbert & Rothwell 2008; Di Fabio & Bucci, 2015; Di Fabio, Palazzeschi, Asulin-Peretz & Itamar 2013).

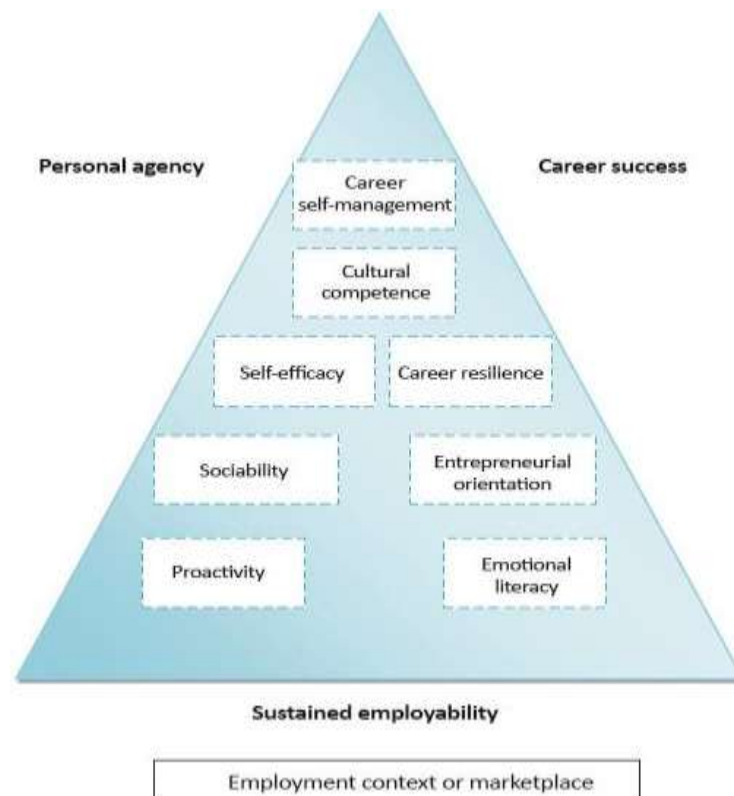
- **Dispositional Measure of Employability (DME)**

Employability is the combination of individual thought and social factors which involve five elements: job and occupational resilience, receptiveness to job changes, innovative career attitude, and job identity (Fugate & Kinicki, 2008).

- **Employability Attributes Scale (EAS)**

Employability denotes overarching capabilities which involve seven elements: ability to govern career, social skills, self-determination, career resilience, affability, enterprising alignment, and self-regulation (Bezuidenhout & Coetzee, 2010).

Further to the above, Bezuidenhout and Coetzee (in Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013) identify eight core competencies (employability attributes framework) of significance to assist in, obtain, and support career paths. These are illustrated in Figure 13 below and discussed in more detail thereafter.



**Figure 13: Employability Attributes Framework**

(Source: Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013:3)

- **Career self-management:**

The skill to reflect on individual job objectives and obtain insight into the achievements one wishes to aspire. Career self-management suggests that a person is confident and shows persistence to engage in life long self-development actions to achieve career goals (Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013).

- **Social competence:**

Making an effort to learn the customs of different cultures and to comprehend their belief and value system and comfortable intercommunication and connectedness with diverse cultures (Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013).

- **Self-efficacy:**

Independent decision making and performance, realise goals autonomously, finding answers and solving and overcoming career path difficulties (Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013).

- **Sociability:**

Construct networks with a diverse set of individuals to build friendships and provide constructive criticism, and who could assist with career advancement possibilities (Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013).

- **Entrepreneurial orientation:**

Inquisitive about and trying out new business prospects and receptive to fresh ideas; feeling optimistic about the study or workplace changes (Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013).

- **Proactivity:**

Acknowledging accountability for personal decisions, seek out new prospects individually, advance skills to improve career advancement, adjust and adapt to difficult career situations (Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013).

- **Emotional literacy:**

The ability to adjust emotions, and improve the ability to observe, comprehend and control own as well as others' feelings (Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013).

- **Career resilience:**

The ability to adjust to fluctuating job descriptions and changes within the job market even in adverse conditions, welcoming and eager to engage with diverse colleagues, confident and prepared to take risks (Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013).

Career resilience is one of a set of psychological resources that could assist individuals with career advancement, self-management, career changes, and future planning (Bollman et al., 2018).(Rossier, Ginevra, Bollmann & Nota 2017).

Further to employability skills, Succi and Canovi (2020) identify twenty soft skills to assist learners with a successful transition into the world of work:

- Dedication to the employer and following their values.
- Daily adherence to workplace ethics.
- Dealing with stress in the workplace.

- Contributing creative and original ideas to implement in one's current job role or in the workplace.
- Attaining new skills through self-evaluation.
- Balancing life and work challenges.
- Clear and plausible spoken and written communication.
- Ability to negotiate and diffuse conflicts to reach mutual satisfactory outcomes.
- Ability to nurture, retain, and build network contacts.
- Culturally adaptable to perform supervisory and enterprise development functions in a multicultural environment.
- Ability to lead, encourage, and steer employees to contribute.
- Ability to encourage and create teams to participate and collaborate.
- Ability to adapt and create new goals in a novel circumstance.
- Ability to analyse, conclude, and forecast by investigating information from alternative sources.
- Striving to improve skills related to job functions consistently.
- Ensure and improve on customer satisfaction requirements.
- Fast and pro-active decision-making to attain objectives.
- Ability to effectively manage by setting goals and prioritising tasks and resources.
- Ability to produce results by striving to meet company goals and ensuring profitability.

## 2.6 CAREER RESILIENCE

Rossier et al (2017) refer to Bickel's definition of "resilience" as the ability to persist and uphold one's integrity, even in the throes of enormous change, while maintaining one's vigour. Resilience can be considered as a reaction to psychological stress related to unpleasant situations. It is defined as a fluid attribute which could be advanced by frequent exposure and adaptation to difficulties.

Pouyaud et al (2017) suggest that career resilience (the capability to conquer hindrances and recover from setbacks) forms part of the three dimensions of career motivation, which also includes *career identity* (the ability to seize chances of

advancement within an organisation or identify or give up something to acquire career goals) and *career insight* (sound job expectancy, acknowledge personal strengths and weaknesses, and clear career ambitions).

Initially, career resilience was perceived as a twofold idea, situated in the inner self, motivated by environmental circumstances and mirrored in career choices.

These choices were characterised by self-belief, risk appetite, and need. Subsequently, career resilience was interpreted as the method of mastering insistent and intermittent career adversities and adjusting (adapting) to transforming work conditions, obstacles, and insecurities (Pouyaud et al., 2017).

Di Maggio, Ginevra, Nota and Soresi (2016) identified career resilience to display a supportive relationship with various psychological aspects relevant for career building and growth, i.e. optimism, confidence, potential direction, and career adaptability. Likewise, similar research by Barto, Lambert and Brott (2015) confirms that career resilience meaningfully complements career adaptability, and that the two considered together, benefits individuals (including young adults) in conquering career difficulties and career choices (Rossier et al., 2017).

In support of the above, Blustein (2017) asserts that individuals should develop critical thinking skills for reading the world correctly. These skills would ensure peak resilience. Career practitioners should integrate critical thinking skills or critical consciousness into career development education. Through thinking critically about the world and by constructing meaning in their personal and job environment, people build resilience.

## **2.7 INSTRUCTIONAL SCAFFOLDING**

In the construction industry, a scaffold is a temporary platform used to erect a structure. In education, the metaphor “scaffolding” refers to the manner in which an educator supports learners to achieve a learning outcome (van de Pol, Volman, Oort & Beishuizen, 2015).

The metaphor finds its developmental momentum (Gonulal & Loewen, 2018) in the work of Lev Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development. In 1976, Bruner and Sherwood

(in Gonulal & Loewen, 2018) used the terminology in a study to describe a mother's intervention with her child in a game of peekaboo. In another 1976 study, Wood, Bruner and Ross (in Gonulal & Loewen, 2018) used the term to describe the role a parent plays in problem-solving activities with a child. Constructivist perspectives utilise scaffolding to assist learners with their developmental proficiency (Woolfolk, 2016). Woolfolk (2016) asserts that Vygotsky's cognitive development is taken into consideration which implies that in order for learners to reach a level of profound understanding whilst dealing with matters in their zone of proximal development, a scaffold is required to operate in that zone. Belland, van de Pol and Beishuizen (in Woolfolk, 2016) characterise scaffolding as contingency support, where the educator continuously fine-tunes, discerns, and modifies responses to learners; fading, where the educator progressively removes support as learners' mastery and expertise strengthen; and transferring responsibility, where learners accept increasing control for their individual learning.

## **2.8 AFRICAN PROVERBS TO SUPPORT CRITICAL THINKING**

In her paper 'Educational Wisdom of African Oral Literature: African Proverbs as Vehicles for Enhancing Critical Thinking Skills in Social Studies Education', Asimeng-Boahene (2009) mentions that African proverbs assume the role of literal, metaphorical, or psychological stimulant and generate a safe space to allow for critical thinking. Asimeng-Boahene (2009) further accentuates the value of African proverbs in education as they tend to generate a creative space, freeing learners' awareness to search for different viewpoints. African proverbs address all aspects of people's lives (Babalola & Alu, 2019). They guide individuals on aspects of morality and wisdom, and advise them on the elements of living a prosperous lifestyle. African proverbs are an effective instrument to teach norms, values, and modify individuals' social behaviour. Those who understand the meaning of African proverbs are obligated to live in the way prescribed by the wise (Babalola & Alu, 2019).

The workshop (Phase 1) made use of African proverbs to deconstruct the four principles of career adaptability. The learners were asked to reflect and make personal meaning of the proverbs, thereby encouraging critical thinking.



South Africa is a resource-limited country, and besides dealing with numerous stress factors (i.e. poverty, AIDS, restricted career opportunities, and joblessness), Ferreira and Ebersöhn (2012) remark that career education support is received by specialists who were trained through Western (British and American) syllabi with Western understandings of career construction. Standardised tests for Western conditions are administered, which may hamper, rather than assist the indigenous population in South Africa to make decisions and thrive in their careers.

The African community use proverbs as a knowledge base which are firmly rooted in their culture, history, the indigenous study of the universe and understandings of the world. The proverbs (philosophies) are used in general discourse within communities to convey cultural values, norms, ethics, and morality to the youth in their journey to adulthood as a teaching method to become responsible and mature (Sefa Dei, 2014). The use of African proverbs assists indigenous learners to create different realities in order to encourage the advancement of critical thinking skills through a lens of African views and experiences (Asimeng-Boahene, 2009).

In her book, *Life Competencies for Growth and Success*, Agochiya (2018:296) quotes Scriven and Paul, who define “critical thinking” as:

[T]he intellectually disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualising, applying, analysing, synthesising, and/or evaluating information gathered from or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. In its exemplary form, it is based on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness.

## **2.9 THE DEVELOPMENTAL PHASE OF ADOLESCENCE**

I chose the late adolescent development phase (Sanders, 2013) to undertake the research for the following reasons:

- Adolescents have advanced reasoning abilities, and they can think logically and hypothetically.
- Adolescents become abstract thinkers as they move away from tangible to imaginary experiences.

- Adolescents have better developed thinking skills on the formal operational stage, awarding them the ability to think about their feelings.

I chose a Grade 11 group due to their developmental position in their search for a career identity. Adolescence occurs between the ages of 12 to 18 years and refers to the developmental stage of individuals from childhood into adulthood in their search for identity (Patterson, 2018).

The essential developmental tasks of adolescence include the formation of a career identity; cognisance of individual strengths and weaknesses; independence from parents; peer group and friendship formation; engaging in sexual and romantic affairs; and honing conflict handling and decision-making skills (Patterson, 2018).

Patterson (2018) further states that by late adolescence (ages 16 – 18) puberty is established and adulthood is in place. Late adolescents have a more robust awareness of identity and ability to enter adult spheres of competence and responsibilities.

In Anita Woolfolk's *Educational Psychology* (2016), Marcia broadens Erikson's identity formation theory by centring on exploration and commitment to accomplish a mature identity. "Exploration" refers to how an adolescent reflects on and examines different views, morals, and behaviour patterns to discover what suits them best. Commitment pertains to the choices the adolescent makes as a consequence of exploration, e.g. ideas on politics and religion. Marcia further classifies four categories of identity status which emerges from the phenomenon of exploration and commitment (Woolfolk, 2016):

- *Identity achievement* – logical options are explored, and choices are made to pursue the chosen option. In this scenario, it is found that few learners achieve this status by the completion of high school, and takes even longer for students who attend university. The phase of exploration is prone to continue into their early twenties, where approximately 80% of students subsequently change their main subjects. In another case, an adult can form a firm identity at one time, only to dismiss and adopt a new identity later.
- *Moratorium* – adolescents labouring with choices. Moratorium refers to a delay in individual and career choices. Erikson perceived these individuals as

experiencing an identity crisis, but in the contemporary era, a moratorium is viewed as common and healthy, as exploration is gradual, as opposed to distressing turmoil.

- *Identity foreclosure* – a commitment is reached without the exploration phase. Adolescents merely oblige to the regime of others (usually parents) and forego exploring alternative identities and possibilities. Foreclosed adolescents tend to be inflexible, prejudiced, unbending, and self-justifying.
- *Identity diffusion* – no options are explored, and no commitment to any activities are made. The individual reaches no outcome or commitment as to the life path they want to navigate. These individuals may appear to be indifferent and detached with regards to their views of their future. They appear to be obstinate, follow the crowd, and are more prone to abuse narcotics.

Adolescence is a crucial period for career planning and development groundwork. It has a significant impact on learners' future welfare, career advancement, and success throughout the lifespan. An essential factor of adolescent career choice planning is the ability to reach a sound and rational career decision (Hirschi, 2011). Del Corso and Briddick (2015) argue that adolescents are amongst those who benefit from participating in such (career) interventions, as they tend to take into account the subjective opinions of an audience as they begin to establish what is meaningful in their lives (Cook & Maree, 2016). They further state that it lessens the angst of an individual when transitioning from school to work.

## **2.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed and explored the existing literature on the topic under study. Attention was first given to the history of career theories to position the concept of career adaptability in the vocational field. Thereafter, the career adaptability construct was explained, along with its four pillars, namely, *career concern*, *career curiosity*, *career control*, and *career confidence*. In addition to clarifying the concepts of *employability* and *career resilience*, the developmental phase of adolescence was examined, along with the role of African Proverbs to support critical thinking. The chapter concluded with an explanation of the role of instructional scaffolding.

In the following chapter, I deliberate and rationalise the theoretic and paradigmatic perspectives I selected to carry out an empirical study. I discuss the qualitative approach, using the interpretivist paradigm and a case study research design to guide my study. I further describe the process of sampling, data collection techniques, and data analysis and interpretation.

# CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

## 3.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

A display of the content of Chapter 3 is presented in the diagram below.

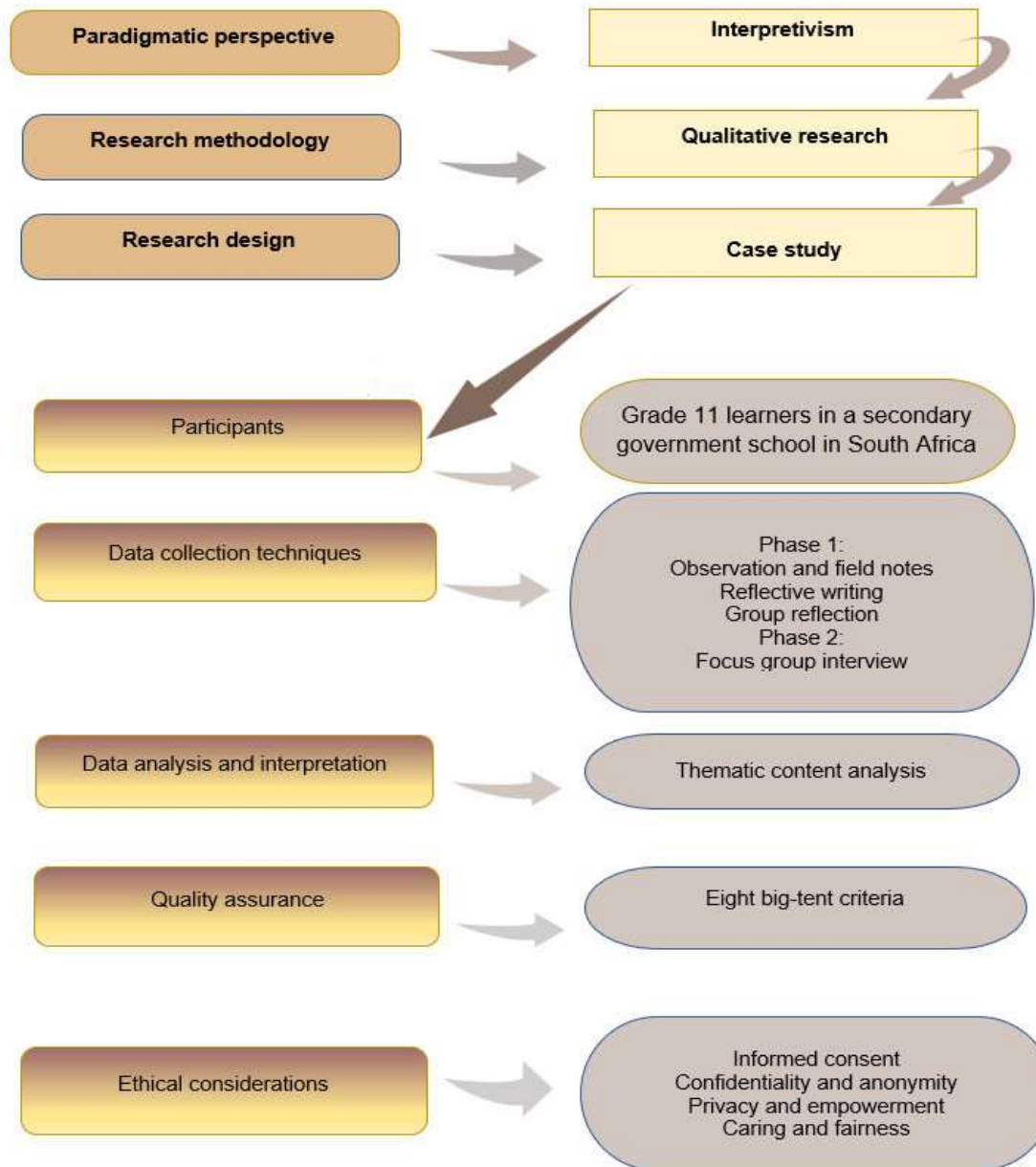


Figure 14: Overview of Chapter 3

## **3.2 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter presented the literature review on the historical narrative of career education and prominent career theories. The current chapter describes the research methodology and design employed in this study, namely, qualitative research and a case study design. The qualitative perspective and case study has a complementary goal as both attempt to unveil intricacies in a natural setting (Gaya & Smith, 2016).

The structure of the chapter is as follows. After a brief overview (section 3.1) and introduction (section 3.2), a synopsis of the research paradigm (section 3.3), namely interpretivism, is presented. This is followed by a description of the research methodology (section 3.4); research design (section 3.5); and research process (section 3.6). Thereafter, the research population and sampling (section 3.7) are discussed, along with the data collection techniques (section 3.8); data analysis and interpretation (section 3.9); and quality assurance measures (section 3.10). In the penultimate section of the chapter, the ethical considerations adhered to in this study are explained (section 3.11), followed by a brief conclusion (section 3.12) to wrap up the chapter.

## **3.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

The use of the term "paradigm" explains the perspective from which the researcher views the world (or their beliefs about the world), and is used to explicate the research data (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). These abstract beliefs shape the researcher's worldview and how the researcher interacts with and interprets issues in the world. The researcher uses this concept as a lens through which he/she inspects the methodological characteristics of the research topic to decide which research methods to use and how to analyse the data. In the *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Guba and Lincoln (1994) describe a paradigm as a reflection of a personal human belief system which guides research activities. The paradigm clarifies the researcher's philosophical view and explains how the researcher will construct meaning from all the data obtained from the research (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

### 3.3.1 Interpretivism

The interpretivist paradigm was chosen for this study as the research did not seek to clarify, foresee, or regulate viewpoints, but rather comprehend, interpret, and debunk participants' social reality through their individualistic views (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c). The explicit purpose of interpretive research is to suggest a viewpoint of a prevailing situation (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b). By analysing the situation, it provides an understanding of how a specific group of individuals create meaning of the phenomena they are confronted with.

As explained in Chapter 1, an interpretive viewpoint assumes that reality is socially constructed and not objectively determined. People are therefore studied in their natural social context, providing a better chance to understand the insights participants have of their own actions (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b). Participants' social reality is characterised by a multiplicity of meaning, as participants understand the same event differently. To understand how people construct meaning of an event, the researcher needs to enter into their world and observe it from within. The role of the researcher is to comprehend, clarify, and interpret participants' social reality through their individualistic views (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b).

Nieuwenhuis (2016a) further premises the interpretive perspective on the following beliefs:

- Existence can only be comprehended from within by a specific individual. It is impossible to define an individual's life from an outside perspective. Interpretivism is the subjective process of focussing on how individuals construct their world by socially interacting with one another and sharing meaning.
- Reality is socially constructed and cannot be measured objectively. Interpretivism assumes that people should be observed in their social settings to provide a greater understanding of how they perceive their own actions.
- At the heart of the root of meaning lies the conscious human mind. By discovering how individuals build meaning, we are able to understand the ascribed meaning and comprehend the sum total.

- The behaviour of human beings is influenced by the knowledge they gain from the social world. Interpretivism suggests that events can be explained in single, but also multiple interpretations (multiplicity) of realities, and may also differ depending on time and location.
- There is a co-dependence between the social world and human's knowledge or wisdom. Researchers are influenced by their understanding and knowledge, which impacts their research questions and the manner in which they conduct their research. Researchers' own knowledge and understanding, such as perceptions, ideals, views, or former knowledge, act as filters to comprehend and define phenomena. As a researcher attempts to 'see' through the eyes of others, they use their knowledge and experience to make sense of and interpret phenomena.

Exploring the manner in which people participate in and intercommunicate with their social environment, and the sense they make of it, is founded on an interpretive viewpoint rooted in the qualitative approach (Merriam, 2019).

### **3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This section describes the methodology employed in this study.

#### **3.4.1 Qualitative research**

Given the nature of qualitative research, a qualitative method was opted for in this study. It was found to be a suitable approach as it seeks to observe a phenomenon and documents and interprets individuals' intrinsic truths about the phenomenon in an ordinary situation to understand the world from another's viewpoint (MacDonald, 2012).

In Table 8 below, Creswell and Creswell (2018) characterise qualitative research as follows:



**Table 8: Characteristics of Qualitative Research**  
(adapted from Creswell & Creswell, 2018)

| Qualitative research characteristics   | Researcher input while aiming to construct a new understanding of the case study  |
|--|---|
| <p>Data is collected in a natural setting where the participants are involved in the phenomena or specific matter under study. A key feature of qualitative research is where information is gathered by personally conversing with participants and observing their behaviour in a specific context.</p>  | <p>Data were collected at the learners' school in a classroom after school.</p> <p>I interacted with the participants and observed their behaviour.</p> <p>The research assistant acted as a complete observer and unobtrusively made field notes.</p>                                    |
| <p>The researcher is a vital contributor to the data gathering process by personally collecting data from the participants. The researcher may choose instruments for recording the data, but they are essentially responsible for information gathering and interpretation.</p>   | <p>I was present and actively involved as participant-observer for the five sessions (Phase 1) and the focus group (Phase 2). I used audio-visual recordings to capture interactive reflections between learners for information gathering and to aid in analysis and interpretation.</p> |
| <p>During the data gathering process, the researcher does not rely on one source only but utilises multiple data collection techniques, e.g. observation, interviews, documents, and audio-visual information.</p>   | <p>I selected multi-data collection techniques for data analysis: observation and field notes, audio-visual recordings, group reflections, reflective writing, and drawing.</p>   |
| <p>The researcher uses an inductive (apply logical reasoning to draw conclusions on collected information and observations) method during data analysis. Themes are examined and categorised, and after that the themes are revisited deductively (logical reasoning is used to draw conclusions from a group of assumptions) to ascertain if further information gathering is required.</p> | <p>I transcribed the total dataset and utilised deductive thematic content analysis to create themes and codes in a logical manner.</p>   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| The qualitative research process required that the participants' meaning of the phenomenon remain paramount throughout the study, and not that of the researcher or authors of the literature.  | Making use of different data sources (triangulation) assisted me to remain focussed on the learners' meaning-making of the phenomenon and not my own.  |
| The research is a developing process (emergent), and modifications may occur after the researcher initiates the data collection process. These modifications indicate that the researcher is mining deeper into the issue or phenomenon.  | I re-examined the themes and applied deductive reasoning to draw conclusions from the assumptions to determine if I required to modify themes or categories or needed further information.   |
| The researchers remain reflective throughout the study, delving into their part in the study to reduce bias. Their individual experiences, cultural orientation, and origin potentially influence the way they interpret the themes and make meaning of the data, thereby influencing the direction of the study. | I acknowledge my potential bias as I am unable to remain objective. I also encountered challenges in the data analysis phase. I often reflected on the multiple data sources, the multiple viewpoints of the learners, and my role as a researcher. I endeavoured to put the different parts of the research together to construct a new comprehension of the study. |

Qualitative research comprises a variety of viewpoints, information sources, and notions to build a construct, which Denzin and Lincoln (2018) refer to as a “bricolage”<sup>5</sup>. The researcher, in turn, is a “bricoleur”, i.e. the creator of a bricolage. As a bricoleur or architect, I endeavoured to journey with learners (actual people in an existing world) to shape their plurality of truths and generate a new consciousness of my research topic. To answer my research question, I utilised a qualitative approach guided by a case study.

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<sup>5</sup> To explain more fully: 1. The disordered effect produced by the close proximity of buildings from different periods and in different architectural styles. 2. The deliberate creation of such an effect in certain modern developments (Forsyth 2018).

## **3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **3.5.1 Case study**

Research designs used for interpretive research include case studies (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Thus, for the purpose of this study, I opted for a case study design. It was considered a suitable approach as it is a qualitative method where a researcher engages with a person, group, organisation, or partnership in a true to life, multi, or single-site location, over a specific period (Creswell & Poth, 2018), which was particularly relevant for this study. The researcher collects comprehensive data by way of various sources (e.g. observational evidence, discussions, electronic communication, written information) and reports the findings by using emerging themes and descriptions. I collected data by using a variety of methods, namely, observation and field notes, group reflection, reflective writing for Phase 1, and a focus group for Phase 2, over a two-month period with a group of learners at a single site location.

Schramm (in Yin & Campbell, 2018) defines the core of a case study as an attempt to emphasise:

- why were choices made?
- how were the choices carried out?
- what was the outcome of those actions?

To obtain answers to the above questions, the researcher partnered with the participants. The participants reflected in a natural setting by using qualitative data collection methods (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b). In my role as a participant-observer, I created a safe space for learners to reflect on career self-construction (why, how, and what) in a group setting.

Case studies centre around research where participants are often observed and where the researcher tries to provide an all-inclusive representation and understanding of the research environment (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b).

### **3.5.1.1. Participants in the case study**

Table 9 below provides a description of the participants who formed part of the case study.

**Table 9: Participants in the Case Study**

| FACTOR FOR THIS STUDY | DESCRIPTION  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Case                  | A group of 18 Grade 11 learners – male and female. |

At first, researchers place the focus on the broad meaning of the case, later tapering their focus as the research progresses, resulting in the necessity for creating temporal (time-related) and spatial (space-related) restrictions. According to Nieuwenhuis (2016b), case study research originates from a need to obtain a closer, thorough, and rich grasp of a bounded entity (person, company, behavioural quality, incident, social phenomena) in a true to life setting.

### **3.5.1.2 Unit and depth of the case study**

Table 10 below provides a description of the unit and depth of the case study.

**Table 10: Unit and Depth of the Case Study**

| FACTOR FOR THIS STUDY | DESCRIPTION   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Unit                  | Unit is bounded by five workshop sessions and one focus group interview with a duration of one hour over six consecutive weeks.                         |
| Depth of study        | An in-depth study to thoroughly analyse the reflections of Grade 11 learners regarding career construction following the career adaptability construct. |

Nieuwenhuis (2016c:81) further expresses that case study research is expected to create new knowledge and surpasses the mere study of isolated incidents. Binding a case to its context to avoid excessive boundaries and prevent loss of focus includes

“time and place” (Creswell, 2003), “time and activity” (Stake, 1995), “and by definition and context” (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

### 3.5.1.3 Context of the case study

Table 11 indicates the context of the case study.

**Table 11: Context of the Case Study**

| FACTOR FOR THIS STUDY | DESCRIPTION   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Context               | An urban government high school during a specific school term in Gauteng, South Africa. |

Yin (2012) distinguishes between four types of case studies: *holistic* (analysis is based on the systematic approach of a phenomenon); *embedded* (analysis concentrates on diverse subsets of a phenomenon); *single case* (a sole unit of analysis); and *multiple cases* (numerous units of analysis selected to predict similar results or opposing results for predicted reasons). Bloomberg (2018) remarks that a single instrumental case study would serve to portray and comprehend the precise issue, problem, or concern, while the collective or multiple case study would serve to show comparative and contrasting viewpoints of the same issue.

### 3.5.1.4 Design of the case study

The design of the case study is presented in Table 12 below.

**Table 12: Design of the Case Study**

| FACTOR FOR THIS STUDY | DESCRIPTION       |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Design                | Single case study |

During the study, evidence integrity should be held by rigorously keeping records to subsequently be available for presentation, explanation, and support of the findings (Harrison et al., 2017).

### 3.5.1.5 Sources for validating the case study

The methods used to validate the case study are depicted in Table 13 below.

**Table 13: Sources for Validating the Case Study**

| FACTOR FOR THIS STUDY  | DESCRIPTION  |
|------------------------|--|
| Sources for validation | Methods of data gathering include:<br>Reflective worksheets, drawings, and doodles.<br>Audio transcripts of group reflections.<br>Researcher's reflective journal.<br>Research assistant observation reflective notes.<br>Focus group interview. |

## 3.6 RESEARCH PROCESS

The purpose of the workshop (Phase 1) was to afford learners the opportunity to reflect on career adaptability with its four pillars of *career concern*, *career control*, *career curiosity* and *career confidence* in order to contemplate on career choices. The workshop content was utilised for data collection purposes. Data collection in qualitative studies concerns itself with generating language-producing or visual mediums for analysis, comprehension and meaning-making of occurrences, social sectors, and subjective individual and group experiences (Flick, 2018). Collection may include non-artificial or induced data such as speaking, listening, observation, sounds, images, or digital material. The foremost aim for qualitative data collection is to provide resources for verifiable analysis of phenomena (Flick, 2018). In addition to the above, I attempted to gain insight into learners' perspectives on career adaptability for data gathering and analysis purposes.

I explained career adaptability concepts by employing African proverbs for learners to make meaning of the career adaptability construct. Asimeng-Boahene (2009) mentions that African proverbs adopt the role of a literal, metaphorical, or psychological stimulant and produce a safe space to allow for critical thinking. Asimeng-Boahene (2009) further highlights the value of African proverbs in education as it creates the tendency to generate a creative area, freeing learners' awareness to search for different viewpoints.

### 3.6.1 Phase 1 – Workshop

Structure for Phase 1 of the study:

- The workshop required five sessions of one hour each for Phase 1
- Worksheets were handed to learners at the start of each session for writing and drawing purposes.
- Worksheets were handed in after each session. Creative writing and drawings on the worksheets were used for data collection purposes.
- Research assistant notes were used for data collection purposes.
- All class and group discussions were audio-recorded for data collection and transcribing purposes.
- The researcher's personal reflections were used for data collection purposes.
- The research assistant observed all the sessions and made field notes for data collection purposes.

#### 3.6.1.1. Visual representation of the five workshop sessions

Table 14 below visually presents the five sessions of the workshop for clarification purposes and to enhance understanding of the process.

**Table 14: Research Process – Phase 1 – Workshop**

| SESSION ONE  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| TOPIC  | CAREER ADAPTABILITY – OVERVIEW  |   |
| AFRICAN PROVERB  | <i>If the rhythm of the drumbeat changes, the dance step must adapt.</i>  |   |
| Learners   | Researcher  | Research Assistant                                      |
| Discuss in class and small groups by reflecting on the proverb and its meaning related to career construction.<br>Written reflection – drawing, writing. | An introductory explanation of career adaptability and its four principles.<br>Facilitate group activities.<br><br>Participated as an observer. | Complete observer.<br><br>Observe and make field notes. |
| SESSION TWO  |   |   |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| TOPIC   | <b>CAREER CONCERN</b> ( <i>Instil a habit of life-long career concern</i> )   |   |
| AFRICAN PROVERB   | <i>Where you will sit when you are old, shows where you stood in your youth.</i>  |   |
| <b>Learners</b>   | <b>Researcher</b>   | <b>Research Assistant</b>                               |
| Discuss in class and small groups by reflecting on the proverb and its meaning related to career construction.<br>Written reflection – drawing writing. | The researcher briefly introduces the proverb and asks the learners to reflect on it.<br><br>Facilitate group activities.<br><br>Participated as an observer. | Complete observer.<br><br>Observe and make field notes. |
| <b>SESSION THREE</b>  |   |   |
| TOPIC   | <b>CAREER CURIOSITY</b> ( <i>Establish a habit of lifelong curiosity</i> )  |   |
| AFRICAN PROVERB   | <i>A baby on its mother's back does not know the way is long.</i>   |   |
| <b>Learners</b>   | <b>Researcher</b>   | <b>Research Assistant</b>                               |
| Discuss in class and small groups by reflecting on the proverb and its meaning related to career construction.<br>Written reflection – drawing writing. | The researcher briefly introduces the proverb and asks the learners to reflect on it.<br><br>Facilitate group activities.<br><br>Participated as an observer. | Complete observer.<br><br>Observe and make field notes. |
| <b>SESSION FOUR</b>   |   |   |
| TOPIC   | <b>CAREER CONTROL</b> ( <i>The importance of lifelong career self-management</i> )  |   |
| AFRICAN PROVERB   | <i>He who eats an egg foregoes a future meal of chicken soup.</i>   |   |
| <b>Learners</b>   | <b>Researcher</b>   | <b>Research Assistant</b>                               |
| Discuss in class and small groups by reflecting on the proverb and its meaning related to career construction.  | The researcher briefly introduces the proverb and asks the learners to reflect on it.<br><br>Facilitate group activities.                                     | Complete observer.<br><br>Observe and make field notes. |



|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Written reflection – drawing writing.   | Participated as an observer.  |   |
| <b>SESSION FIVE</b>   |   |   |
| TOPIC   | <b>CAREER CONFIDENCE</b> ( <i>The importance of career confidence</i> ).  |   |
| AFRICAN PROVERB   | <i>If there is no enemy within, the enemy outside can do no harm.</i>   |   |
| <b>Learners</b>   | <b>Researcher</b>   | <b>Research Assistant</b>                               |
| Discuss in class and small groups by reflecting on the proverb and its meaning related to career construction.<br>Written reflection – drawing writing. | The researcher briefly introduces the proverb and asks the learners to reflect on it.<br>Facilitate group activities.<br>Participated as an observer. | Observe and make field notes.<br><br>Complete observer. |

### 3.6.2 Phase 2 – Focus group interview

A focus group interview was conducted after the workshop was completed to gain the learners' perspective on the use of career adaptability and African proverbs to construct career paths. The goal of focus groups is to acquire significant and comprehensive data (Carey & Asbury, 2016). Data collection focusses on the stories that the group shares with the facilitator, and not on the verbal and non-verbal communication amongst the participating members. Focus groups are instinctively agreeable. Individuals like to be listened to and value when effort is made to understand what they are saying (Carey & Asbury, 2016).

#### 3.6.2.1 A visual representation of the focus group interview

Table 15 below provides a visual representation of the focus group interview for clarification purposes and to enhance understanding of the process.

**Table 15: Visual Representation of the Focus Group Interview**

| <b>SESSION SIX</b>                           |   |                           |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| <b>FOCUS GROUP</b>                           | <b>FEEDBACK SESSION</b>   |                           |
| Questions                                    | What are your feelings about the content of the workshop?<br>How did you experience the influence of African proverbs to explain the meaning of career adaptability?<br>What is your concern about your career path after school? |                           |
| <b>Learners</b>                              | <b>Researcher</b>   | <b>Research Assistant</b> |
| Learners discuss questions among themselves. | Researcher facilitates group dynamics.  |                           |
| Learner perceptions                          | Learners share their personal views.  |                           |

### 3.7 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

Qualitative research requires a purposeful selection of partakers or locations, and documents or pictorial material, which assists the researcher to comprehend the research question and problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Random sampling or selection of a sizable group of partakers is not required as is the case of quantitative research.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) postulate that the four characteristics identified by Miles and Huberman be taken into consideration when deliberating the participants and location.

The characteristics of the participants and location are depicted in Table 16 below.

**Table 16: Characteristics of Participants and Location**

| Four characteristics  | Study   |
|---|---|
| The location where the research will be carried out.  | An urban government high school classroom during a specific school term in Gauteng, South Africa. |
| The contributors or participants will be observed and/or interviewed.   | A group of Grade 11 learners – male and female.   |
| The activities the participants partake in will be observed, or participants will be interviewed while the research is taking place | Group reflection, reflective writing, drawing. Focus group interview.                             |
| The spontaneous development of the activities/process inside the location.  | Reflection on career adaptability to construct a career.  |

### 3.7.1 Sampling: Purposeful convenience

When employing *purposeful sampling*, sound judgement is needed from the researcher as the quality of participants should be deliberated and nonrandomly found. Further, people must be willing and able to provide information by reflecting and articulately communicating experiences. The essence of purposive sampling is to choose participants with specific traits who will best answer the research questions and provide insight on the research topic (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016).

*Convenience sampling* is a type of nonprobability sampling where the sample is freely available with regards to practicality (Waterfield, 2018). It is a technique where participants are selected based on their quick availability (location, ease of access, and known contacts). In qualitative research, a guideline for sample size ranges from between 1 to 40 or more participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Convenience sampling does not entail comprehensive records of the study population and has logistical advantages in terms of travelling, budget, and time expenses (Waterfield, 2018).

Waterfield (2018) further states that although convenience sampling has methodological limitations, it could be diminished by a detailed description of:

- The demographic profile and characteristics of the sample;
- Equating it with the pertinent population for readers to appraise its representativeness;
- Include all participants in the study to reduce response bias and to lessen the potential problem of representativeness;
- Making sure that participants enlisted are theoretically appropriate to the research and not exclusively chosen for convenience.

#### **3.7.1.1 Participants**

The unit of participants purposely chosen for this study comprised of Grade 11 learners from a government secondary school in the Gauteng province. Adolescents in the late adolescence phase (around ages 16 to 18) are characterised with a stronger sense of individuality than younger adolescents, where pubertal changes are complete with set adult appearance. These individuals are moving toward assuming adult roles and responsibilities (Patterson, 2018). Grade 11 learners were chosen for their capacity to commence mature thinking and take responsibility for future career paths.

I conveniently chose this school because of its close proximity to my home and because it was representative of Grade 11 learners attending a South African government school. The scenario was representative of the majority learner population in South African government schools. The ethnicity grouping consisted of black learners (both male and female).

#### **3.7.1.2 Sampling (Workshop – Phase 1)**

Creswell and Creswell (2018) indicate that researchers should discuss the different strategies implemented to recruit participants as well as the manner participants will

be informed. Further, the researcher should comment on the numbers of participants and locations required for the study.

In order to get willing participants, all learners in Grade 11 at the selected school were invited to participate (Phase 1). The school made an announcement to the Grade 11 group to create awareness of the workshop. Electronic copies of the invitation to participate were emailed to interested learners, and hard copies were made available to collect from the administration building should a learner who has no email wish to participate. I anticipated a drop out percentage (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c) and used a funnelling approach by selecting more participants than needed.

The workshop participants consisted of a group of learners (male and female) who volunteered to take part in the workshop after consent/assent forms were signed and returned to the researcher. The sample was a group of 18 black male and female learners. In qualitative research, a guideline for sample size ranges from between 1 to 40 or more participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

The inclusion criteria for participation were as follows:

- Only learners in Grade 11 were considered.
- Learners had to be able to attend all five after-school sessions.
- Learners had to have transport arrangements available to return home after sessions.
- The sample only included participants whose informed consent/assent forms were signed.
- The selection was based on the participants' eagerness and commitment to participate.

An independent research assistant with an educational background was identified by placing an advertisement on Facebook. The assistant was interviewed to ascertain her ability to observe and write field notes (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c). The research assistant was not associated with the school.

### **3.7.1.3 Focus group sampling (Focus group interview – Phase 2)**

Group composition in selecting a focus group is essential to ensure substantial interaction (Morgan & Hoffman, 2018). An important factor in selecting a focus group is the manner of interaction with each other and with the topic. A focus group should not have too many participants. Groups between 6 and 12 will avoid complicated data analysis and prevent unruly behaviour. A smaller participant group might not have enough to talk about and cause a stall in the discussions (Gavin, 2008). The researcher observed learners in Phase 1 of the study. Eight learners of mixed gender who attended the workshop were identified and chosen for the focus group in Phase 2. Learners were chosen according to their level of contribution and commitment to the workshop and their manner of interaction with each other (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c).

The composition of the focus group is presented in Table 17 below.

**Table 17: Focus Group Participant Composition**

| <b>GENDER</b> | <b>AGE</b> | <b>GRADE</b> |
|---------------|------------|--------------|
| Female        | 18         | 11           |
| Female        | 18         | 11           |
| Male          | 18         | 11           |
| Female        | 17         | 11           |
| Male          | 18         | 11           |
| Male          | 17         | 11           |
| Female        | 17         | 11           |
| Female        | 17         | 11           |
| Male          | 18         | 11           |
| Female        | 18         | 11           |

## **3.8 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES**

Qualitative data collection serves to uncover and address field matters or standard operations within practices and procedures (Flick, 2018). Flick (2018) further argues that data can be collected through natural derived or extracted means, including narratives, listening, observations, sound material analysis, images, or digital material. Data gathered in research is not only used to understand the theoretical framework

better (Etikan et al., 2016), but also aims to produce generalised reports of phenomena through data analysis (Flick, 2018).

For the purpose of this study, I opted to apply three qualitative data collection techniques, namely, *focus group interview*, *observation and field notes*, and *group reflection*.

### **3.8.1 Focus group interview**

After the workshop in Phase 1 was concluded, a focus group interview with open-ended questions was conducted to gain insight into learners' perceptions on the value of career adaptability and African proverbs as a learning tool to construct career paths. Ten learners were chosen by their level of contribution to the workshops. The essence of a focus group is to have a group of individuals who provide in-depth information/data about their experience, perceptions, and attitude towards the research topic (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a). The ideal is for them to initiate an active debate among themselves (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a). Focus groups are instinctively agreeable as individuals like to be listened to and value when an effort is made to understand what they are saying (Carey & Asbury, 2016).

The goal of the focus group was to acquire essential and comprehensive data. Nieuwenhuis (2016c) mentions that audio and video recordings are of cardinal importance and are frequently explicitly used in focus group interviews as a data collection technique to capture discussions and non-verbal nuances. It is recommended to devise a strategy to identify participants when documenting the transcript, as it will assist in rich data analysis (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a). I printed numbers on stickers, which the learners placed on their chests in clear view. The learners were asked to refer to each other by number and not by name.

### **3.8.2 Observation and field notes**

The process of observation implies that the researcher records the participants' patterns of behaviour by using his/her senses (see, hear, smell, touch, taste) and

instincts to gather pieces of information (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c). With regards to field notes, accuracy is of utmost importance (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c).

Creswell (2012) mentions two approaches to taking field notes, namely, descriptive and reflective field notes. *Descriptive field notes* capture details about what happened (participants, situation, actions), while *reflective field notes* relate to personal thoughts (emerging themes, perceptions, meaning making). Field notes for recording accurate data on what the researcher and non-participant saw, heard, and experienced were used for data collection. Digital recordings were made of the field and observation notes. Recording data as a qualitative data gathering technique is an important factor. A combination of observations with audio recordings provide rich data for analysis (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a). An essential factor is to design a method to identify individual group members and analyse the group interaction (role players) when transcribing the audio. It is suggested to either transcribe the audio immediately after the session or to write observations in the reflective journal (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a).

Observation for the study is categorised as follows:

*Participant as an observer:* I became part of the workshop and worked together with the participants to reflect on career construction. I immersed myself in the workshop to gain an insider perspective (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b). I was part of the inner circle and participated in the workshop proceedings. I was comfortable and obtained consent from the participants to partake in activities (Creswell 2012). After each session, the research assistant and I reflected on the session, and I subsequently wrote my reflective thoughts in a journal.

*Complete observer:* I made use of a non-participant observer who unobtrusively observed the session from a distance and made field notes in the form of anecdotal records. A non-participant observer does not participate in the intervention interaction. The non-participant observer looks from the outside (inconspicuous location) to observe and record (Creswell, 2012). An assistant as an observer to write field notes is advantageous to the study's reliability (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c).

To record the observations, the non-participant observer made use of running records (more specific, focussing on the action and the situation, describing the action in context) (Nieuwenhuis, 2016c).

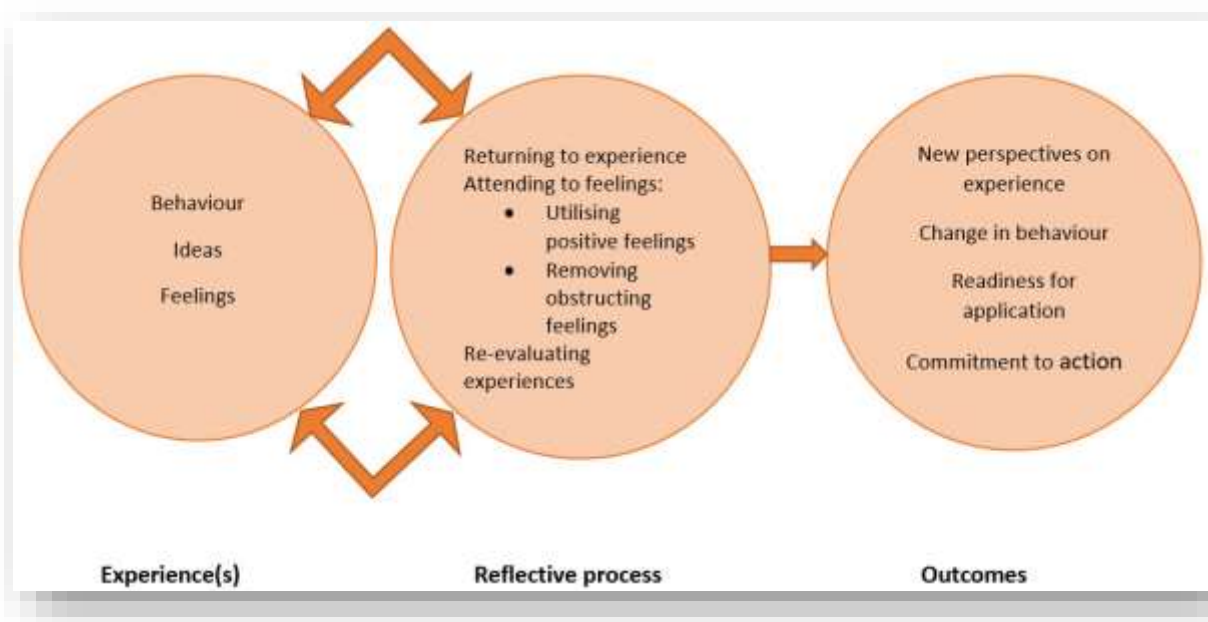


### 3.8.3 Reflective practice

In qualitative research, reflection is used as a significant intellectual method to justify and authenticate research actions (Mortari, 2015). Rogers (2001) defines “reflection” as a method to absorb the knowledge gained from a specific experience and to create a better future choice.

Privately, and in business, reflection is perceived as an essential mental operation (Mortari, 2015). Reflection is taking a look in the mirror, where the participant is equally observed and observer, thereby becoming the self-observed subject of his or her own life experiences. The practice of reflection is a core function, as an individual thoughtfully connects with his or her own life experiences, and subsequently obtaining personal self-understanding (Mortari, 2015).

The reflective process is illustrated in Figure 15 below.



**Figure 15: Reflective Process**

(Source: Boud, Keogh & Walker, 2005:36)

Over the past decades, reflective practice has been found useful as it improves learning and strengthens personal insight (Ziomek-Daigle, 2017). Ziomek-Daigle

(2017) refers to Dewey's (1910) enthusiasm for evidence-informed education and his conviction that people learn from reflection on experience, rather than the experience itself.

### **3.8.4 Group reflection**

In all the sessions of the workshop in Phase 1, I divided learners into several small groups after a whole group facilitation session on the topic of the day, that is career adaptability and its four pillars of career *concern*, *-curiosity*, *-concern*, and *-confidence*. I asked learners to reflect on the topic of the day with a focus on their personal career construction process and to discuss career thoughts they wanted to share in their groups. Each small group was issued a cellular phone with a recording function to record their reflections for data collection purposes. A member of the group was asked to start and end the recording on the device. The devices were collected after each session for transcribing. Rutakumwa and colleagues (2020) mention that the use of an audio or visual recording device is a valuable tool against critique as qualitative research is inclined to invoke bias. Rigour and validity are ensured when data is recorded accurately and extensively by using audio and video devices (Rutakumwa et al., 2020).

The practice of small and large group reflective dialogue for adolescents, in comparison to written reflection, is not a widely researched field (Vetter & Meacham, 2018). Academics have been researching written reflection concerning learning and practice for many years, but Vetter and Meacham (2018) contend that reflective talk is as important. Small groups are a practical learning environment where participants can learn from interacting with one another (Annamalai, Manivel & Palanisamy, 2015). Group discussion enhances participant involvement and proves to be conducive to exchanging thoughts and self-governed learning (Annamalai et al., 2015).

Payne and Payne (2004) define a group discussion as a data collection method where collective meanings from numerous participants who have similar experiences are gathered. Focus group discussions differ from group discussions as focus groups have a particular style which addresses a specific topic and where group members do not necessarily know each other (Payne & Payne, 2004).

### **3.8.5 Reflective writing**

Reflective writing is a thought gathering and sense-making process offering the writer a view from outside, drawing on information from the deepest recesses of our minds (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018).

Participants were invited to reflect individually after the small group reflection by writing or drawing pictures on a worksheet in the workshop sessions of Phase 1. I guided and provided structure on the content. Learners firstly reflected in groups on the topic of each session, and after that, made personal meaning of the content through creative writing and drawings (Boud, 2005).

Ramlal and Augustin (2020) refer to the early philosopher Socrates who argued that life is not worth living if it is not self-explored. Humankind makes meaning of life by rationalising and appraising their experiences. Schon (in Ramlal & Augustin, 2020) explains that reflective writing means taking a backwards step prior, in the course of, and after an occurrence, reflecting on it, and then writing to express notions and sentiments.

The reflective writing approach (Jasper, 2005) offers the potential to carefully examine learners' learning experiences and reduce the cost one would have incurred with intense observations, while drawings can be used to explore the meaning that the participants ascribe to the concept (Walker, 2005).

## **3.9 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

The process of qualitative data analysis is to make sense and meaning of the data collected. Creswell and Creswell (2018) postulate that comprehension of the manner in which the researcher makes sense of the writing and pictures is of crucial importance to formulate answers to the research questions.

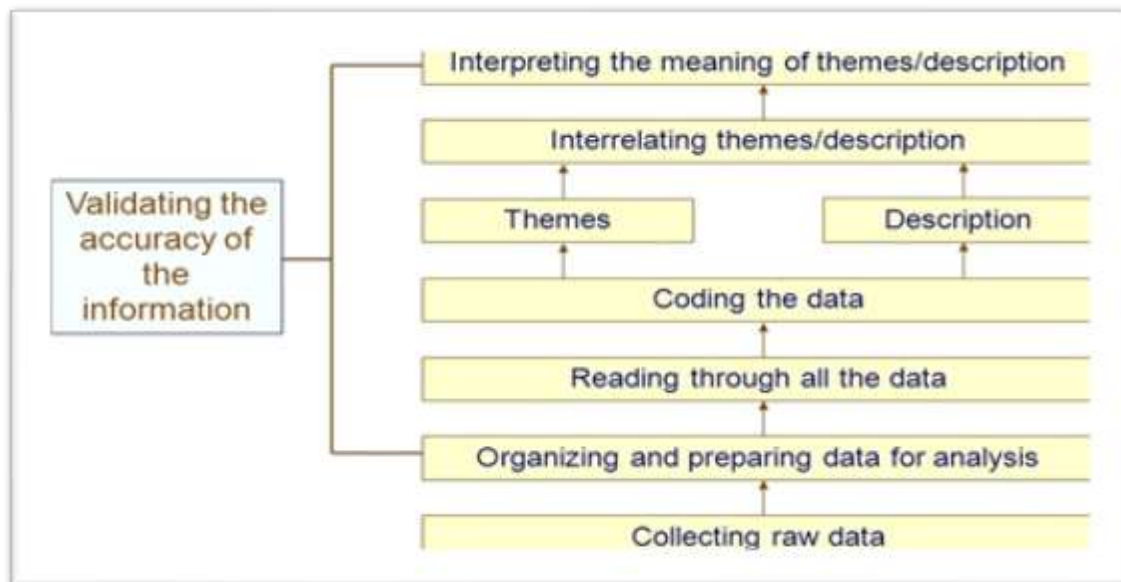
The researcher interpreted the significance of the research by promoting personal opinion, interpreting and creating associations concerning the findings and literature, and signifying limitations and further research (Creswell, 2012).

### 3.9.1 Thematic content analysis and interpretation

I followed Creswell and Creswell's (2018) five steps for data analysis and interpretation, namely: (1) organise data, (2) prepare and transcribe data, (3) reading the data more than once and making notes in the margins to make meaning, (4) label data with terms, and (5) organise the data into categories of themes using the coding system.

Thereafter, the data was scrutinised for overlapping codes within the segments in the code labelling phase. Emerging themes were subsequently coded and used for the research report.

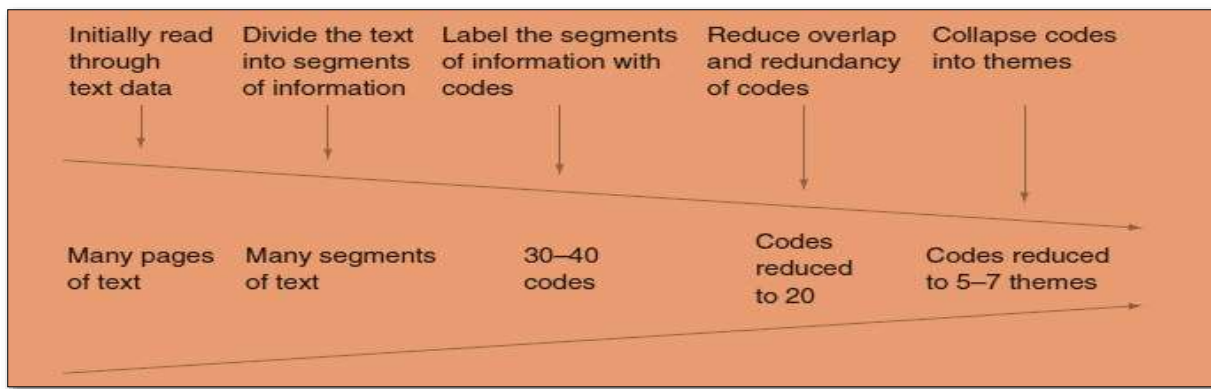
The process of data analysis in qualitative research is portrayed in Figure 16 below.



**Figure 16: Data Analysis in Qualitative Research**

(Source: Creswell & Creswell, 2018)

Furthermore, Figure 17 provides a visual representation (Creswell, 2014) illustrating data coding as follows:



**Figure 17: The Coding Process**  
 (Source: Creswell, 2014)

Nieuwenhuis (2016a) expresses that the researcher remains receptive right through the analysis process to generate new understanding and possibilities. For this study, I looked at the bigger picture and not only to the immediate concept to enhance precise and reliable findings.

### ***3.9.1.1 Steps of thematic data analysis***

The five steps for thematic analysis followed in this study are outlined in Table 18 below.

**Table 18: Five Steps for Thematic Data Analysis Implemented in This Study**  
**(Creswell & Creswell, 2018:332-333)**

| <b>THEMATIC ANALYSIS STEPS</b>  | <b>RESEARCHER ACTIONS</b>   |
|---|---|
| Organise, prepare, and transcribe data                                | <p>Electronically scanned reflective writing and research assistant observations.</p> <p>Electronically transcribed group reflections from audio recordings.</p> <p>Electronically transcribed focus group discussion from the audio recording.</p>   |
| Read data more than once<br><br>Make notes in margins to give meaning | <p>Read repeatedly.</p> <p>Made notes in margins to give meaning.</p> <p>Made additional reflective notes.</p>  |
| Code the data   | <p>I disassembled data into smaller parts and labelled data with terms in margins – repeated and refined.</p> <p>Organised data into categories.</p>  |
| Create a description and themes                                       | <p>Employed the coding procedure to create a detailed rendition of participants and events.</p> <p>Employed coding to generate themes or categories which were used as headings in the findings chapter.</p>  |
| Represent the description and themes                                  | <p>Used a narrative pathway to represent the description and themes. The narrative included a detailed discussion of themes and sub-themes. Visual representation in the form of learner drawings, observations, quotations, and multiple viewpoints of learners were included in the discussion.</p> |

### 3.10 QUALITY ASSURANCE

When conducting and reporting on research, an essential task for researchers is to strive for maximum quality (Cope, 2014). I employed triangulation using multiple methods of data collection for the duration of the study to acquire a coherent and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Cope, 2014).

#### 3.10.1 Quality criteria followed

I followed the eight “big-tent criteria” to ensure the quality of the research (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). These are illustrated in Table 19 below.

**Table 19: Eight Big Tent Criteria Applied in This Study**  
(Adapted from Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017:3-4)

| <b>CRITERIA FOR QUALITY<br/>(end goal)</b> | <b>PRACTICAL MEASURES EMPLOYED FOR<br/>ACHIEVEMENT</b>   |
|--|--|
| Deserving topic                            | The topic of the research was <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ad rem</li><li>• Well-timed</li><li>• Meaningful</li><li>• Appealing</li></ul>   |
| Methodological rigour                      | The study was informed by adequate, ample, suitable, and elaborate <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Theoretical concepts</li><li>• Data and field periods</li><li>• Representation(s)</li><li>• The frame(s) of reference</li></ul> |
| Candour                                    | The study was underscored by <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self-reflection about personal beliefs, partiality, and predisposition of the researcher(s)</li><li>• Transparency about the methods and limitations</li></ul>        |
| Plausibility                               | The research was set by  |

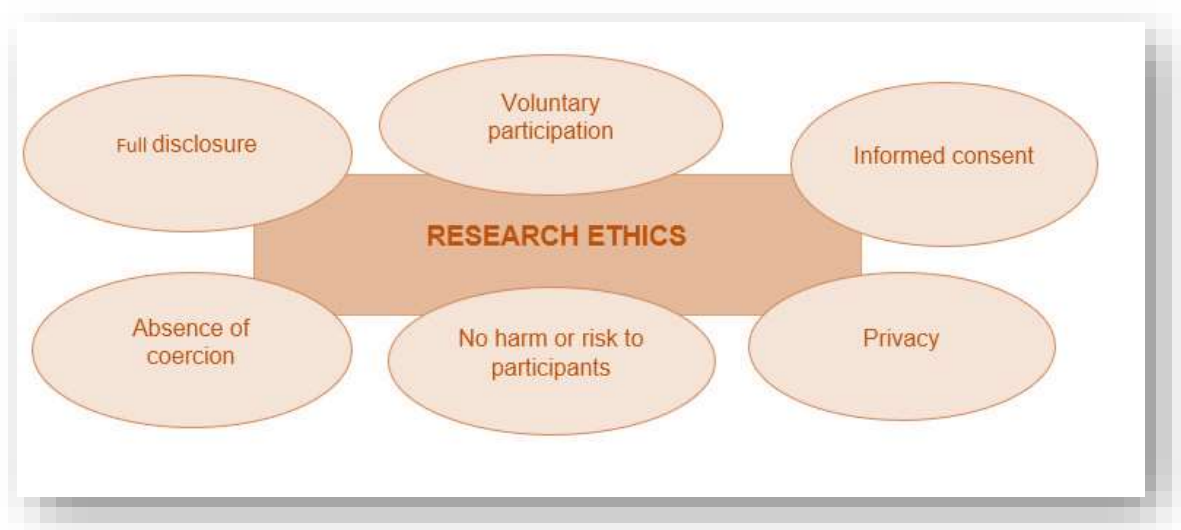
|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
|                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rich description, specific detail, clarification of implied (nontextual) awareness, and displaying rather than recounting</li> <li>• Triangulation or crystallisation</li> <li>• Susceptible to interpretation in many ways</li> <li>• Reflection</li> </ul> |
| Rapport                | <p>The research will hopefully impact, sway, or stir individual readers or a range of readers through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tasteful, evocative representation</li> <li>• Real-life generalisations</li> <li>• Transferable conclusions</li> </ul>                             |
| Substantive input      | <p>The research afforded a considerable contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Theoretical grounds</li> <li>• Practical standpoint</li> <li>• Virtuously</li> <li>• Methodologically</li> <li>• Problem-solving</li> </ul>   |
| Ethically sound        | <p>The research took into account</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethical process</li> <li>• Operational environment and ethics related to culture</li> <li>• Ethics situated in relationship</li> <li>• Outgoing ethics (exiting the study and distributing the research)</li> </ul>    |
| Purposeful consistency | <p>The research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accomplished what it claimed</li> <li>• Used methods and approaches that matched its specified aims</li> <li>• Constructively linked bibliographical material, research inquiries, findings, and portrayal with each other</li> </ul>    |

### 3.11 RESEARCH ETHICS

McMillan and Schumacher (2014) explain that ethics involves those beliefs which are morally correct or incorrect while working with participants to protect their rights and safety or when retrieving historical information.



Full disclosure always requires that the researcher be transparent and truthful about the study with participants. The researcher should not suppress any information about the intention of the research or deliberately mislead the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). Participants must not be forced, pressured, or coerced in any way. The participants (and parents in the case of learners) give assent and consent by signing a form which specifies that they understand the purpose of the research and that they agree and give permission to take part. The research should not cause bodily or psychological damage or cause humiliation or danger to the participants. Participants' privacy is protected by ensuring anonymity, confidentiality, and proper storing of data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). These ethical considerations are illustrated in Figure 18 below.



**Figure 18: Research Ethics**

I applied for ethical clearance from the College of Education's Research Committee and was provided with a letter of approval before I commenced with the research.

I was committed to keeping to the established set of ethical standards established for conduct in education research. I was therefore obligated to adhere to the stipulated values and guidelines concerning everyone involved in the research (American Educational Research Association, 2011).

The ethical standards adhered to in this study included:

### **3.11.1 Informed consent**

I received permission with assent and consent from the participants and their legal representatives/guardians (Sandu & Frunza, 2019).

### **3.11.2 Confidentiality and anonymity**

To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, all confidential information was protected, and code names were used instead of real names. Furthermore, the location and any participant information will not be recognisable in print (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

### **3.11.3 Privacy and empowerment**

I negotiated with participants to let them understand their control in the process. I did not deceive the participants in any way, as that would violate informed consent and privacy, and result in feelings of betrayal (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

### **3.11.4 Caring and fairness**

I adopted a thinking process of caring and fairness towards participants. The conversations were always transparent to encourage fairness (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014).

### **3.11.5 Ethical considerations**

Before commencing a study, the researcher should foresee ethical issues that may arise from their research process and address the issues beforehand (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The ethical considerations followed in this study are outlined in Table 20 below.

**Table 20: Ethical Issues in Research**  
**(Adapted from Creswell & Creswell, 2018)**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Before the study</b>   | <p>Scrutinised professional standards of the school.</p> <p>Obtained ethical clearance and a certificate from the University of South Africa.</p> <p>Obtained approval from location (school) and Participants and/or parents.</p> <p>Selected a site with no expectation of financial or any other gain.</p>  |
| <b>At the start of the study</b>  | <p>Found a research problem that participants would gain from.</p> <p>Communicated the objective of the study.</p> <p>Did not force participants to sign consent documentation.</p> <p>Considered the customs of indigenous cultures.</p> <p>Considered the needs of vulnerable people, e.g. youth.</p>  |
| <b>Data collection phase</b>  | <p>Valued the location and attempted not to cause disturbances.</p> <p>Treated all participants in a similar manner.</p> <p>Did not mislead participants.</p> <p>Whilst observing, kept personal influencing capabilities in mind and did not manipulate participants.</p> <p>Did not exploit participants by merely gathering data and withdrawing from the location.</p> <p>Refrained from gathering information that could harm participants.</p>   |
| <b>Data analysis phase</b>  | <p>Refrained from taking sides – remained impartial.</p> <p>Abstained from divulging only positive findings.</p> <p>Held the privacy and anonymity of participants in the highest confidentiality.</p>   |
| <b>When reporting on the data</b><br><b>When sharing the data</b><br><b>When storing the data</b> | <p>Did not commit plagiarism, forge writing, or fabricate data, proof, findings and conclusions.</p> <p>Refrained from forging sources, evidence, data, findings, and conclusions.</p> <p>Did not reveal information that would damage partakers.</p> <p>Spoke and wrote in an unambiguous, fitting language.</p> <p>Made data available to other people.</p> <p>Retain original data collected in a safe place for five years.</p> <p>Did not replicate any publication, even in partial stages</p> |

Some concluding remarks follow next to wrap up the chapter.

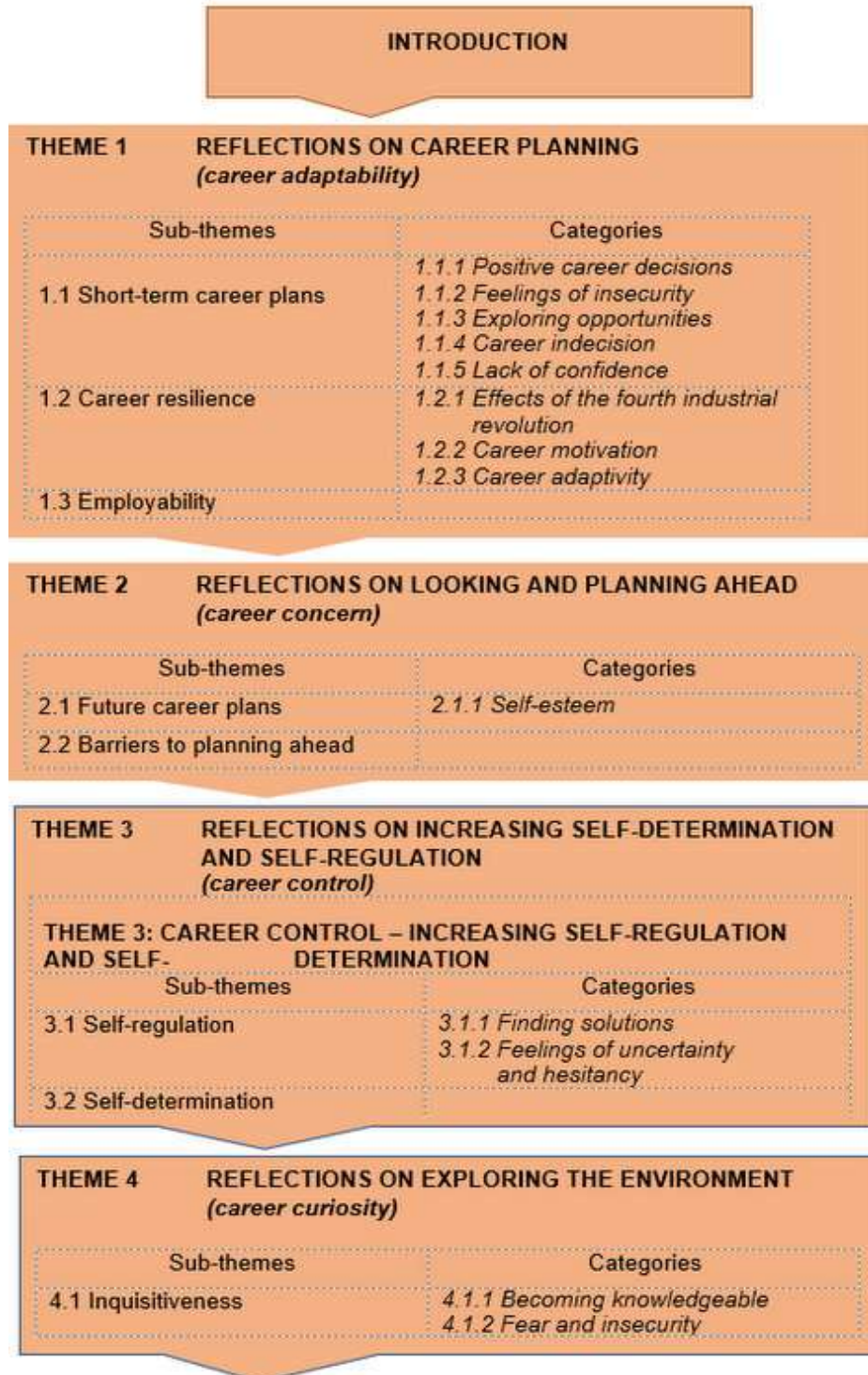
### **3.12 CONCLUSION**

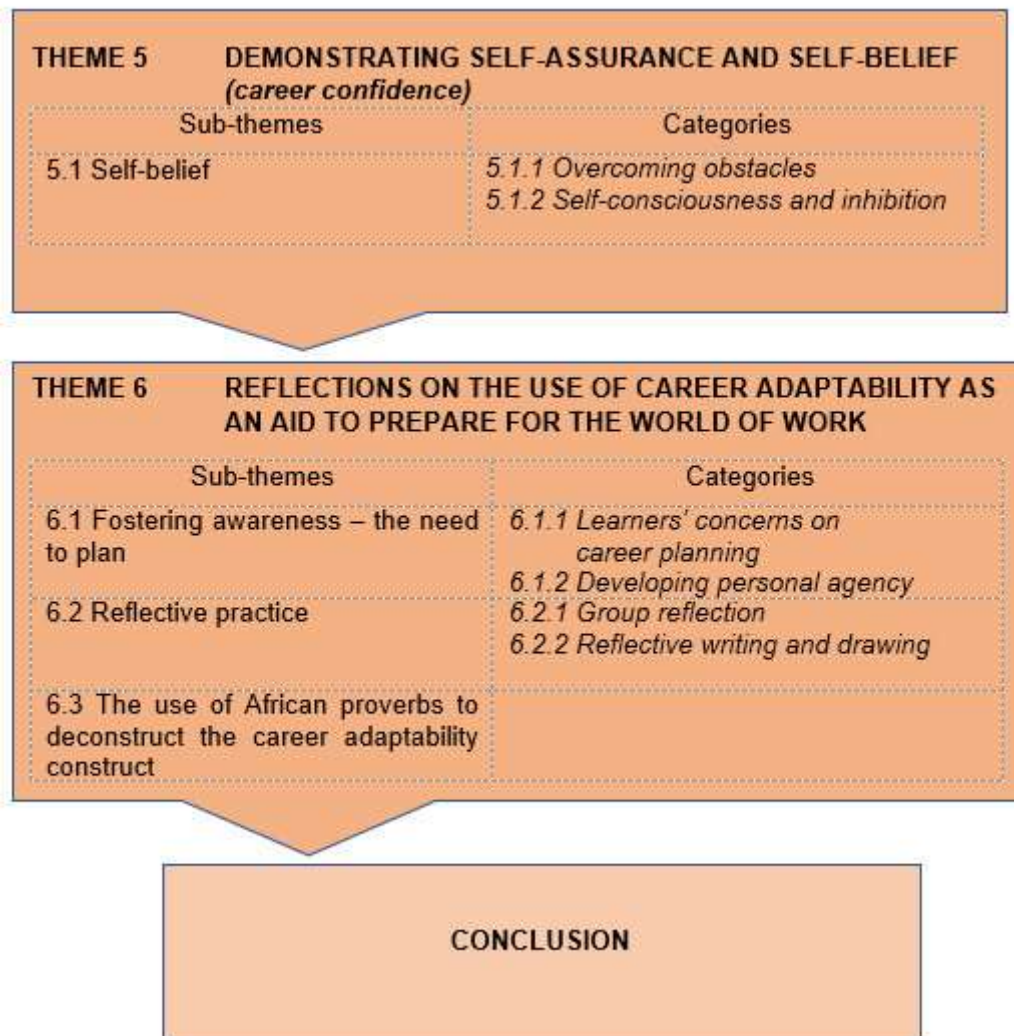
This chapter described the methodology utilised in this study. Particular attention was given to the paradigmatic perspective, the research design, as well as population and sampling methods that were used. The research process was described in detail, including the workshop (case study), data collection, and process of data analysis. In addition, consideration was given to the quality criteria and ethical guidelines adhered to in this study, which was also tabled for clarification purposes and to enhance understanding.

The following chapter presents the results of the study. The results are discussed under the six themes and their related sub-themes and categories that emerged from the thematic inductive analysis. Participant excerpts are used to support the results of the study.

# CHAPTER 4: RESULTS OF THE STUDY

## 4.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW





**Figure 19: Overview of Chapter 4**

The figure above provides a visual overview of Chapter 4, including the emerged themes, sub-themes and categories that will be unpacked and elaborated on further in this chapter.

## 4.2 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the research methodology and design employed in this study. In addition to describing the research process at length, attention was given to the sampling technique used to select the case study and research participants, as well as the procedures and methods to collect and analyse the data.

The current chapter presents the themes and related sub-themes and categories that emerged from Phase 1 (workshop) and Phase 2 (focus group) of the study. These are summarised in Table 21 below.

**Table 21: Summary of the Themes, Sub-themes and Categories**

| <b>THEME 1: LEARNERS' REFLECTIONS ON CAREER PLANNING</b>                           |  |
|--|--|
| Sub- themes  | Categories   |
| 1.1 Short-term career plans  | <i>1.1.1 Positive career decisions</i><br><i>1.1.2 Feelings of insecurity</i><br><i>1.1.3 Exploring opportunities</i><br><i>1.1.4 Career indecision</i><br><i>1.1.5 Lack of confidence</i> |
| 1.2 Career resilience  | <i>1.2.1 Effects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution</i><br><i>1.2.2 Career motivation</i><br><i>1.2.3 Career adaptivity</i>   |
| 1.3 Employability  |  |
| <b>THEME 2: REFLECTION ON CAREER CONCERN – LOOKING AND PLANNING AHEAD</b>          |  |
| Sub-themes   | Categories   |
| 2.1 Future career plans  | <i>2.1.1 Self-esteem</i>   |
| 2.2 Barriers to planning ahead   |  |
| <b>THEME 3: CAREER CONTROL – INCREASING SELF-REGULATION AND SELF-DETERMINATION</b> |  |
| Sub-themes   | Categories   |
| 3.1 Self-regulation  | <i>3.1.1 Finding solutions</i><br><i>3.1.2 Feelings of uncertainty and hesitancy</i>   |
| 3.2 Self-determination   |  |

| <b>THEME 4: CAREER CURIOSITY – EXPLORING THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT</b>                                     |   |
|--|---|
| Sub-theme  | Categories  |
| 4.1 Inquisitiveness  | 4.1.1 Becoming knowledgeable<br>4.1.2 Fear and insecurity                                     |
| <b>THEME 5: CAREER CONFIDENCE – DEMONSTRATING SELF-ASSURANCE AND SELF-BELIEF</b>                         |   |
| Sub-theme  | Categories  |
| 5.1 Self-belief  | 5.1.1 <i>Overcoming obstacles</i><br>5.1.2 <i>Self-consciousness and inhibition</i>           |
| <b>THEME 6: REFLECTIONS ON THE USE OF CAREER ADAPTABILITY AS AN AID TO PREPARE FOR THE WORLD OF WORK</b> |   |
| Sub-themes   | Categories  |
| 6.1 Fostering awareness – the need to plan   | 6.1.1 <i>Learners' concerns on career planning</i><br>6.1.2 <i>Developing personal agency</i> |
| 6.2 Reflective practice  | 6.2.1 <i>Group reflection</i><br>6.2.2 <i>Reflective writing and drawing</i>                  |
| 6.3 The use of African proverbs to deconstruct the career adaptability construct                         |   |

In the ensuing discussions, the emerged themes, sub-themes and related categories are substantiated with excerpts transcribed from the learner group recordings, researcher's reflections, reflective writing, and drawings from each of the five sessions, as well as focus group interview, researcher's reflections, and research assistant's observations.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide insight into the participants' reflections on self-constructing a career using the *career adaptability construct* as an instructional scaffold following a single case study design and a focus group. Themes are employed to demonstrate particular issues (Creswell & Poth, 2018) in the case. Phase 1 provides a detailed description of the case (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To this end, the procedure



suggested by Yin and Stake and supported by Creswell and Poth (2018) was followed to ensure a detailed comprehension of the case study.

The procedure followed included:

- *Determine the purpose of the study and consider the type of study.* In this regard, a single case study at a specific site focussing on a specific matter was chosen for this study.
- *Ensure a clearly identifiable case with boundaries and pursue a detailed understanding thereof.* In terms of this study, the case comprised a group of male and female Grade 11 learners bounded by five workshop sessions (Phase 1) and a focus group interview (Phase 2) in an urban government high school during a specific school term in Gauteng, South Africa.
- *Construct methods for thorough multiple data collection sources.* For the purpose of this study, I chose group and individual reflections, a focus group, researcher's reflective notes, and research assistant observations.
- *Define the analysis procedures for building case descriptions by utilising themes and context particulars.* For this dissertation, six main themes with related sub-themes and categories were identified following thematic inductive analysis.
- *The report must be organised with:* (a) an appealing opening to give readers an understanding of the context of the case; (b) an account of the case with important information to comprehend the case; (c) an integration with the researcher and research assistant's interpretations; and then (d) close with a final argument, warning readers of the complexity of the case and the researcher's perception.

Each theme is first introduced, followed by a discussion of the sub-themes and categories. The participants', researcher's, and research assistant's (written) reflections are incorporated into the discussion (in the form of italic phrases) to present their voices and convey the personal meaning they brought to the study.

Any bias by the researcher might have been prevented by presenting learners' actual words. Where learners reflected by creating drawings, the drawings were scanned and placed in sub-themes and categories (unaltered) so as not to change the meaning of the drawing.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. Following the visual outline of the chapter (section 4.1) and introduction (section 4.2), the six themes and their related sub-themes and categories are presented and discussed (sections 4.3 – 4.8). A few concluding remarks are then provided to wrap up the chapter (section 4.9).

### 4.3 THEME 1: LEARNERS' REFLECTIONS ON CAREER PLANNING

This section presents the first theme that emerged from the data analysis, along with its related sub-themes and categories. Theme 1 is summarised in Table 22 below.

**Table 22: Theme 1, Sub-themes and Categories**

| <b>THEME 1: LEARNERS' REFLECTIONS ON CAREER PLANNING</b> |  |
|--|--|
| Sub- themes  | Categories   |
| 1.1 Short-term career plans                              | <i>1.1.1 Positive career decisions</i><br><i>1.1.2 Feelings of insecurity</i><br><i>1.1.3 Exploring opportunities</i><br><i>1.1.4 Career indecision</i><br><i>1.1.5 Lack of confidence</i> |
| 1.2 Career resilience                                    | <i>1.2.1 Effects of the fourth industrial revolution</i><br><i>1.2.2 Career motivation</i><br><i>1.2.3 Career adaptivity</i>   |
| 1.3 Employability  |  |

This theme discusses the learners' reflections on the world of work and their reflections on how they feel about the present status of the world of work and their feelings about

making career decisions. The effect of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century wave of industrialisation in the world of work has become an essential focal point to equip learners with career decision-making skills and resilience to make informed decisions (Maree, 2017). Integrating critical thinking skills into career education forms an essential part of career education. By thinking critically about the future of jobs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and constructing meaning of their personal career and personal environment, learners can build resilience and become employable (Lengelle, Van der Heijden & Meijers, 2017).

#### **4.3.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Short-term career plans**

Hartung and Cadaret (2017) underscore the need for learners to take part in career planning activities, thereby improving the transition from school to work.

After a group discussion on the meaning of career adaptability, learners were asked to reflect on their plans for a career after leaving school. Learners should acknowledge (Liew, 2015) the importance of directing their careers which necessitates a transformation in their way of thinking about education and work.

At this time in the workshop, learners were introduced to the career adaptability construct and initiated reflection concerning possible short-term career plans without the aid or scaffold of the accompanying four pillars of *career concern*, *career control*, *career curiosity*, and *career confidence*.

##### **4.3.1.1 Category 1.1.1 – Positive career decisions**

A few learners indicated that they have already planned for the world of work and laid out their career plans with confidence.

*“I want to get a PhD in medicine. First of all, I would like to do vascular doctor” (pgr<sup>6</sup> 56).*

*“After completing my Grade 12 course ... ohm ... my Grade 12 ... I am going to go for the course of medicine” (pgr 50).*

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<sup>6</sup> pgr = participant in group reflection

*“I am planning on doing maybe sport science or psychology ... yeah, I would like to do sport science” (pgr 54).*

*“I will go to school, get the best qualifications for a certain job that I want to do and do it to the best of my ability, and get good results at the end of varsity, so I can apply for a certain job” (pgr 62).*

*“Uhm ... currently I am not looking for employment after Grade 12 because I am planning on going to school, and uhm, get my qualifications” (pgr 47).*

*“I feel like my plans after I finish Grade 12 is like, go to university, and like, further my studies, and also like, accomplish my sports dreams and stuff like that” (pgr 42).*

*“... to finish my studies and get a proper job where I can, like, be stable with my life” (pgr 45).*

#### **4.3.1.2 Category 1.1.2 – Feelings of insecurity**

While the above learners showed a fair amount of confidence in their plans after school, other learners were insecure about their future career plans. There seemed to be a lack of psychosocial capabilities to change their circumstances linked with career search and career decisions (Hartung & Cadaret 2017). Anita Woolfolk (2016) refers to the categories of identity status emerging from exploration and commitment (refer to Chapter 2.9), and tendencies of moratorium (adolescents labouring with choices) are observed in some learners.

*“... so no matter your motivation is not as high as it was ... so you are not a better person; you are not good, even with your friends; you're not good as a human being itself – so I am just searching” (pgr 74).*

*“... that's my problem, I don't know who I am inside” (pgr 81).*

*“... when it comes to finances, I have studied research bursaries and stuff, but when I read through the research it says that they want people from privileged backgrounds, so my problem is ...” (pgr 86).*

*“... physics, so I am really confused right now; I university*

*don't know what I want, so honestly, I am confused” (pgr 77).*

*“Guys, I don't have plan, so I am confused right now, like I am complex, I don't know what to do” (pgr 32).*

#### **4.3.1.3 Category 1.1.3 – Exploring opportunities**

“Career curiosity” is the third pillar of the career adaptability construct and is intrinsically tied to the manner in which learners explore the job market (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013).

Learners only started to pursue career possibilities after they selected subjects at the end of Grade 10 and came to the realisation that they have to change their career trajectories since they did not have the correct subjects to enter for a specific higher education course.

*“I want to study, like further my studies at a university of my choice, but sometimes people think that because I am a technical student I won't get the opportunity to go to the university of my choice ... they are not operating on a technical level yet, so that's a bit of a setback for me” (pgr 5).*

*“... you know, I always thought I wanted to be a geologist, but then it happened that I changed my subjects – my physics to business, and well, for you to be a geologist, you really need physics” (pgr 26).*

#### **4.3.1.4 Category 1.1.4 – Career indecision**

“Career indecision” is regarded as a normal stage every person experiences in a lifetime and arises from a lack of readiness (Di Fabio et al., 2013). Learners have not yet mastered the ability to collect job-related information, set goals, make definite plans, or solve problems.

*“I have had a lot of people that had told me that there are options here like in certain subjects and certain careers you can get more money; you can*

*do a lot of things. You can even open businesses, but then I am not sure what I want ...” (pgr 13).*

*“I am not sure what I want to do, but I know that I want to make an impact, but I don't know yet what I want to do ... because I am not sure where my path is” (pgr 17).*

*“I am not quite so sure what career I want at the moment, but so far I am thinking of law or something ... people say I might not be good(at law) ... I don't know though, but some people say I can because I am not a person that talks a lot, I am quite shy, but I am interested” (pgr 20).*

*“... plan I want to be a gynaecologist, but I am not sure yet what I want to be, because I want to be a lot of things” (pgr 24).*

*“... always wanted to be a chef, and yeah, I don't know what happened; then I got interested in history, and then I wanted to be a lawyer and stuff like that” (pgr 29).*

*“I am not really sure, but okay, I am sure [laughing] I want to study agriculture, but I am not sure if the career is correct” (pgr 34).*

#### **4.3.1.5 Category 1.1.5 – Lack of confidence**

Career choice uncertainty may result from a cognitive doubt which keeps the learner from moving ahead (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017). Learners need to raise their self-esteem to become confident. The fourth pillar of career adaptability, namely, *career confidence*, may assist these learners to raise their level of confidence.

*“... where you feel like, eeh, how can you make it when your sister never made it or your mom [can] never make it, so it does happen like that, because of sometimes it's discouraging, it's like you can't do it ... but you know you can, but you just can't, there is just this thing that's blocking you” (pgr 69).*

*“I always wanted to be a lawyer, but then I just feel like I don't have the confidence” (pgr 79).*

*“... so I wonder if won't I drop out first year if I am not coping. You see, so I am just wondering what if I drop out, then what that means – I wasted my parents' money, so, Ja ... if I don't meet the requirements of the career that I want to do, what would I do? And these days it is very hard to find a job” (pgr 83).*

#### **4.3.2 Sub-theme 1.2 – Career resilience**

Alchin and McIlveen (2017) express that career adaptability plays an influential role in *career resilience*, as it assists individuals' capability to change and compromise, solve problems, develop enterprise development skills, and self-govern. *Career resilience* is directly connected to career adaptability as a growth instrument to develop employability. Career resilience suggests an inherent capability to adapt and regain control over worrying or unfavourable circumstances (Urbanaviciute, Bühlmann & Rossier, 2019).

##### **4.3.2.1 Category 1.2.1 – Effects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution**

The effects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (as discussed in Chapter 1 of the study) are evident in the significant changes taking place in the job market (Leopold, Ratcheva & Zahidi 2017), resulting in new jobs, new skills, and new technology. A subsequent need arises to support learners in comprehending the implication of the changing job market and obtain the skills required to persevere and be successful (Alchin & McIlveen, 2017).

Learners were provoked into thinking critically about their future careers in the aftermath of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Adaptive behaviour assists learners to control their responses effectively and to make modifications in an ever-changing environment proactively (Rossier et al., 2017). Learners reflected in groups after a class discussion on the Fourth Industrial Revolution and after that offered their understanding of the long-term effects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution in South Africa.

*“... the youth of the country is going to sit without jobs one day because right now there is a high rate of, uhm, unemployment” (pgr 416).*

*“... jobs are going to be limited for certain people, because they did not have the qualifications to do that certain job” (pgr 418).*

*“... I think it's going to get worse [opposed to what it is now]” (pgr 430).*

*“... since technology is taking over, this is an example in the future: we'll be having machines teaching, and then teachers, you know, have no jobs, so more people will be unemployed” (pgr 432).*

*“... personally, I don't think the world is actually going to be depending on jobs in the future because it's going to be like – no one is going to need anybody, because technology will be taking over” (pgr 412).*

*“Crime increases every time, so jobs are going to be reduced” (pgr 415).*

#### **4.3.2.2 Category 1.2.2. – Career motivation**

Positive career decision-making capabilities (Duarte, da Silva & Paixão, 2017) rely on pre-determined cognitive-motivational factors, essential need gratification, self-determined career construction, self-belief, critical thinking skills, and optimistic emotional adaptation. These motivational capabilities lead to inner resilience and the ability to overcome obstacles. Some learners manifested a lack of these motivational factors.

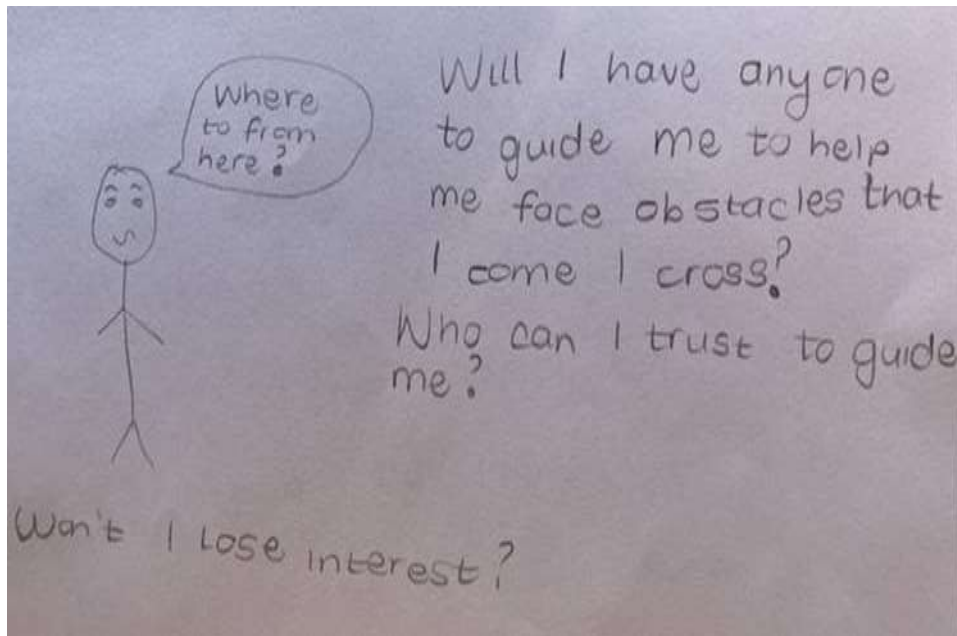
*“... sometimes I am not really motivated to be better, so I just rely on whatever I have for now, so I basically don't have anything that's my motive” (pgr 66).*

*“... yeah, the pressure, the expectations, are high” (pgr 65).*

*“... your motivation is not as high as it was ... so you are not a better person; you are not good, even with your friends; you're not good as a human being itself ...” (pgr 74).*



*"I regret being in this position. At times, because of lack of motivation and people who insist on seeing my downfall, I fail to see myself positively ..."* (pwr<sup>7</sup> 253).



(pwr 395)

#### **4.3.2.3 Category 1.2.3 – Career adaptivity**

Bickel's (in Rossier et al., 2017) definition of "resilience" is described as the dexterity to prevail and hang onto personal vigour and integrity when suffering through change. Some learners demonstrated their inherent resilience capabilities to adapt to future challenges.

*"... if my plans don't work out, I have to adapt into a different situation and have a different solution" (pgr 308).*

*"I will find an alternative or I'll switch careers or career fields or career paths. Uhm, I'll find a career that goes hand-in-hand with the subjects that I chose in high school. Then I'll upgrade my marks" (pgr 320).*

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<sup>7</sup> Participant written reflection

*“I am honestly prepared for anything that comes my way, and I am prepared to adapt to any changes that, uhm, the career might bring my way” (pgr 333).*

Many learners displayed the ability to self-govern and indicated that they would develop new enterprises should the need arise.

*“I would most probably have to open up my own business. My second option is being [an] entrepreneur – I want to open up my own [laughing] shisanyama. Yeah, I want to open up my own like in every location in South Africa to have a shisanyama” (pgr 310).*

*“I have plans to open my own business as well. I also want to be an entrepreneur, start my own workshop someday, [and] help other people that also wants to become engineers like myself” (pgr 314).*

One learner felt negatively impacted and hopeless with respect to the effects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

*“I feel that there is nothing we can do, because it is not just technology that's taking over people's jobs but it is also nepotism ... it's a thing of, I know you, then I get the job, and the other person doesn't get it” (pgr 424).*

#### **4.3.3 Sub-theme 1.3 – Employability**

Successful transitioning to the world of work entails skills as described in the literature review in Chapter 2 (section 2.5) of this study. Acquiring employability skills improves individuals' chances to adapt in the workplace, be enterprising, and promote success in an organisation (Succi & Canovi, 2020). Learners were asked to reflect on the meaning of "to be employable". There were no facilitation or group discussions to deliberate the meaning beforehand.

Most of the learners referred to a particular skill set required to be employable but could not specifically name any skills.

*“... meaning the necessary skills that are needed for that particular career and loving or having passion for what you are doing” (pgr 785).*

*"When I have all the skills that they are looking for – that the employer are looking for – then I can regard myself as employable" (pgr 788).*

*"To be employable means you have the required skills to do a certain job, the qualifications that your career needs" (pgr 790).*

*"... employable – it means when you have all the requirements and you have all the certifications and abilities to perform a specific job which is requiring specific skills" (pgr 793).*

*"... employable means you are able to get a job wherever you go" (pgr 794).*

Learners reflected on the "skills set" required to be employable and assigned attributes to the term.

*"... is you are basically flexible in the working industry; you are able to actually work with people, work with kids, work with old people, computers, places where you don't use computers, outside, inside, on a laptop, with books, everywhere and anywhere, you are just flexible, and you can just move around. Just be a boss, be a leader, and also being able to follow the business world" (pgr 797).*

*"... this fingerprint ... the skills to do something that someone cannot think about; be creative, you know you can think of something, and she doesn't think of it. Like, sometimes you can answer something that she does not know – that makes you special, that makes you unique" (pgr 803).*

*"... okay, what it needs to be employable, it needs to be like, flexible [inaudible], to be able to be appointed to any job like" (pgr 807).*

Three learners indicated that they have no understanding of the meaning "to be employable".

*"... what I understand on term 'to be employed', I really don't, I am not sure about that one" (pgr 781).*

*"... what is my understanding 'to be employable', okay, I don't know, but yeah ..." (pgr 783).*

*“... to have the skills you know – I still have to find out guys” (pgr 792).*

The above sections described Theme 1 and its accompanying sub-themes and categories. The next section focuses on the second main theme and its related sub-themes and categories that emerged from the data.

#### **4.4 THEME 2: REFLECTION ON CAREER CONCERN – LOOKING AND PLANNING AHEAD**

This section presents the second theme that emerged from the data analysis, along with its related sub-themes and category. Theme 2 is summarised in Table 23 below.

**Table 23: Theme 2, Sub-themes and Categories**

| <b>THEME 2: REFLECTION ON CAREER CONCERN – LOOKING AND PLANNING AHEAD</b> |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| Sub-themes  | Categories        |
| 2.1 Future career plans   | 2.1.1 Self-esteem |
| 2.2 Barriers to planning ahead  |                   |

This theme focusses on the first pillar of career adaptability, namely, *career concern*. The “career concern” pillar denotes the learners' attitude towards preparing an orientation or tendency towards their future world of work. Learners' feelings regarding career concern presuppose either an optimistic, hopeful, and planful stance of the future, or a pessimistic and indifferent attitude (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017).

While reflecting individually, the learners presented their views of concern for their career. Many students made use of drawings to express and emphasise their feelings. They also shared their views by reflecting on the proverb ‘*where you will sit when you are old, shows where you stood in your youth*’. The proverb illustrates the meaning of

career concern and provided learners with a scaffold. The learners discussed the proverb in their small groups before they individually reflected on career concern.

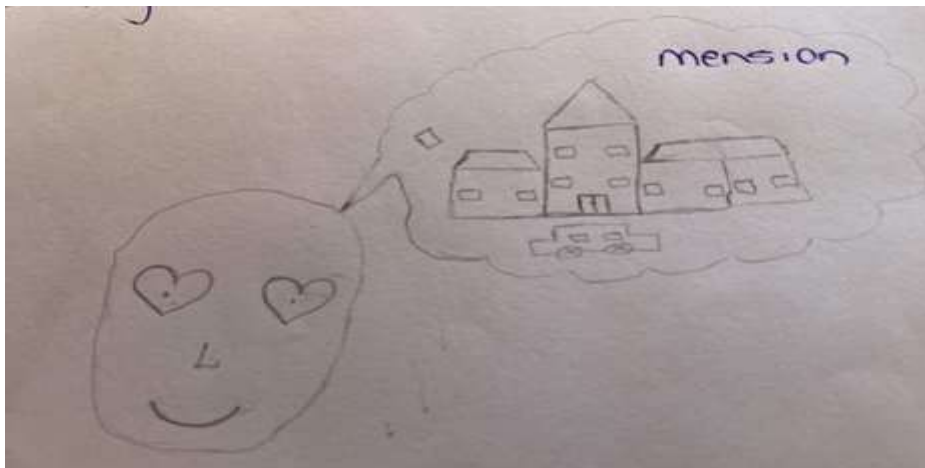
#### 4.4.1 Sub-theme 2.1 – Future career plans

Career concern focusses on the learners' stance towards planning and constructing a career and the manner of hopefulness and optimism they manifest going about it (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017). Several learners demonstrated a decisive and goal-oriented attitude after reflecting in small groups.

*"I know exactly where I'm going. I grew up saying that I want a better future. I've been seeing people living nice lives, so I say that I see myself as a better person than what I am now" (pwr 297).*

*"I want to become successful; I want to be an independent woman who will be able to take care of her own family" (pwr 228).*

*"Being successful has always been my dream – living in a big mansion, that has always been my dream" (pwr 230):*

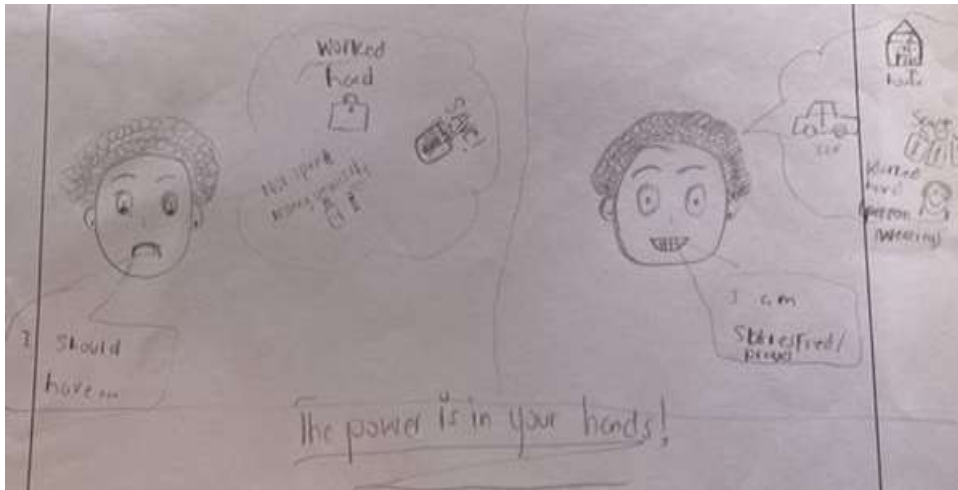


*(pwr 230)*

*"What you put in is what you get out" (pwr 222).*

*"All decisions took as a teenager will affect my life and career, so I should aim for good and positive outcomes" (pwr 223).*

*“The background you come from doesn't define [you] ... There are a lot of opportunities given to the misfortune [misfortunate] or the people who can't afford to have what they need or want ... No one has an excuse for not doing what they want” (pwr 233).*



(pwr 240)

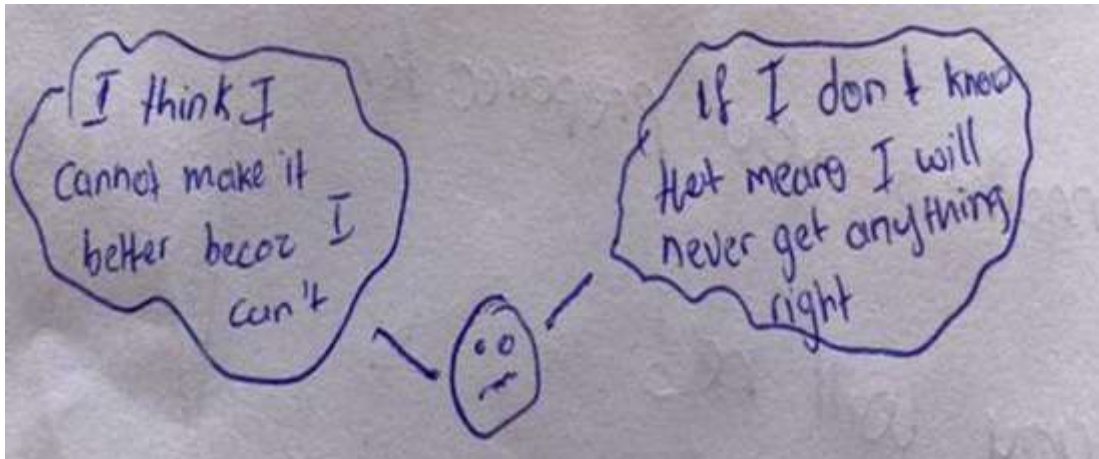
*“If I make the right choices [a habit] then it will stay with me forever” (pwr 261).*

#### **4.4.1.1 Category 2.1.1 – Self-esteem**

After small group discussions, some learners spontaneously reflected inwards and initiated a self-regulation process, attempting to disengage from past barriers of underdeveloped self-esteem.

*“I realised that I also need me more as much as I need all people in my life. I need to be broken from the thoughts about me, so I can be – "sit" – in a stronger and stable place when I am old” (Pwr 274).*

*“What makes me say that? Is it the reason that I myself don't have everything under my control? Is it because I know I am not able to bring change? Is it because I compare myself to those higher than me in certain fields or strengths? Could I possibly change?” (pwr 281).*



(pwr 285).

*"... effort and hard work or determination that you put in now will reflect on your future – behaviour set your tomorrow. It's like, if you decide to play with your life and not making an effort of enhancing and making your life a success, then you will end up like a nothing ..."* (pwr 286).

*"But how can you train yourselves for the things you don't expect at the present time to be stronger for the future. How do I gain courage from the things I am most weak in ... Yes, there is hope within me that I can, I can be better"* (pwr 270).

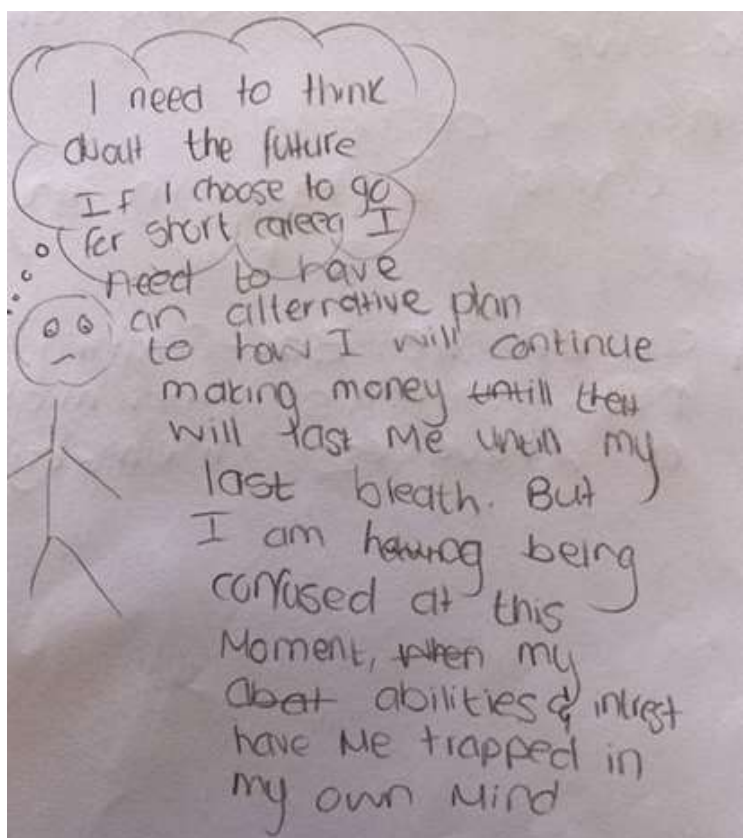
#### **4.4.2 Sub-theme 2.2 – Barriers to planning ahead**

Problems with career concern results in little or no drive to initiate career investigation processes or obtaining knowledge of possible careers, deciding what to change, and internalising these changes (Del Corso, 2017).

After small group discussions on career concern, some learners displayed feelings of inadequacy, futility, regret, pessimism, bewilderment, and an urgency to change current behaviours about their future careers.

*"I don't even know where I will start after school. Sometimes I feel like I just came to school making a living"* (pwr 262).





(pwr 227)

*"To me, I feel unsure about the future, almost as if I don't know what I want to do anymore" (pwr 295).*

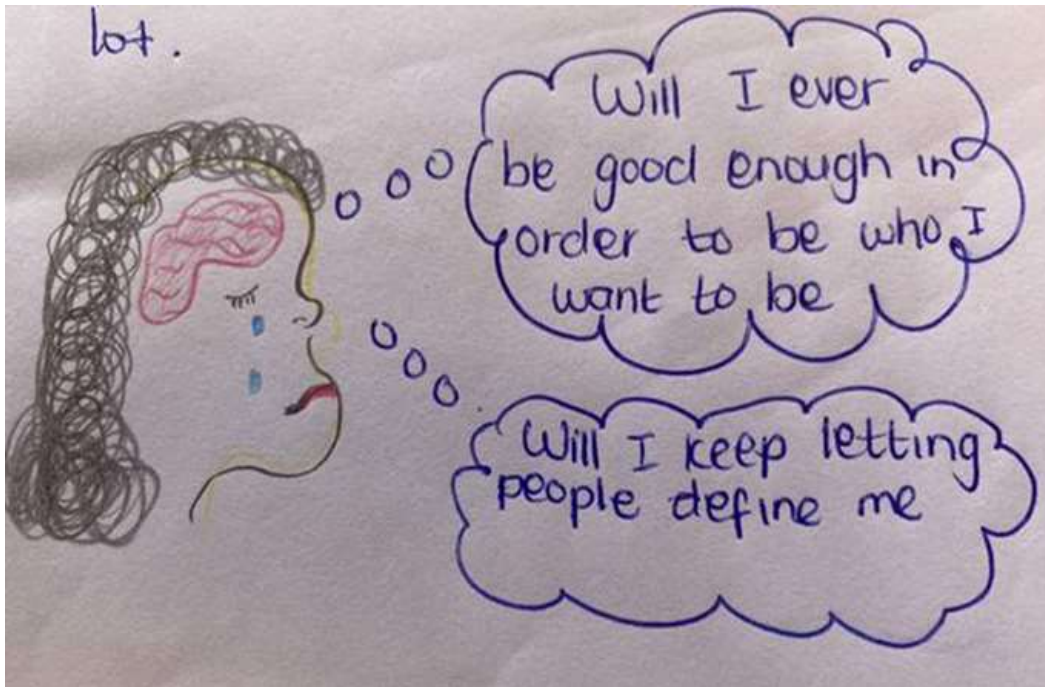
Although some learners appeared to be pessimistic about their future, reflection prompted others to realise that a mind shift should take place. Learners were able to identify the barriers keeping them mired in their current mindset. Some of the barriers the learners identified within themselves included not working hard enough, lack of motivation, confusion, and insecurity.

*"The negative part is that I'm not sure that I will qualify for university because I need to pull up my socks with my marks" (pwr 225).*

*"This immediately makes me picture myself years later. I see myself wondering, is this what I wanted in life, for me to sit here with certain failed tasks that I could've accomplished when I had the chance to do? I regret being in this position. At times because of lack of motivation and people*

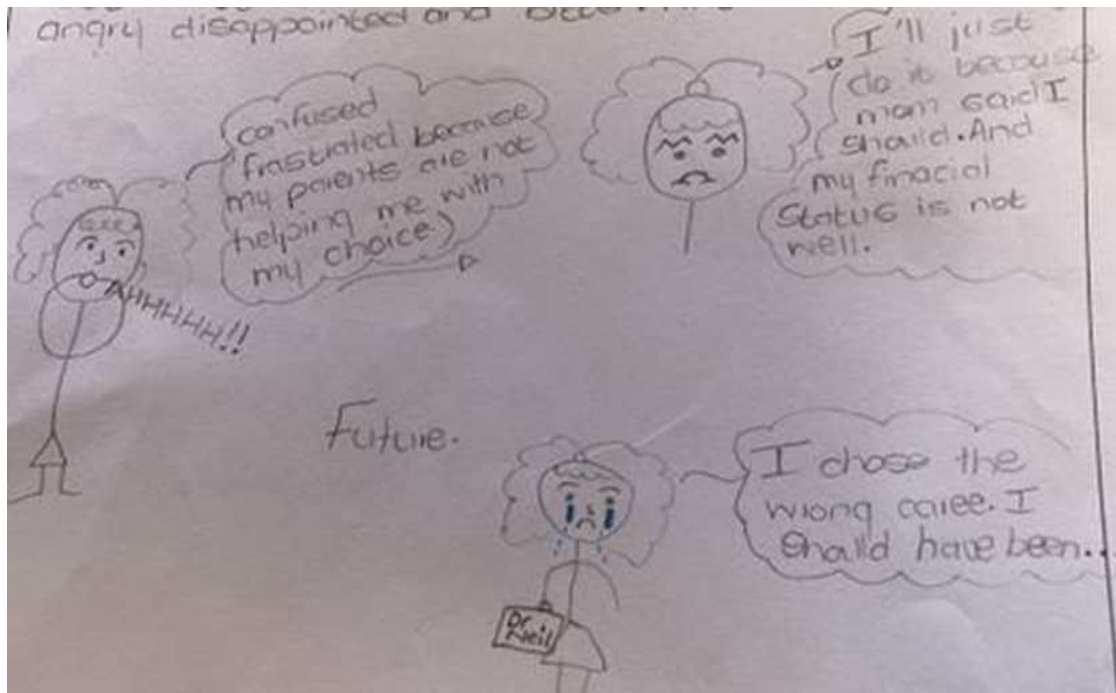


*who insist on seeing my downfall, I fail to see myself positively, which leads me into doubting myself a lot” (pwr 250):*



*(pwr 257)*

*“Where I currently sit right now will determine where I'll be when I'm older. I might be confused, angry, disappointed, and bitter. Who knows?” (pwr 264).*



(pwr 267).

Having described the second main theme and its accompanying sub-themes and categories in the sections above, attention now shifts to the third main theme that emerged in this study.

### 4.5 THEME 3: CAREER CONTROL – INCREASING SELF-REGULATION AND SELF-DETERMINATION

This section presents the third theme that emerged from the data analysis, along with its related sub-themes and categories. Theme 3 is summarised in Table 24 below.

**Table 24: Theme 3, Sub-themes and Categories**

| <b>THEME 3: CAREER CONTROL – INCREASING SELF-REGULATION AND SELF-DETERMINATION</b> |  |
|--|--|
| Sub-themes   | Categories   |
| 3.1 Self-regulation  | 3.1.1 <i>Finding solutions</i><br>3.1.2 <i>Feelings of uncertainty and hesitancy</i> |
| 3.2 Self-determination   |  |

The pillar of “career control” refers to the learners' ability to self-regulate. Control of one’s career indicates the ability to make decisions, and to take responsibility and ownership for future careers. Learners become autonomous and conscientious when gaining career control (Peila-Shuster, 2017). Career control further indicates independence, autonomy, pre-emptiveness, accountability, and persistence.

Learners were asked to personally reflect on and describe their understanding of the proverb ‘*he who eats an egg foregoes a future meal of chicken soup*’, which associates with the pillar of *career control*.

#### **4.5.1 Sub-theme 3.1 – Self-regulation**

Career control does not represent autonomy but instead includes traits such as self-discipline, hardworking, purposeful, and resolute when it comes to planning career paths (Del Corso, 2017). Whilst reflecting on career control, many learners manifested excellent insight into the meaning of career control.

*“Basically, if I lose control of my life at an early age, then I'm probably not going to get up on my feet in the future. Doing something bad now then having a criminal record will affect me in the future when looking for a job. Getting a tattoo right now might limit you from getting a job that you want*

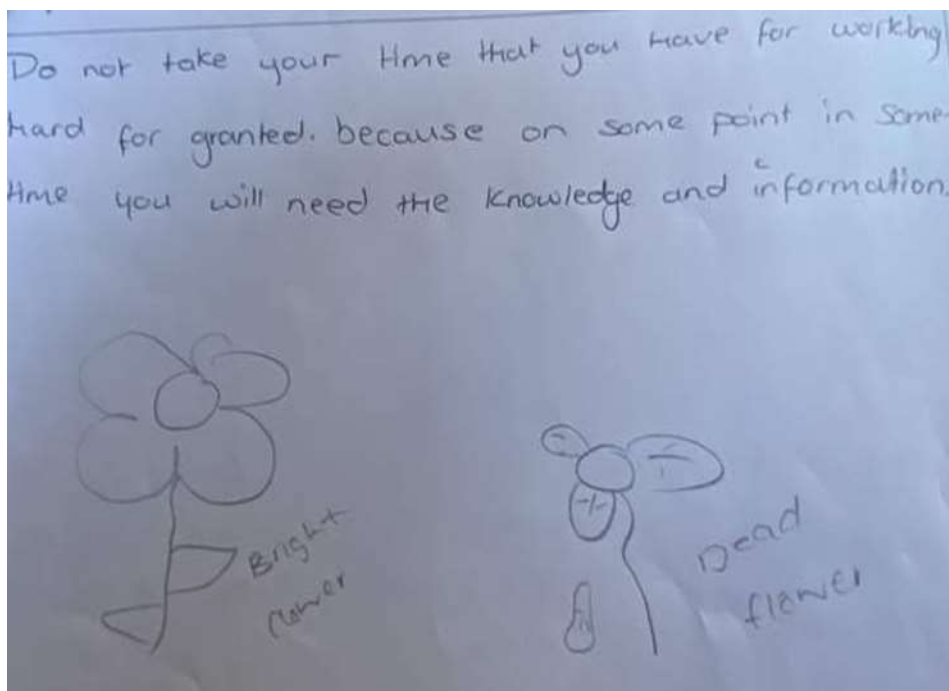
as some workplaces don't want their employers [employees] to have[a] tattoo" (432).

"If I am impatient, I won't get a career that is best for me – rash decisions have rash ends" (pwr 444).

"If I decide to do something which will make others happy, I won't get to do or enjoy benefits of my hard work. Or once I decide to do things to make people happy, I settle for less, and that won't have a positive effect on me. Do what will make you happy regardless of difficult situation one faces" (pwr 454).

"If I don't consider my option in a career, I will be stuck in life. I won't have anything to keep at the end. I won't have any income; I would have just wasted my time" (pwr 459).

"Who puts an effort into work is preparing for their future will have a successful future as you are in control of your future" (pwr 462).



(pwr 464).

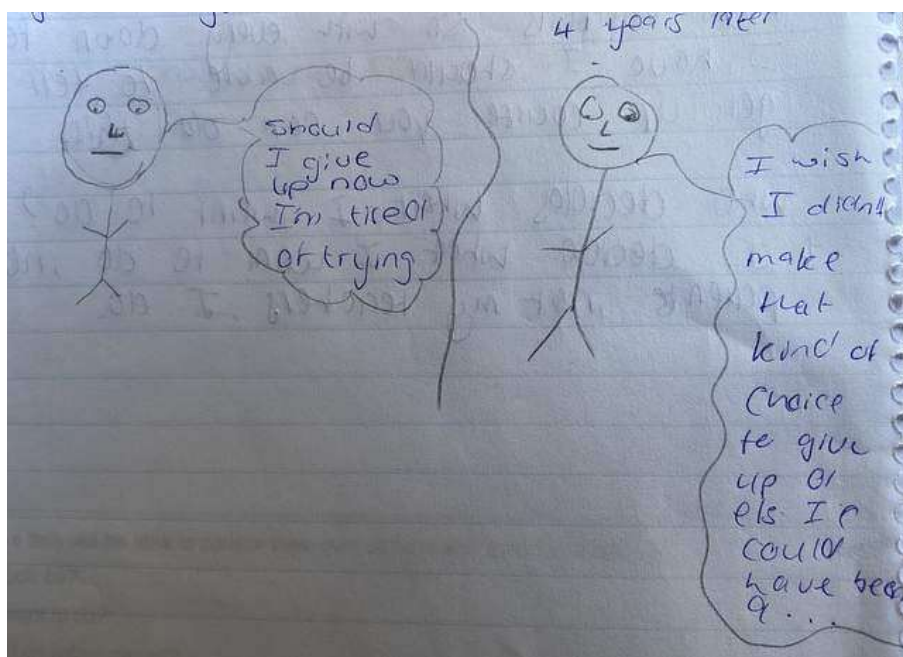
#### 4.5.1.1 Category 3.1.1 – Finding solutions

A few learners reflected on their shortages with regards to career control. They recognised their challenges and added solutions, thereby taking control of their future careers.

*"If I don't pull up my socks now on my schoolwork, I won't be able to get a job that I always wanted, so I have to pay special attention on my schoolwork in order to be successful" (pwr 441).*

*"Since I'm not sure about what I want to do in life, it's time to take control of my life and discover who I am and what I really want to do, because, if I don't do anything or take action, my future is already failing; but I believe that I will work hard, research what I want to do, maybe I can discover new things, who knows? It might lead me to the right career choice, but all I need is strength, encouragement, and inspiration" (pwr 447).*

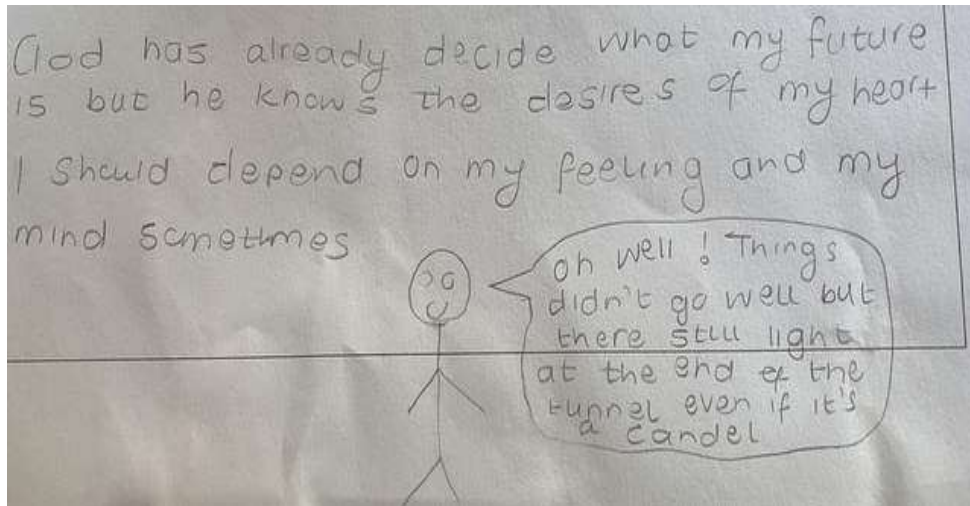
*"If you give up now, you won't get what you always wanted to do" (pwr 471):*



*(pwr 470).*

*"From my opinion, I must not concentrate on one career field or on one career, while there are ample careers that I can also consider, so that I have backup in terms of career. This might also mean that I shouldn't give up nor*

*should I waste time focusing on one career path, thinking that I'll have more time to pursue whatsoever I want, for time waits for no man" (pwr 473).*

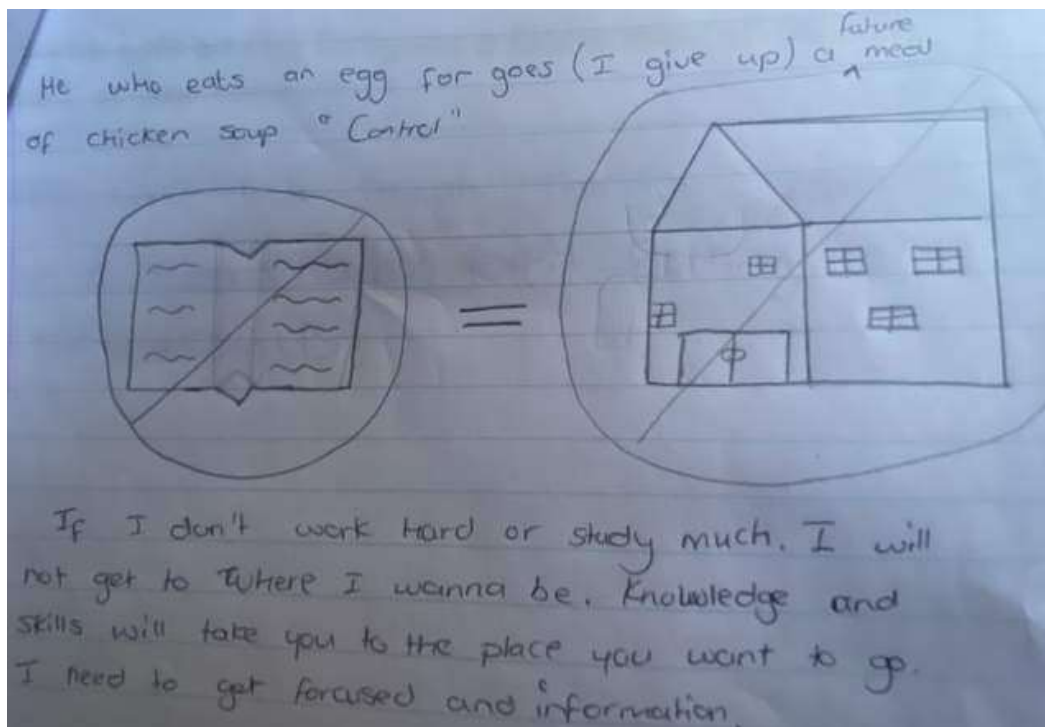


*(pwr 479).*

*"If you waste time now, you won't be able to succeed and go on with your career. You won't have the future you want and deserve if you waste your time now" (pwr 479).*

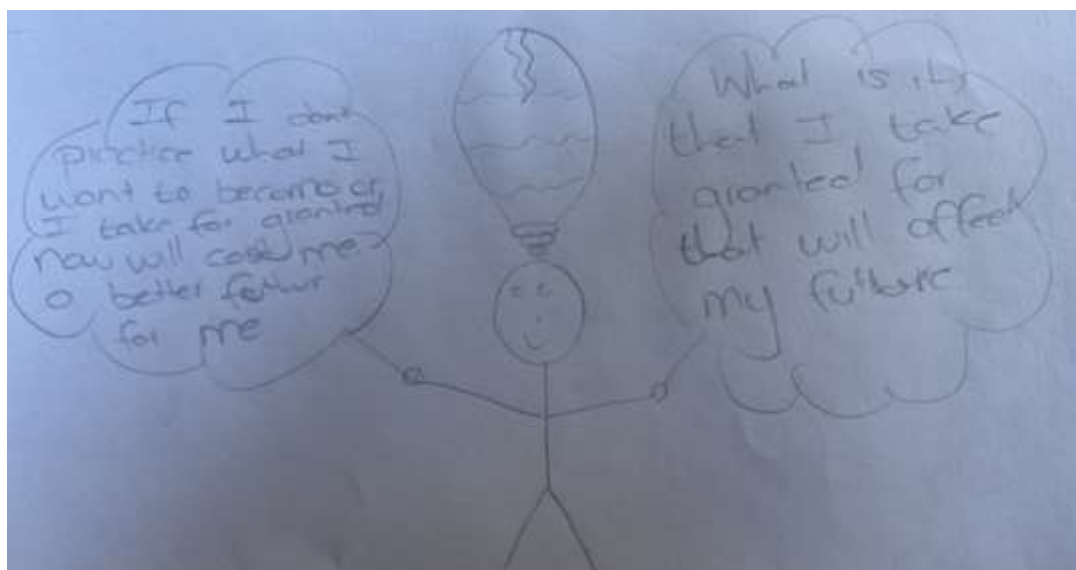
*"Whatever you do now, determines your future. If you mess up everything now, you won't get a chance to live a life you've always wanted or the life you deserve. Perseverance also plays a part in our daily lives and for our future. Whatever you do now will affect you positively or negatively" (pwr 483).*





(pwr 488).

*"If I give up now, I won't be able to benefit in the future. This can lead to poverty and to my next upcoming generations. I have the control to decide what I want my future to be like" (pwr 489).*



(pwr 446).

*“Not to take the easy road or way out – never gives good results, you have to work hard and have passion for what you do and push yourself in order to get a big reward instead of taking yourself to a lower standard because you want the easy way out” (pwr 492).*

*“If you give up today, I am also giving up my future. Having control today is my good determination of not giving up on my future and my future career. Giving up is not the first that comes of my mind so all I need to do is to compromise and go through all my obstacles, temptations and all the hard road I go through. Have control over my life future and career is the main key for everything” (pwr 496).*

*“If I'm not in patient enough I will never reach what I could have but the only thing that would be filled in me would be regret of why was I not strong then. The one reason standing in my way now wouldn't appear to be a challenge the day I realise I should have really took control of myself” (pwr 507).*

*“If I have my mind set up on one thing. I won't be able to see other things as something as great which simply leads me to be biased on matters that could've been great had I considered them in the first place” (pwr 515).*

#### **4.5.1.2 Category 3.1.2 – Feelings of uncertainty and hesitancy**

Learners may feel that they have no power over their career trajectories, which in some cases may manifest as a perceived lack of control, while in other cases it is an authentic lack of control over their ability to construct a desired career due to societal or psychological restrictions (Del Corso, 2017). A shortage of career control marks qualities of indecision, uncertainty, and hesitancy about future career possibilities.

*“I am unsure of my future because I have no control over the bad things that might happen” (pwr 467).*

*“If I don't make plans for my future, I will not be able to have a successful future. But what if it happens that I do make plans then my future isn't a success” (pwr 465).*



#### 4.5.2 Sub-theme 3.2 – Self-determination

Career control includes the process of individuation, where a learner transcends the traditional family attachment of parents making career decisions, to choosing their own career trajectories. Many young adults, however, stem from controlling and stringent backgrounds, and they are likely to feel hesitant to construct a career of their choosing. These learners would find it difficult to oppose their parents or caregivers to pursue different opportunities (Del Corso, 2017). Adults may have values they learned from their parents, and the emerging youth may be susceptible to these values and base career choices on parent's influence (Chen, 2017).

Some learners demonstrated the fact that their parents are controlling their career decisions and indicated a propensity to claim their independence towards self-determination.

*“My mom will decide on what I do” (pwr 557).*

*“I should advise my parents to stop making career-based decisions for me. I must show them that I’m curious enough to do it on my own” (pwr 345).*

*“Leaning on people and relying on your parents at all times, because by doing that means you’re spoilt. And when you face the real world you won’t know what to do. You won’t know how painful or how much sweat is needed to get to what you want” (pwr 391).*

*“If ever you are forever dependent on your parent, you will never learn to be responsible or face reality” (pwr 349).*

*“I am the only one who will decide what I want to do, my parents can’t do that anymore” (pwr 566).*

The above sections described Theme 3 and its accompanying sub-themes and categories. The next section focuses on the fourth main theme and its related sub-theme and categories that emerged from the data.

## 4.6 THEME 4: CAREER CURIOSITY – EXPLORING THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

This section presents the fourth theme that emerged from the data analysis, along with its related sub-themes and categories. Theme 4 is summarised in Table 25 below.

**Table 25: Theme 4, Sub-themes and Categories**

| THEME 4: CAREER CURIOSITY – EXPLORING THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT |   |
|---|---|
| Sub-theme   | Categories  |
| 4.1 Inquisitiveness   | 4.1.1 Becoming knowledgeable<br>4.1.2 Fear and insecurity |

The career curiosity theme signifies learners' ability to ask questions and show interest in developing career plans. Career curiosity characterises the way learners explore and become informed about the world of work. It leans towards an investigative, observant, and positive attitude regarding careers. A lack of career curiosity restricts investigation into career paths, and leads to idealism, and impractical goals and desires about the world of work (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017).

Learners were asked to personally reflect on and explain their understanding of the proverb *‘a baby on its mother’s back does not know the way is long’*, which associates with the pillar of *career curiosity*.

### 4.6.1 Sub-theme 4.1 – Inquisitiveness

After small group discussions and reflection on the meaning of the proverb, learners realised that careers may change and that they should be prepared and become curious about future career paths so as not to be caught up in hardship.

*“I think that this is saying that life after school is long and hard. Don't say to yourself that life after matric is the end of the road, because you actually*

*lying to yourself. Life of school doesn't end. School is life, learning is a great thing to actually get. Journey is life. Journey is what you going to live with for the rest of your life” (pwr 358).*

*“When I was a baby or a child, I always thought that life is easy and that everything come on a golden platter” (pwr 364).*

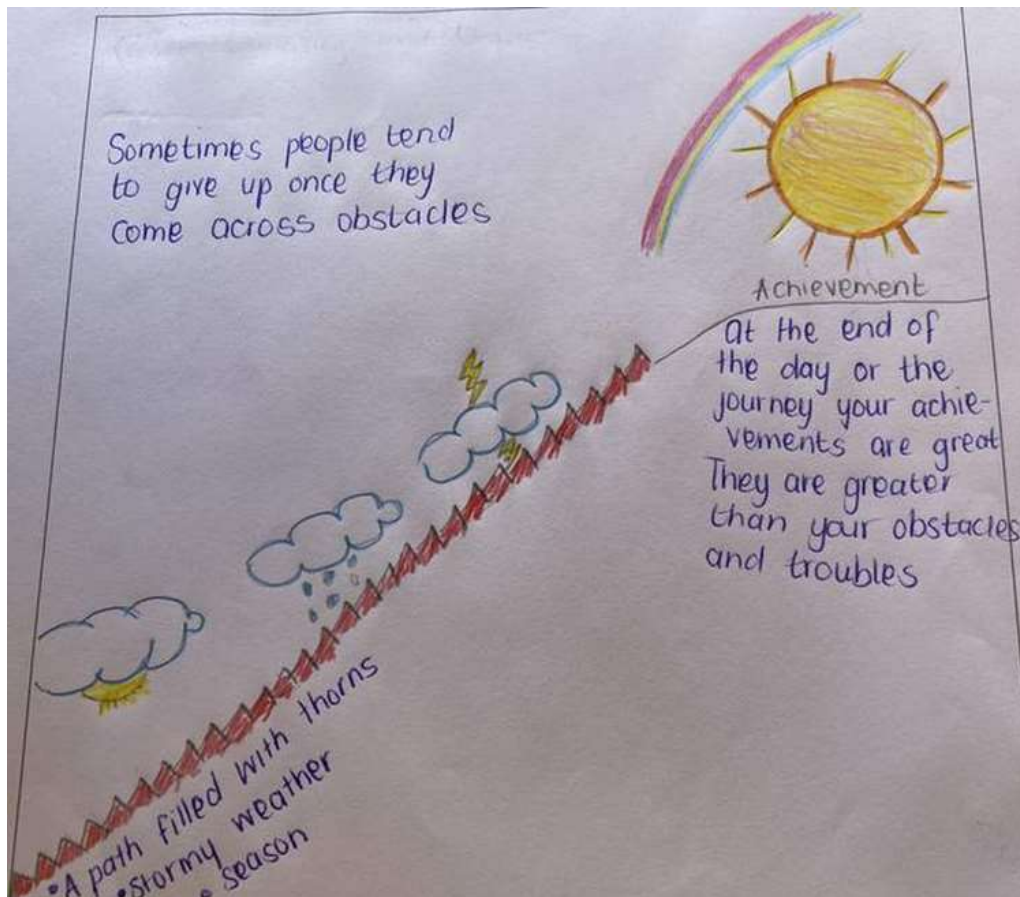
*“I could lack realisation from the struggle that I could put myself in because I don't know ‘the way is long’” (pwr 397).*

#### **4.6.1.1 Category 4.1.1 – Becoming knowledgeable**

The learners reflected on the essence of curiosity and realised that becoming curious about different future career opportunities also meant that one becomes knowledgeable (Hlad'o, Kvaskova, Jezek, Hirschi & Macek, 2020) about life (observing and investigating diverse approaches) and the self (looking for unique growth opportunities).

*“Get the right advice from the right people and make sure that I understand everything about the career that I want to follow” (pwr 371).*

*“To become what you want will take a long way because you will go through tough obstacles and you will face many challenges” (pwr 373).*



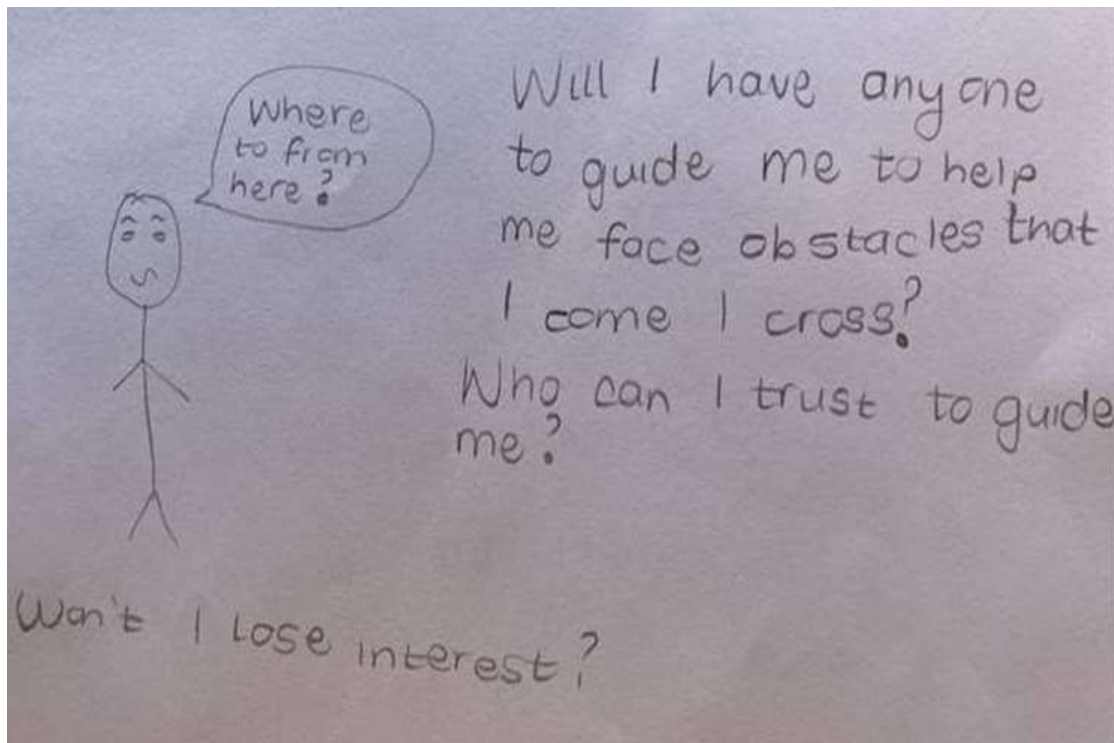
(pwr 396).

*"... walk with your own feet and you will see the worth of living for you" (pwr 396).*

#### **4.6.1.2 Category 4.1.2 – Fear and insecurity**

Instead of developing a curious nature, some learners experienced doubt, fear, and insecurity when reflecting on becoming curious about careers. Change may be difficult for some individuals, especially in a disruptive milieu, and they could become sceptical or develop a negative outlook (Bower & Konwerski, 2017).

*"Where to from here? Will I have anyone to guide me to help me face obstacles that I come across? Who can I trust to guide me? What if I lose interest?" (pwr 383):*



(pwr 395).

*"Will my job be successful. Will I be able to reach my goals in the career I choose?"*(pwr 405).

*"I'll be certain about my future when I see I have a future"* (pwr 386).

*"I should stop having doubts ..."* (pwr 348).

The above sections described Theme 4 and its accompanying sub-theme and categories. The next section focuses on the fifth main theme and its related sub-theme and categories that emerged from the data.

## **4.7 THEME 5 CAREER CONFIDENCE – DEMONSTRATING SELF-ASSURANCE AND SELF-BELIEF**

This section presents the fifth theme that emerged from the data analysis, along with its related sub-theme and categories. Theme 5 is summarised in Table 26 below.

**Table 26: Theme 5, Sub-themes and Categories**

| <b>THEME 5: CAREER CONFIDENCE – DEMONSTRATING SELF-ASSURANCE AND SELF-BELIEF</b> |   |
|--|---|
| Sub-theme  | Categories  |
| 5.1 Self-belief  | 5.1.1 Overcoming obstacles<br>5.1.2 Self-consciousness and inhibition |

The fourth pillar of career adaptability, namely, “career confidence”, touches on the ability to solve problems, self-regulate, and the ability to obtain skills to solve difficulties while constructing future careers (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017). Career confidence includes feelings of efficiency, productiveness, self-perception, reliability, and self-confidence. A shortage of career confidence brings out feelings of self-consciousness, fearfulness, and inhibition in learners.

Learners were asked to personally reflect on and indicate their understanding of the proverb *‘if there is no enemy within, the enemy outside can do no harm’*, which associates with the pillar of *career confidence*.

#### **4.7.1 Sub-theme 5.1 – Self-belief**

A critical skill for learners is the development of adaptive skills and self-regulating action plans. These competencies are supported by delving into and unwrapping internal reserves (Drabik-Podgórna, 2017).

*“If you don't tell yourself you can do it, you won't make it in life. You are never negative about anything; no one can tell you, you can't do anything. If you know what you want to achieve in life, no one can tell you otherwise” (pwr 652).*

*“Other people's perspectives or point of views about me will not determine my life, future, and future career because I believe and know that I can get and do anything that I want to do and success in it. Believing in myself has*

*helped me, not only to be me but not to be easily influenced by others and not be intimidated by other people's success/good results, for everyone walking, crawling, and running on their own lanes” (pwr 687).*

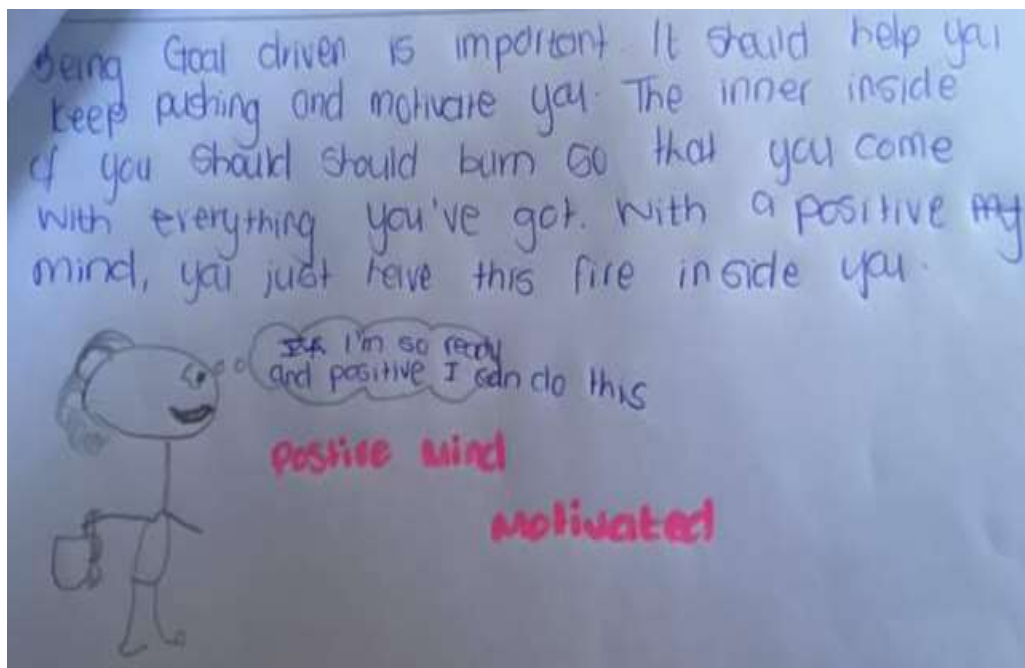
*“If there's nothing holding you back inside then people who want to see your downfall will not prosper. Always see yourself as a successful person; aim high and let nothing bring you down; stand firm and be emotionally strong so that other people's opinions wouldn't affect you” (pwr 694).*

*“... if you don't compete with yourself then you'll obviously be defeated, because the first person you have to compete against is yourself and nobody else” (pwr 656).*

*“Do not waste your time on things that are not going to bring out the best of you” (pwr 679).*

*“If I fully believe in myself and I'm true to myself no one can break my spirit. If I don't conflict myself, no one can conflict with me” (pwr 683).*

*“Being goal-driven is important. It should help you keep pushing and motivate you” (pwr 678):*



*(pwr 679).*



*“Basically, this means that I can't stop myself from going forward and I can do whatever it takes to get there, for everything starts from my heart, and I can tell myself that I can do it/make it in life, but a person can try to discourage me, but my will can bring down any man's thoughts” (pwr 671).*

*“If I am always optimistic about life, there is no one who can change that. No one can influence me in a bad way. I cannot befriend people who are pessimist” (pwr 649).*

#### **4.7.1.1 Category 5.1.1 – Overcoming obstacles**

Career confidence includes the level of conviction learners hold to find ways and resolve obstructions in their paths as they construct their careers (Coetzee et al., 2015).

*“Be happy with who you are and have confidence and no one will hurt or break you” (pwr 642).*

*“If I do believe in myself and the ability, I will be able to achieve. No one can stop me. Because I have confidence in myself” (pwr 705).*

*“If I don't fight my thoughts, feelings, and choices of what I really want to be. No one can discourage me or make me feel bad about the career choices I make. So I have to accept my feelings, be confident about what I want to do so that no one can be able to discourage me” (pwr 634).*

*“If I don't have confidence and trust yourself, others can easily break you/hurt you (or if have confidence and trust in yourself, others cannot easily break you/hurt you” (pwr 639).*

*“Be happy with who you are and have confidence and no one will hurt or break you” (pwr 642).*

*“The confidence I can build for myself will make it easier for me to choose the perfect career or a career which will suit me. Confidence in one's life helps a person to make the best choices. If only I can realise that, my*

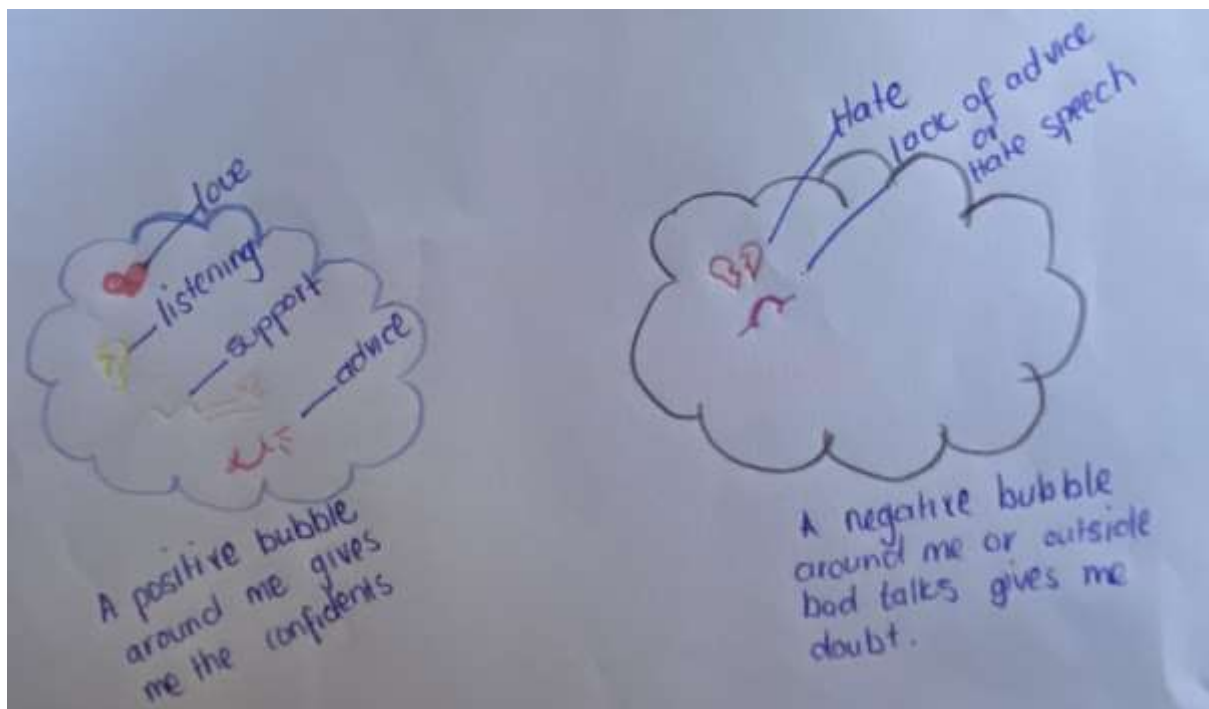


negative thoughts – I should not let them make me feel bad (choice) about my other career choice” (pwr 644).

“If the people whom are close to me try to sabotage my future and I don’t let them succeed with that, then no one else can stop me from conquering my dreams. I should not let people come between me and my future, so I should always have confidence in what I do, no matter what people say” (pwr 675).

“You are the one who fights your fears inside. Having confidence may help you find what you think about yourself. Confidence will fight all the fears inside” (pwr 649).

“I think having the support I need from the people around me can give me confidence to face people outside my circle” (pwr 642).



(pwr 664).

“If you trust yourself and you have confidence in your own abilities no one can stop you from achieving your goals” (pwr 665).

*“Basically, this means that I can't stop myself from going forward and I can do whatever it takes to get there, for everything starts from my heart, and I can tell myself that I can do it/make it in life, but a person can try to discourage me, but my will can bring down any man's thoughts” (pwr 671).*

#### **4.7.1.2 Category 5.1.2 – Self-consciousness and inhibition**

In terms of development (Del Corso, 2017), learners in general are susceptible to difficulties related to career confidence. In addition to articulating doubt, they are impressionable and sensitive to the opinions of others (Del Corso, 2017). Low career confidence results in inhibition, a lack of self-esteem, and timidity when constructing a career (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017).

*“I fear that the enemy within might stop me from achieving things because of my fear” (pwr 631).*

*“I lack confidence in a lot of things I do” (pwr 633).*

*“My confidence is not that good; I let things get to me. I believe what people tell me” (pwr 732).*

*“They say I should have thick skin but how do I do that?” (pwr758).*

*“I should not discuss my future dreams with people. I should learn to achieve things on my own, not depending on people” (pwr 747).*

The above section described Theme 5 and its accompanying sub-theme and related categories. The next section focuses on the sixth main theme and its related sub-themes and categories that emerged from the data.

## **4.8 THEME 6: REFLECTIONS ON THE USE OF CAREER ADAPTABILITY AS AN AID TO PREPARE FOR THE WORLD OF WORK**

This section presents the sixth theme that emerged from the data analysis, along with its related sub-themes and categories. Theme 6 is summarised in Table 27 below.

Table 27: Theme 6, Sub-themes and Categories

| <b>THEME 6: REFLECTIONS ON THE USE OF CAREER ADAPTABILITY AS AN AID TO PREPARE FOR THE WORLD OF WORK</b> |   |
|--|---|
| Sub-themes   | Categories  |
| 6.1 Fostering awareness – the need to plan   | <i>6.1.1 Learners' concerns on career planning</i><br><i>6.1.2 Developing personal agency</i> |
| 6.2 Reflective practice  | <i>6.2.1 Group reflection</i><br><i>6.2.2 Reflective writing and drawing</i>                  |
| 6.3 The use of African proverbs to deconstruct the career adaptability construct                         |   |

Insufficient career education and preparation for the world of work for adolescents is a growing global concern (Maree, Pienaar & Fletcher, 2017). In South Africa, adolescents battle with threats to their emotional well-being, poverty, family disagreements, single parent dynamics, violence, and factors causing stress educationally. Maree et al. (2017) urge that learners require age-related support leading to self-governance and schools could play a substantial role in assisting adolescents to develop their identities and finding their place within their social structures.

This theme includes the reflections of the (1) participants of the focus group, (2) researcher, and (3) research assistant.

#### **4.8.1 Sub-theme 6.1 – Fostering awareness – the need to plan**

The career adaptability principles created awareness of the importance of planning and developing career paths. The importance of *curiosity in career planning* became

an essential factor for learners to empower themselves and become knowledgeable about different options in the job market.

*“... the awareness and about, like, this is the principle that you supposed being aware of, like other, uhm, other careers. I feel it helps, because, like, I was not (aware of) most of the careers that ma'am told us about ... like, I have bigger interest I guess in that most careers and I don't know about them so” (pfg<sup>8</sup> 1160).*

*“... not to focus on one career” (pfg 1432).*

*“... you are not limited to one career and stuff like that and flexible” (pfg 1155).*

*“... be flexible” (pfg 1422).*

The career adaptability construct empowered learners to overcome barriers of fear and insecurity and replace it with self-belief and self-regulation.

*“... you are your own person; you have to stand on your own. Like, they are not going to affect me, even though it's like kind of affecting you; you just got to be your own person and go out of what is happening...” (pfg 1245).*

*“... being realistic ...” (pfg 1437).*

*“... but also, be positive” (pfg 1439).*

*“... and also believing in yourself” (pfg 1431).*

*“... to do something that someone cannot think about, be creative” (pfg 1406).*

*“... so I basically feel like these obstacles that I wake up with if, I overcome them by myself, then I feel like I would better my future” (pfg 1197).*

In my reflective notes after each session, I noticed the learners' enthusiasm to partake in activities as they settled into the workshop and emersed themselves in the activities.

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<sup>8</sup> pfg = participant in focus group

*“Learners were hesitant at first. But as we progressed, more and more started raising their hands, wanting to convey their thoughts on the proverb – I had to caution them to slow down, as they were so eager that one started talking while the other was still busy” (rrn<sup>9</sup> 1038).*

In her field notes, the research assistant recorded that the learners had enjoyed the session. It became evident that the African proverbs and group discussion invited critical thinking.

The learners actively participated in the activities and demonstrated positive attitudes towards the topics discussed.

*“I think they enjoy these session[s] and that it really gets them to think ...” (rao<sup>10</sup> 912).*

*“The children looked determined and focussed; they had lots of questions and had a very good and positive attitude and mindset towards these lessons” (rao 945).*

*“Two girls are discussing what was being said. Some wrote down what the researcher said and some just listened. Putting the theory into a realistic situation – they like it” (rao 827).*

#### **4.8.1.1 Category 6.1.1 – Learners’ concerns on career planning**

South Africa has a high percentage of unemployment which was a concern to learners. They found it challenging to retain a positive outlook and plan ahead because of the lack of career opportunities.

*“... so going different paths, it’s actually a, well, I think it’s basically a waste of time because it’s holding you back, because sometimes when you’re going like this you just don’t know where to go” (pfg 1317).*

Learners indicated that a characteristic of resilience is required to ensure career paths in the future and that they would need to pursue multiple skills.

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<sup>9</sup> rrn = Researcher reflective notes

<sup>10</sup> rao = research assistant observations

*"I am focusing on a sports career only, and then I go out and I play hockey, and then I break my leg. I didn't go to school; I didn't study any other career. Where am I going to go after? Am I just going to sit there and be broken and do nothing with myself? Do you understand what I am saying? ... You have to have a backup ..."* (pfg 1355).

*"... what I am saying is that you should go in different ways. Don't just go in one path or you'll find that, and people, have a tendency of choosing careers that are like a lot of people, like its crowded in the career, like..."* (pfg 1317).

Although one learner indicated that she would like to pursue a career that she prefers, she noted that one would have to consider available careers in order to obtain a job.

*"... is so like love sports ... And then there is also psychology. I love psychology! Like, I have lots of books, I read about it, and then it is that thing of I go to school and study psychology, so psychology you get jobs nearly everywhere in hospitals; doctors need psychologists, business[es], teams soccer players need, so, like, it's a broad career, you understand. That's why I chose psychology. Like, if I do it now and then, I go to the hospital, maybe I work there, but that's not what I want since I love sports. I also want to travel [inaudible] something like I am doing physiology for the personality and then [inaudible] so actually in the sports industry at the same time and then we talk about [inaudible] doing all these things my hobby is in one career and stuff like that, you understand, and then when your job is done there, I just go back to hospital, and like, can I have a job there is a job sign like doctors, you understand what I am saying? ..."* (pfg 1317).

Some learners considered leaving the country should suitable employment not be found.

*"... but here in South Africa you ... some careers ... so you just have to, because after going to varsity you can still get a chance to go to other countries ..."* (pfg 1338).

*“ ... no, no I am not saying like I am just asking there is a high rate of unemployment, high rate of crime, high rate of all these negative things ... so how do you think that you are going to overcome them, are you that ‘special’? I am not asking that as a personal question, but I am just saying get away [cross talk]” (pfg 1390).*

One learner found that it might be challenging to obtain a job after school because of her race.

*“ ... we are black guys so it can be difficult for you to get a job ... ” (pfg 1293).*

#### **4.8.1.2 Category 6.1.2 – Developing personal agency**

After the workshops, the learners felt that they could self-reflect on career planning, which they were unable to do before:

*“ ... obviously it depends on you. If, whenever you want to study, you will study” (pfg 1266).*

*“... that's why I think sometimes you should have discipline, because if you can't discipline yourself, ah-ah, you're not getting anywhere” (pfg 1269).*

*“ ... you have to be optimistic about life, you know” (pfg 1258).*

*“ ...: just look it and be like, nah! Nah! That's not for me. Hey, just sommer leave it like, yeah, this is not for me, I'm not bothering [referring to optimism]” (pfg 1260).*

*“... I think I wait a lot for things to happen, you know what I am saying? I just wait for, ja, something great to happen. I don't put in the effort I don't have; I don't have that much discipline” (pfg 1262).*

*“ ... what you want obviously it depends on you. If, whenever you want to study, you will study” (pfg 1266).*

*“ ... I am researching like different kind of jobs that fits my interests” (pfg 1276).*

*“... sometimes ... you should find interest like what you are interested in and see where it's lacking” (pfg 1291).*

*“ ... but even if it's tough (the world of work) you have to be a person to work hard [cross talk] to get where you want to be ...” (pfg 1367).*

*“As I was wandering through the class and offering assistance in opening up further opportunities to reflect on, the learners indicated that they preferred to talk among themselves, showing autonomy and peer dominance. The researcher remained the observer and while group reflection was taking place, did not have a voice – and could not influence learners – the researcher sees that as a positive sign of learner empowerment” (rrn 1098).*

*“Some students felt that they were still confused on making decisions on what they were going to do after school and that seemed to make them nervous, but after re-confirming that these concepts in total after all the sessions, might give them direction as to how to INITIATE the process made them more comfortable” (rrn 1086).*

*“They [the learners] were actively involved and even the most shyest were drawn in by the conversation and had something to say” (rrn 1081).*

*“... some think a lot before they write and others just start writing immediately” (rao 912).*

*“While doing the activity, the children were silent and were thinking very hard” (rao 923).*

#### **4.8.2 Sub-theme 6.2 – Reflective practice**

Drawing on core intrinsic capabilities, learners drew on information to gather thoughts, make sense, and write reflectively (Bolton & Delderfield, 2018). Learners interacted with each other and learned from one another in small groups which acted as a practical learning environment (Annamalai et al., 2015).



#### **4.8.2.1 Category 6.2.1 – Group reflection**

Co-operative group work fosters positive student learning (Fung & Liang, 2019). Although at first anxious, learners found the group sessions enjoyable and insightful. They bounced ideas back and forth and either confirmed or contradicted other learners' ideas.

At first, learners experience anxiety by the “unknown” and needed re-assurance to openly discuss their inner thoughts, whereafter they opened up and actively took part in the discussions and small group reflections.

*“I could feel their anxiety, treading waters that is unknown to them, not knowing what to expect” (rrn 1022).*

*“They, however, need re-assurance that it is ok to have their own thoughts over an issue and continuously wonder if their answers are ‘correct’. Soundboarding it against a neighbouring learner happens continuously – they less enjoy it when I asked them to reflect in private – the group setting is more to their liking” (rrn 1143).*

*“I had to stop discussions a couple of times as time were running out, but the learners asked for a few moments more, as they felt they still had a lot to say on the subject. They became animated as the discussions progressed” (rrn 1090).*

*“After a class discussion I invited the learners to break up in teams of 5/6 in four small groups and discuss the meaning of the proverb further. I had to prompt them twice that time was up – but they were still busy talking among themselves, reflecting, and listening to others. Some were hesitant to participate, but with real Ubuntu, other[s] drew them into the conversation, prompting and helping them to find their words. The classroom buzzed” (rrn 1043).*

*“The small group discussions worked like a house on fire. The learners liked it more than written reflection or drawings. They were actively involved and even the shyest were drawn in by the conversation and had something to say” (rrn 1080).*

*“The learners indicated that they loved the small group session where they could reflect and share their thoughts with other learners. They also learned from what the other learners were saying and found new perspectives on how to think about their future careers” (rrn 1073).*

*“I really feel that these small group reflections are of great value to the learners to activate critical thinking skills. It opens up alternative roads on which they wanted to further reflect and discuss with their classmates” (rrn 1095).*

*“... and find this process refreshing and empowering. It is also a good point to develop and enhance their own critical thinking skills – as the session progress[es], I see more and more automatic responses and even the shy learners do not mind contributing” (rrn 1140).*

*“In the beginning the majority looked sceptical and unsure” (rao 813).*

*“They all started to smile when the researcher told them to go into groups. They like being alone with their friends when doing these activities. They like letting their friends hear their opinions and thoughts. Their attitudes were very positive ... still some of the student faces showed concentration. They started lighting up when talking themselves. Some looked more relaxed after the activity. They were smiling when giving their opinions” (rao 846).*

*“ ... in the group work a girl said she does not know and her groupmates started to get her thinking with questions and then recorded what she said” (rao 857).*

*“The children love the group activities, some of them smiled ... the majority of the time during the activity” (rao 885).*

*“I found that they are afraid of answering questions because they are afraid that the answer is wrong and that their peers will laugh at them or think wrong of them. They looked relieved when the researcher said there [are] no wrong answers. They looked like they enjoyed it, and they confirmed*

*[that] they like the group discussion and finding it help[ful] to hear other people's views. Their faces also shows it!" (rao 859).*

*"They enjoy hearing their peers' answers" (rao 839).*

*"The children looked determined and focused on answering your questions. I think it is very good questions to ask the students. It looked like the children were intrigued by it and it was provoking them to think hard" (rao 893).*

*"Their faces spelt focus and thinking hard" (rao 896).*

*"They like talking and hearing what their peers are saying. They like group work" (rao 845).*

#### **4.8.2.2 Sub-theme 6.2.2 – Reflective writing and drawing**

Adolescent reflective dialogues (big group or small groups) are not yet widely researched (Vetter & Meacham, 2018). Written reflection as an aid to learning, however, has been researched for many years, although Vetter and Meacham (2018) argue that reflective talk is of equal value.

The learners preferred reflective group discussions over reflective writing. Both writing and talking seemed to be an empowering mechanism for critical reflection.

*"The small group discussions worked like a house on fire. The learners liked it more than written reflection or drawing. The[y] were actively involved and even the most shyest were drawn in by the conversation and had something to say" (rrn 1080).*

*"... they love the discussions more when [where] they can talk" (rao 930).*

*"The children love the discussion and group work more when they can talk to each other" (rao 909).*

*"The children love writing their opinion and drawing their opinion" (rao 908).*

*“... I think they enjoy these sessions and that it really get them to think ... some think a lot before they write and others just start writing immediately” (rao 911).*

*“The children got very talkative and started to discuss everything” (rao 939).*

*“At the end, the one girl showed that her hand was tired of writing, but she was determined to continue” (rao 897).*

#### **4.8.3 Sub-theme 6.3 – The use of African proverbs to deconstruct the career adaptability construct**

African proverbs reach over many generations and are used to coach, steer, caution and reprimand (Sefa Dei, 2014).

African proverbs, used as a deconstruction method, assisted learners to understand the career adaptability principles and form opinions. The learners felt that it applied to them because they were black learners, and that they could relate to them as their grandparents used African proverbs. African proverbs assisted the learners to understand that their actions of today impact their decisions of tomorrow.

*“... [inaudible] in the future and for you to learn what you did today is going to impact you tomorrow ... (pfg 1174).*

*I feel that they help more like with the spiritual development, like, even the ... proverbs [inaudible] help in the future and for you to learn what you did today is going to impact you tomorrow” (pfg 1171).*

*“ ... that she use African proverbs we can, like, uhm, relate to them [inaudible] as we are growing up, uh, our grandparents use to do this test ... maybe things like that ... so if she uses African proverbs she can be you ...” (pfg 1179).*

*“... they apply, because we are black” (pfg 1183).*

*“The African proverbs seemed to kickstart the critical thinking process. It brought the concept of career adaptability into an understandable starting*

*point for learners to further their thinking process autonomously without interruption or intervention from the researcher. I introduced the proverb, linking it with a one-word concept, e.g. concern, curiosity, etc. And reminding the learners that it should be explored from within themselves and link it to their future career path decisions” (rrn 1128).*

*“Basing the concept on African proverbs made sense to them. First, they reflected on the meaning of the proverb and then applied the outcome on the specific concept in their discussions” (rrn 1083).*

Some concluding remarks follow next.

## **4.9 CONCLUSION**

This chapter presented the six themes and related sub-themes and categories that emerged during the thematic inductive data analysis. These were further supported by extracts from the gathered data.

In Chapter 5, I juxtapose the acquired results to the existing knowledge base, present the findings, and draw inferences relating to the research questions in Chapter 1. I reflect on constraints and the limitations of the study, emphasise the contributions, and propose recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

# CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, LIMITATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

An overview of Chapter 5 is presented in the figure below.

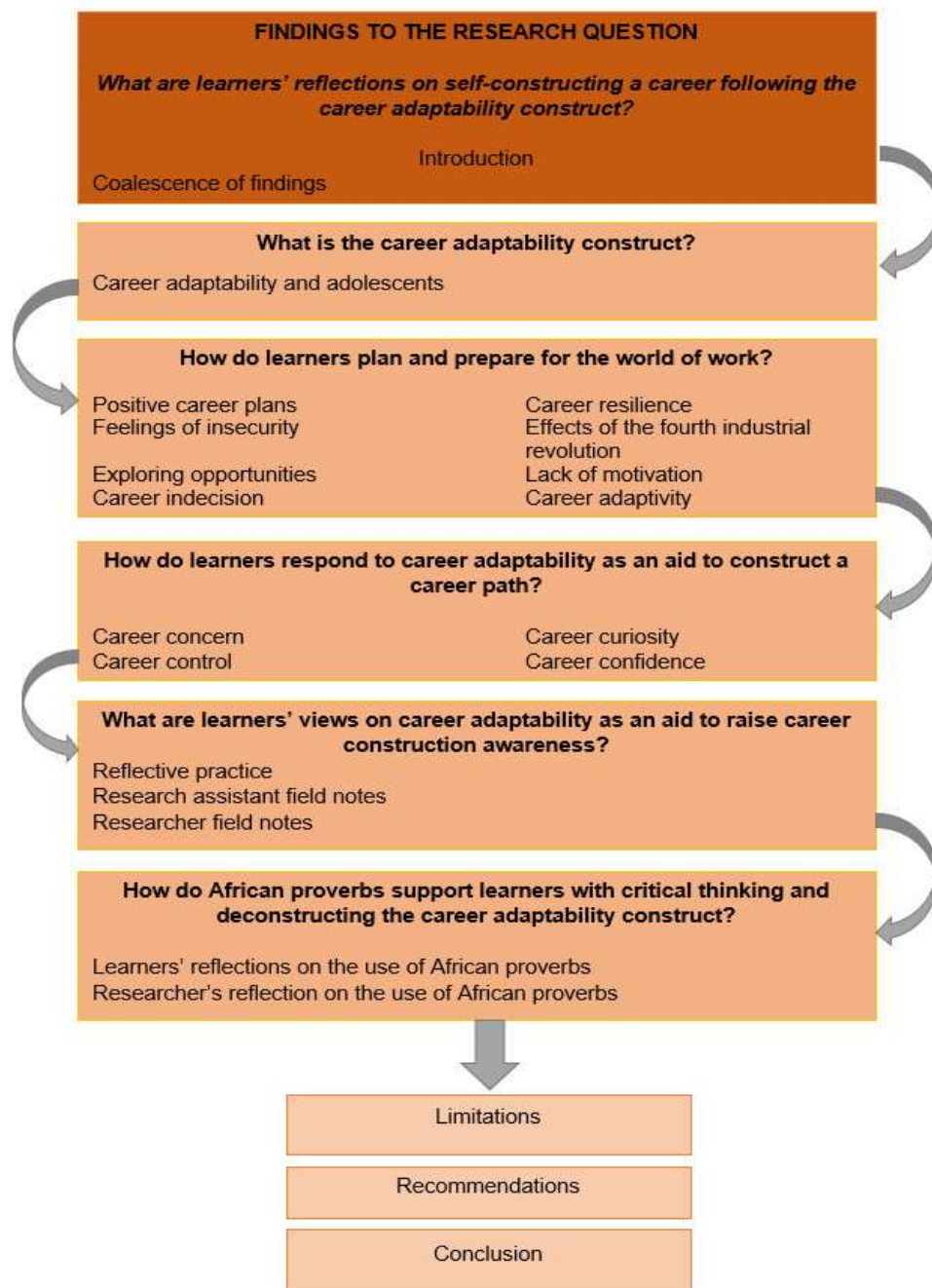


Figure 20: Overview of Chapter 5

## 5.2 INTRODUCTION

Due to the changing nature of the 21<sup>st</sup> century world of work, young adults find the school to work transition an uncertain and stressful experience. I was motivated to undertake this study to understand how learners currently plan for a future career and possibly aid them with constructive career construction activities before entering the world of work.

Career planning for learners in the South African school curriculum often leaves a large gap between education and the work sector. To assist learners in the school to work transition, academics frequently make calls for innovative papers to enhance and post-modernise career education. In addition to the above conundrum, at the time of writing this dissertation, the world is facing an unprecedented health pandemic (COVID-19) with harrowing death numbers across the globe. The above crisis, in conjunction with industrialisation, is exacerbating unemployment in South Africa, which is currently at 43.1% in the third quarter of 2020 (Statistics South Africa, 2020). Considering that the impact of unemployment may cause mental health problems and the lack of substantial career education in schools, one becomes aware that the South African youth is at significant risk. Furthermore, some role-players in the South African workforce (Duma, 2017) expressed their concerns that emerging adults are not work-ready when they transition from school to the world of work.

Chapter 4 of this dissertation offered a panorama of learners' reflections on self-constructing a career utilising career adaptability as an instructional scaffold to prepare for the world of work. In addition to learners' reflections during the workshop (Phase 1) and the focus group interview (Phase 2), the research assistant and I reflected on learners' meaning-making of career construction and the use of career adaptability as an instructional scaffold in career planning. The workshop (Phase 1) emphasised the four pillars of career adaptability, namely, *career concern*, *career control*, *career curiosity*, and *career confidence*, and the use of African proverbs as an aid to assist learners with critical thinking and to deconstruct the four pillars.

This chapter presents and discusses the research findings of the study (sections 5.3 to 5.7); the limitations of the study (section 5.8); and recommendations for policy,

practice, and future research (section 5.9). The study draws to a close with some final remarks and conclusions (section 5.10).

### **5.2.1 Integration of findings**

The research paradigm, namely, *interpretivism*, directed the research results. The data analysis generated multiple findings that delineated learners' reflections on career planning. Furthermore, obstacles that prevent constructive execution efforts or lack of planning activities came to light. The results of Chapter 4 are outlined below, supported by the literature review (Chapter 2) to answer the research questions of the study (as indicated in Chapter 1.8). In doing so, the objectives of the study were met, and the aim of the study was achieved (as indicated in Chapter 1.9).

## **5.3 WHAT IS THE CAREER ADAPTABILITY CONSTRUCT?**

This section answers the research sub-question (Chapter 1.8), namely, "what is the career adaptability construct?" Thereby, meeting Objective 1, which sought to *define the career adaptability construct*.

The career adaptability psychosocial construct was discussed in Chapter 2, and flows from the career maturity construct within Super's life-span, life-space theory (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017). Super argued that career maturity was required for life-stage success, as individuals moved through the developmental phases, particularly the exploration phase. Career maturity is defined as the mental ability (cognitive readiness) to a specific way of thinking (attitudinal readiness) in order to make sound career decisions (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017). Attitudinal readiness includes energetic involvement in preparing for and exploring a work-related future (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017).

Career adaptability emerged as a construct to augment career maturity (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017), but later superseded career maturity into a meta-competency to effectively support career construction and life design. Savickas (quoted in Duarte et al., 2017) notes that career adaptability can be considered a building-block added to the developmental dimensions of planning, exploration, and decision.



Career adaptability is divided into four main pillars that individuals use to change the self and their situation. The four pillars of career adaptability are constructive, as they allow learners to mould and re-mould themselves and construct careers in the ever-changing world of work (Peila-Shuster, 2015).

Career adaptability and its foundational pillars are outlined in Table 28 below:

**Table 28: Career Adaptability Attributes**  
(adapted from Peila-Shuster, 2015)

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Career concern    | Alignment towards the future world of work                |
| Career control    | Developing the self and taking ownership of future career |
| Career curiosity  | Inquiring and investigating career opportunities          |
| Career confidence | Progressive self-regulation and problem-solving skills    |

For Savickas, career adaptability presupposes personal attitudes of career planning, exploring the self and the world of work, and making well-informed career choices, whether you are an adult or an adolescent (Duarte et al., 2017).

### **5.3.1 Career adaptability and adolescents**

As seen in the previous section, and referring to Themes 2 to 6 of the study, career adaptability can be regarded as a vital building-block or cornerstone in children and adolescents' career construction (Patton, 2017). Patton (2017) makes reference to Savickas's description of career construction as learners' alacrity to enthusiastically address career planning despite the inconsistent and ever-changing world of work.

#### **5.3.1.1 Learners' responsiveness to the career adaptability construct**

The research results of the workshop (Phase 1) and the focus group interview (Phase 2) discussed in Chapter 4, Theme 6 (sub-theme 6.2) demonstrated that learners

actively engaged in reflection on career planning activities when they were introduced to the career adaptability construct.

In the first session of the workshop (Phase 1), before touching on the pillars of career adaptability, the learners were asked to reflect on their career plans after school, and the research results of Chapter 4, Theme 1 (sub-theme 1.1) revealed that learners might not be career ready. Learners do not engage in focussed critical thinking when they plan for the world of work. The results of Chapter 4, Theme 1, categories 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.1.4 and 1.1.5, indicate that many learners experience feelings of fear, insecurity, indecision, and a lack of confidence with regards to career construction.

The research findings of Chapter 4, Theme 1 (sub-theme 1.1, categories 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.1.4 and 1.1.5) further called attention to a possible low level of adaptability in the majority of participants. Many of the participants who reflected before the introduction of the career adaptability construct, had negative feelings about their future. The participants' experienced emotions of insecurity, fear, and disempowerment due to the current state of the world of work. Reflections on career adaptability, however, propelled learners to positively initiate self-construction on a career identity and possibilities of different career paths to fit their personalities.

#### **5.4 LEARNERS' PLANS AND PREPARATIONS FOR THE WORLD OF WORK**

This section discusses the results of Chapter 4, sub-theme 1.1 of this study. A particular attempt is made to answer the research sub-question, namely, "how do learners prepare for the world of work?" The participants reflected on this sub-question in Phase 1 (workshop) of the study, thereby addressing Objective 2, which sought to *explain how learners prepare for the world of work*. The workshop content is addressed in Chapter 3, and will be reflected on throughout the discussion: learners' plans and preparation for the world of work.

For the most part, learners leaving school in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will experience non-specific and vague job-life scenarios (Peila-Shuster, 2018). Learners will have to use their initiative and invent unique methods to prosper and endure in this taxing and uncertain times where jobs can no longer be guaranteed (Peila-Shuster, 2018). Referring to Chapter 4, sub-theme 1.1, and taking into consideration that the learners'

reflected without the aid/scaffold of the four pillars of career adaptability, the research findings confirm that the learners need help to develop their career paths. With regards to preparedness for the world of work after school in the study results of Chapter 4, Theme 1, I found most participants in Grade 11 not ready for the school to work or school to university transition. Most participants lacked career plans. The research results of Chapter 4, Theme 1, sub-theme 1.1 (category 1.1.4) confirms the argument of Di Fabio et al., (2013) that career indecision is a result of a lack of readiness. The research results concur with Hartung and Caderet's (2017) belief that learners lacked psychosocial capabilities to change their situations regarding career search and career decisions.

#### **5.4.1 Positive career plans**

This section discusses the research results corresponding with Chapter 4, sub-theme 1.1 (category 1.1.1) where some participants have applied the pillars of career adaptability before the workshop in Phase 1 of the study was presented and seemed to have self-constructed definite career paths.

The research results alarmingly reveal that only a small number of participants had their future careers planned. These participants have successfully navigated the career construction process and knew how they were going to execute their career paths to obtain their goals. A few participants seemed sure of the career path they have chosen but lacked knowledge and insight into the suitability, execution, and achievement of their career choice. The results of Chapter 4, therefore, confirm Peila-Shuster's (2018) argument that a process of skills development in self-reflection would assist participants to gain discipline, self-reliance, and insight to further their career construction skills.

#### **5.4.2 Feelings of insecurity**

Furthermore, the results of Chapter 4, sub-theme 1.1 (category 1.1.2) denote participants' feelings of insecurity. In session one of the workshop (Phase 1), the participants reflected on their possible career plans for the world of work and many

students found that feelings of insecurity undermined their ability to self-construct a career.

The research results confirm the life design for career construction theory from which career adaptability flows as discussed in Chapter 2 of the study. Self-construction is strongly associated with career construction. Career construction was not optimal as the participants had not yet developed a career identity. Improving learners' career identity earlier might be considered a critical factor to endure the 21<sup>st</sup> century world of work (Maree, 2018). The findings correlate with Maree's (2018) statement that most participants seem not to have developed a career identity in Grade 11 and are therefore less able to prepare a career path.

The research results are closely tied with the viewpoint of Hartung and Cadaret (2017) who argue that young people lack psychosocial skills and are therefore unable to change their circumstances linked with career search and career planning.

#### **5.4.3 Exploring opportunities**

The third pillar of the career adaptability construct is *career curiosity* as discussed in the literature study in Chapter 2. Career curiosity signifies the manner in which learners investigate the job market to make informed career decisions (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013). In the workshop (Phase 1), participants reflected (Chapter 4, Theme 1, sub-theme 1.1, category 1.1.3.) on difficulties they experience when constructing careers.

The research results indicate that many of the participants in the workshop (Phase 1) decided on a career path after they chose their focus subjects in Grade 10, and found that their career choices are limited or that their subject choice is not adequate for the career they might want to pursue. The research findings in Chapter 4, Theme 1, sub-theme 1.1 (category 1.1.3) confirm that the absence of preparation for possible career paths in early childhood causes feelings of disempowerment in learners. In *Exploring New Horizons in Career Counselling*, Peila-Shuster (2015) refers to Gottfredson's (2005) suggestion that young people can be decisive and narrow down career choices well in advance of acquiring cognitive reasoning skills. Young people should,

therefore, be motivated to develop these skills to adapt and make meaningful career choices.

#### **5.4.4 Career indecision**

This section refers to the research results of Chapter 4, Theme 1, sub-theme 1.1 (category 1.1.4). Career indecision indicates a shortage of career control, the second pillar of the career adaptability construct (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013) as discussed in the literature study in Chapter 2 of the dissertation.

Most participants in the workshop (Phase 1) indicated that they are unsure about their future career paths. The findings of Chapter 4, Theme 1, sub-theme 1.1 (category 1.1.4) indicate a high level of career indecision in Grade 11 learners. Career indecision corresponds with elevated levels of psychological hardship and low intensity of personal well-being (Lipshits-Braziler, Gati & Tatar, 2015); it is therefore burdensome and incites fear.

#### **5.4.5 Lack of confidence**

A lack of confidence is a characteristic of the fourth pillar of the career adaptability construct as discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2 (Di Fabio & Maree, 2013).

The results of Chapter 4, Theme 1, sub-theme 1.1 (category 1.1.5) show a potential lack of confidence in many of the participants' ability to make meaningful career decisions. A lack of confidence pre-empts a lack of concern and curiosity about the future and future development (Suan, 2015).

#### **5.4.6 Career resilience**

Career resilience, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 of this study, forms an integral part of career construction and is further developed by applying the principles of the career adaptability construct.

Career resilience correlates with the outcome of the individual ability of people to empower themselves (Lengelle et al., 2017). The research results in Chapter 4, Theme 1, sub-theme 1.2 collected in the workshop (Phase 1) confirmed that participants' career resilience could possibly benefit from the career adaptability construct. The know-how to interact with oneself meaningfully and in a group through reflection, promotes flexibility. According to Lengelle et al (2017), schools should cultivate career resilience through discourse to reduce insecurity.

#### **5.4.7 Effects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution**

In Chapters 1 and 2 of this study, I emphasised the importance of the effects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on learners' career construction endeavours.

The research results collected in Phase 1 of the workshop and discussed in Chapter 4, Theme 1, sub-theme 1.2 (category 1.2.1) indicate that most participants are acutely aware of the state of unemployment in South Africa. Participants feel anxious about the future of jobs in South Africa. The feeling of mostly hopelessness has a direct impact on participants' career construction activities. Numerous participants find that the unemployment situation in South Africa might force them to leave the country in search of a career abroad. Other participants are fearful that they might not find work, even if they obtain qualifications. Participants were not aware of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and its effect on the workforce of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Participants had limited knowledge of the scarce-skills jobs, and most of the learners asked for a copy of the list after I discussed scarce skills with them. One learner approached me after a session and angrily remarked: "Why did they not tell us about it?"

#### **5.4.8 Career motivation**

In the literature review (Chapter 2), career resilience was discussed at length. It was stated that career resilience, which is the ability to overcome hindrances and recover from setbacks, formed part of career motivation (Pouyaud et al., 2017).

The results of Chapter 4, Theme 1, sub-theme 1.2 (category 1.2.2) revealed that the participants demonstrated low levels of motivation. Intrinsic motivation and the

capability to prevail over difficulties are characterised by self-determination and -belief regarding career construction, critical thinking, essential need fulfilment, and the ability to adapt emotionally (Duarte et al., 2017). By strengthening these factors in adolescents, they would be empowered to overcome demotivation in adverse environments.

#### **5.4.9 Career adaptivity**

Resilience refers to favourable individual adaptation advancement practice (Tien & Wang, 2017) as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 (literature review) of the study.

The research results obtained in the workshop (Phase 1) and discussed in Chapter 4, Theme 1, sub-theme 2.2 (category 1.2.3) illustrate that most participants were able to improve their adaptivity skills after reflecting on career construction utilising the career adaptability construct. The participants became interested in their future careers and enthusiastically reflected with the assistance of the career adaptability construct as an instructional scaffold.

#### **5.4.10 Employability**

In Chapters 1 and 2 of the study, I comprehensively discussed the importance of employability to assist in, obtain, and support career paths (Potgieter & Coetzee, 2013). Bezuidenhout and Coetzee (in Di Fabio, 2017) further identified seven competencies related to employability: *personal responsibility for career management, cultural skills, belief in personal ability, job resilience, positive sociable qualities, entrepreneurship, and active involvement*.

During the workshop (Phase 1) and in the focus group interview (Phase 2) participants were asked to reflect on their understanding of the term “to be employable”. The results of Chapter 4, Theme 1, sub-theme 1.3 indicate that participants’ understanding of the definition appeared mostly vague or ignorant. Some participants were able to refer to only a few skills identified by Succi and Canovi (2020) in Chapter 2 (section 2.5). To be employable, one should be able to gain and retain a job which is a learned technique or skill (Tien & Wang, 2017).

## **5.5 HOW DO LEARNERS RESPOND TO CAREER ADAPTABILITY AS AN AID TO CONSTRUCT A CAREER PATH?**

The results of the above research sub-question addressed Objective 3 of the study, namely, *to understand how learners respond to career adaptability as an aid to construct careers*. This is supported by Themes 2 to 5 in Chapter 4 of the study. Themes 2 to 5 incorporate the four pillars of career adaptability, namely, *career concern*, *career control*, *career curiosity*, and *career confidence*. The results of the themes were collected in sessions 2, 3 and 4 of the workshop (Phase 1).

The career adaptability construct was extensively discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2) of this dissertation.

### **5.5.1 Career concern**

The results of Chapter 4, Theme 2 confirm that the scaffold of the career concern pillar appeared to propel learners into critical thinking about their plans for a future career. Career concern refers to future orientation and cultivates feelings of optimism, hope, and planning (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017). A lack of career concern causes feelings of detachment and discouragement towards the future. Hopeful and planful behaviour and growing self-esteem develop if learners are offered the chance to partake in career construction activities.

The results of Chapter 4, Theme 2 (sub-themes 2.1 and 2.2) demonstrate that several participants identified problems with constructing future career plans due to a lack of self-esteem (category 2.1.1) and barriers which they did not know existed before the reflection process took place (sub-theme 2.2). The participants identified feelings of inadequacy, futility, regret, and pessimism which negatively influenced their career planning processes. They also recognised the above feelings as barriers while reflecting and felt the urge to disengage themselves and change their attitudes to potential self-belief and constructive career planning.



### **5.5.2 Career control**

The key to taking responsibility for the self and the future lies in career control. Keywords involved in career control include decisiveness, decision-making, assertive conduct, and self-belief (Hartung & Cadaret, 2017). The findings of Chapter 4, Theme 3.1 (category 3.1.1) indicate that many participants manifested exceptional personal understanding of career control after the scaffold was presented. Participants reflected on shortages (sub-theme 3.1, category 3.1.1), presented challenges, and found solutions. Some participants felt uncertain and hesitant about the future and demonstrated a lack of career control (sub-theme 3.1, category 3.1.2). A few participants indicated that their parents influenced their career choices (sub-theme 3.2) and found it empowering to experience autonomy in determining their own career paths.

### **5.5.3 Career curiosity**

The results of Chapter 4, Theme 4 confirmed the importance of career curiosity for career construction. After an introduction to the career curiosity pillar, participants reflected on and came to understand the fluidness of the 21<sup>st</sup> century work environment. Participants agreed that a lack of curiosity would lead to hardship (sub-theme 4.1, category 4.1.1). Participants took to heart that the exploration of different career paths signified increased knowledge about the world of work and individual growth (Hlad'o et al., 2020). A few participants found an immediate change in attitude to become curious about a career strenuous (sub-theme 4.1 category 4.1.2), and they held on to disabling feelings of doubt, fear, and insecurity due to the disruptiveness of the 21<sup>st</sup> century working environment.

### **5.5.4 Career confidence**

The findings of Chapter 4, Theme 5 (sub-theme 5.1) point to a well-founded number of adaptive skills and self-regulation after learners were introduced to the scaffold of career confidence. Many participants were able to internalise and uncover self-regulatory and adaptive reserves (Drabik-Podgórna, 2017). Participants were able to

positively seek ways to overcome obstacles (category 5.1.1) as they initiated the career construction process (Coetzee et al., 2015). Several participants experienced a lack of confidence and self-belief (category 5.1.2), by exhibiting traits of self-consciousness and inhibition. These participants however, recognised their barriers and sought potential ways to remedy the shortages.

## **5.6 WHAT ARE LEARNERS' VIEWS ON CAREER ADAPTABILITY AS AN AID TO RAISE CAREER CONSTRUCTION AWARENESS?**

This section links to the previous objective, namely, *to understand how learners respond to career adaptability as an aid to construct careers* (Objective 3), but focuses on the practice of career adaptability as an instructional scaffold.

Career adaptability and its four pillars as an instructional scaffold was discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 (literature review). The scaffold (career adaptability psychosocial construct) was introduced in sessions 1 to 5 of the workshop (Phase 1) and discussed in Chapter 4, Themes 2 to 5.

The career adaptability construct leaned on Vygotsky's cognitive development model (Woolfolk, 2016) for participants as a scaffold to operate in their zone of proximal development and to reach an understanding of dealing with difficult concepts.

After the workshop (Phase 1) on the career adaptability construct and its four pillars (*career concern, -control, -curiosity, and -confidence*), eight participants took part in a focus group to discuss the benefit of career adaptability to construct a career.

The results of Chapter 4, Theme 6 (sub-question theme 6.1) indicate that the participants found that the workshop fostered awareness of the importance of career planning in school before entering the job market. Furthermore, the participants were not aware of the status of the 21<sup>st</sup> century job market and the effects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution on the future of jobs (category 6.1.1). After the workshop, the participants understood that they needed to focus on multiple careers and be flexible in their career planning process. The participants also felt that they needed to become attitudinal ready by investigating the job market and build resilience to be able to navigate the future job market (category 6.1.2). The research findings also conclude

that the career adaptability construct potentially empowered learners to overcome fear and insecurity (category 6.1.2) by replacing these with feelings of personal agency.

### **5.6.1 Reflective practice**

To obtain self-understanding, the participants mindfully connected with their individual life experiences through the practice of reflection (Mortari, 2015). The research findings were derived from the researcher and research assistant's field notes in Chapter 4, Theme 6 (sub-theme 6.2). The research results indicate that the group and individual reflections in the workshop (Phase 1) potentially improved participation and contributed to exchanging ideas and self-management (Annamalai et al., 2015).

### **5.6.2 Research assistant field notes**

The research assistant who assisted with observations during the workshop sessions (Phase 1) found that the participants were initially unsure and suspicious of the workshop (Chapter 4, Theme 6, sub-theme 6.2, category 6.2.1). However, after I translated the theory into practice with an African proverb, the participants were interested in the topics and actively contributed to the group reflections.

Participants preferred small group discussions and appreciated the opinions of their peers. Participants reflected on their concerns and assisted group participants by asking questions and leading them to answers. Although the participants fully embraced small group reflection, they were less enthused by written reflection. The participants demonstrated positive attitudes during the workshop and applied critical thinking skills.

### **5.6.3 Researcher field notes**

Initially, the participants appeared apprehensive about the content in the first session of the workshop (Phase 1), but after explaining the reason for the workshop and reassuring their safety, participants actively engaged in lively discussions and group reflections (Chapter 4, Theme 6, sub-theme 6.2). The small group reflections proved

to provide valuable input as participants drew in hesitant participants in the well-known “ubuntu” manner and found new perspectives by listening to others’ views. Participants found the private, written reflection (sub-theme 6.2, category 6.2.2) less enjoyable as they were forced into deep critical introspection and felt a loss by not “hearing” their own voices. The participants’ critical thinking skills were put into action and empowered learners to change negative attitudes and creatively plan career paths.

## **5.7 HOW DO AFRICAN PROVERBS SUPPORT LEARNERS WITH CRITICAL THINKING AND DECONSTRUCTING THE CAREER ADAPTABILITY CONSTRUCT?**

This section addresses the research sub-question 4 and Objective 4, which endeavoured to *explore how African proverbs support learners with critical thinking and deconstructing the career adaptability construct.*

African proverbs were discussed as a tool to deconstruct the career adaptability construct in the literature review (Chapter 2) of this study. African proverbs were used to deconstruct the career adaptability construct with its four pillars in all the sessions of the workshop (Phase 1):

Career adaptability – *If the rhythm of the drumbeat changes, the dance step must adapt.*

Career concern – *Where you will sit when you are old, shows where you stood in your youth.*

Career curiosity – *A baby on its mother's back does not know the way is long.*

Career control – *He who eats an egg foregoes a future meal of chicken soup.*

Career confidence – *If there is no enemy within, the enemy outside can do no harm.*

The results of Chapter 4, Theme 6 (sub-theme 6.3) show that the African proverbs provided the participants with an opportunity to create a potential alternative reality by looking through a lens of African views and experiences. The African proverbs encouraged participants to engage their critical thinking skills (Asimeng-Boahene, 2009).

#### **5.7.1 Learners' reflections on the use of African proverbs to deconstruct career adaptability**

Participants were asked to reflect on the use of African proverbs to deconstruct career adaptability in the focus group interview (Phase 2) of the study.

The results of Chapter 4, Theme 6 (sub-theme 6.3) determined that the participants found it supportive utilising African proverbs to deconstruct the career adaptability construct in Phase 1 (workshop) of the study. Participants stated that their grandparents used African proverbs to explain life experiences and that they could relate to the proverbs.

#### **5.7.2 Researcher's reflection on the use of African proverbs to deconstruct career adaptability**

The results of Chapter 4, Theme 6 (sub-theme 6.3) indicate that African proverbs set the participants critical thinking into action. Whilst facilitating the five workshop sessions in Phase 1, I was able to illustrate the meaning of career adaptability with less "teaching", allowing more time for participants to reach within and reflect, link it to the respective career adaptability pillar (career concern, -control, -curiosity, and -confidence) and autonomously apply their critical thinking skills to the proverb and its meaning.

### **5.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

As with all research undertakings, limitations are usually encountered in one form or another. In terms of the present study, the following limitations were experienced. The

first limitation concerned school selection. It is sometimes difficult to initiate a research study in a government school as they mostly do not have time to accommodate researchers due to the full curriculum. I approached several suitable government schools in the greater Tshwane area who turned me down, reasons being that the school day is already fully packed with learning and sports activities. It was frustrating to get the door slammed in my face at each turn. I stated my case at the school where the research was conducted and the workshop and focus group interview was approved as the school thought that Grade 11 learners could benefit from the workshop content.

The second limitation was related to time and weekday for sessions. Only three weeks remained of the school term when the research study was approved by the UNISA Department of Education Ethics Committee (Addendum 1). The ideal timing for the workshop was one session per week for five weeks. Finding suitable days at two sessions a week was problematic, as many students have sports or cultural activities after school. The Department of Education only allows research at schools to be done after formal school hours and in specific terms which did not allow me to change the workshop. On the chosen days, a few learners reported that teachers changed times for choir practice or cultural events and that they were not able to attend on that specific day. Only learners who were able to stay after school or could arrange alternative transport could be considered for the workshop. It left many learners disappointed, as they were keen to attend the workshop.

The third limitation concerned the length of the session. One hour was allocated for each session, but learners were held back by teachers after school, and on three occasions I was not able to start the workshop session on time, which resulted in hasty workshop sessions. In one specific week, I was forced to combine two workshop sessions into one, and learners did not have time to reflect in small groups.

Despite the limitations, the study provided a new understanding of the manner learners used career adaptability to construct career paths.

## **5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This section presents the recommendations, addressing the final objective of the study (Objective 5), aimed at three target areas, namely, policy, practice, and further research.

### **5.9.1 Recommendations for education policy**

The following recommendations are made for education policy:

- Career education should receive greater emphasis in schools and a significant percentage of the future life orientation curriculum in South African high schools could revolve around career education with well-informed teachers as facilitators.
- The career adaptability construct and employability skills could be introduced in the school curriculum to prepare learners for the world of work. It is clear from the research results that participants lack knowledge which places them at a disadvantage when entering the world of work.
- At the graduate level, a mandatory programme in learner career education could be implemented for future teachers to raise awareness and for them to assist learners during their school years.
- Workshops should be created on a tertiary level for life orientation teachers on career education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and emphasis should be placed on career adaptability skills, employability skills, and resilience.

### **5.9.2 Recommendations for practice**

The following recommendations are made for future practice:

- Learners should be made aware of the effects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the world of work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to suitably prepare for the world of work through comprehensive career education and not be part of the unemployment statistics.
- Learners require assistance with gaining resilience to prepare for the world of work. Learners are vulnerable and not equipped to cope with the 21<sup>st</sup> century

world of work. Learners gain resilience to cope with adverse 21<sup>st</sup> century working conditions by applying the career adaptability construct to their career construction process.

- The career adaptability workshop model used in this dissertation could be introduced in phases in the earlier grades, as Grade 11 learners make their subject selections in Grade 10, and learners found that their chosen career paths required different subjects. Deconstructing career adaptability into easily understood African proverbs leaves room to phase in career adaptability with its four pillars gradually each year, starting at Grade 7. It would mean that learners might be ready to make informed subject selections in Grade 10 in line with their possible career choices. Further research on the effect of career adaptability deconstructed by African proverbs as a career construction tool might be necessary.
- Schools should focus on small group discussions and reflective practice to enhance critical thinking in career education.
- Parents should be made aware of the current prognosis for work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and be provided with information to advocate the practice of career planning in early childhood.

### **5.9.3 Recommendation for further research**

The following recommendations are made for further research:

- Case studies in different types of schools, demographics, and learner age groups might provide solutions to effective career education.
- Case studies on the current teacher knowledge base and proposals for 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching in career education could be considered.
- Further case studies on the impact of group reflection for career construction could be undertaken to assist learners with career planning.



## 5.10 CONCLUSION

This study was undertaken to understand how learners plan for careers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century world of work. The career adaptability construct was specifically chosen to investigate its application possibilities to aid learners and serve as an instructional scaffold in their career construction process.

The career adaptability construct has not previously been explored as a scaffold or learning aid for career education in a South African classroom setting. My study could add value to career education in all South African schools.

The results of Chapter 4 confirm the effectiveness of the career adaptability construct as an instructional scaffold in learners' career planning activities. If deconstructed into African proverbs and phased into the curriculum, it is an inclusive programme that would reach, benefit, and empower every school learner in South Africa, irrespective of race, class, or demographics.

It can therefore be stated with confidence that the aim of the study was achieved, the five research objectives were met, and the five research questions were fully answered.

I would like to close this study with the following words of wisdom:

*“Let us put our minds together and see what life can make for our children”*

– (Sitting Bull, n.d.)

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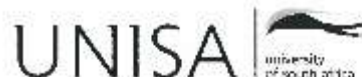
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# ADDENDA

## Addendum 1: Ethics approval



### UNISA COLLEGE OF EDUCATION ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Date: 2018/11/14

Ref: **2018/11/14/59371064/62/MC**

Name: Mrs M Algra

Student: 59371064

Dear Mrs Algra

**Decision:** Ethics Approval from  
2018/11/14 to 2021/11/14

**Researcher(s):** Name: Mrs M Algra  
E-mail address: marlene.algra@gmail.com  
Telephone: +27 82 578 5304

**Supervisor(s):** Name: Dr H Olivier  
E-mail address: olivih@unisa.ac.za  
Telephone: +27 12 429 6753

#### Title of research:

**Exploring the influence of adaptability on career construction to increase employability for Grade 11 learners**

**Qualification:** M. Ed in Psychology of Education

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA College of Education Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for the period 2018/11/14 to 2021/11/14.

*The **medium risk** application was reviewed by the Ethics Review Committee on 2018/11/14 in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.





## Addendum 2: GDE approval



### GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

### GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

|                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Date:                          | 07 March 2018  |
| Validity of Research Approval: | 05 February 2018 – 28 September 2018<br>2018/373   |
| Name of Researcher:            | Marlene A.   |
| Address of Researcher:         | 7 Took's Corner<br>Pierre van Ryneveld<br>Centurion, 0157  |
| Telephone Number:              | 012 662 0664 082 578 5304  |
| Email address:                 | marlene.algra@gmail.com  |
| Research Topic:                | Exploring the influence of adaptability on career construction to increase employability for Grade 11 learners |
| Type of qualification          | MEd Psychology of Education  |
| Number and type of schools:    | One Secondary School   |
| District/s/HO                  | Tshwane South  |

#### Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

*Faith Tshabalala* 13/03/2018

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1

*Making education a societal priority*

#### Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7<sup>th</sup> Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

## Addendum 3: Letter of consent/assent



### LETTER OF CONSENT OR ASSENT LEARNER AND PARENT

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I am doing a study on "The influence of adaptability on career construction to increase employability for Grade 11 learners" as part of my studies at the University of South Africa. Your principal has given me permission to do this study in your school. I would like to invite you to be a very special part of my study. I am doing this study so that I can find ways for learners to better equip themselves towards employability and choosing a career path. This may help you and many other learners of your age in different schools.

This letter is to explain to you what I would like you to do. There may be some words you do not know in this letter. You may ask me or any other adult to explain any of these words that you do not know or understand. You may take a copy of this letter home to think about my invitation and talk to your parents about this before you decide if you want to be in this study.

I would like to ask you to participate in activities for 40 minutes after school once a week for five weeks. You should ensure that you have an arrangement for transport to your home after each session.

The workshop will take the form of reflection, group discussions, writing, drawing and art forms of your choice for you to be able to express your views and opinions on the following concepts with regards to your career path decisions:

| PRINCIPLES        | LEARNER ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE WORLD OF WORK   |
|-------------------|--|
| Career concern    | Negative and apathetic towards future/positive and pro-active  |
| Career control    | Indecision/decisive<br>Uncertainty about future/certain about future<br>Hesitancy/certainty  |
| Career curiosity  | Limited exploration/full exploration<br>Unrealistic aspiration and expectations about future<br>career/realistic aspiration and expectations about future career |
| Career confidence | Feelings about future:<br>Self-consciousness/self-assured<br>Timidity /decisiveness<br>Inhibition/unconstrained  |



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The research structure for session will be as follows:

- I. The researcher will facilitate six contact sessions with the participants. The researcher will introduce the term, career adaptability and the four principles; career concern, career curiosity, career control and career confidence and the related African proverbs assigned to each of the principles.
- II. The first five sessions of the workshop will entail the following:
  - a. Meet and greet.
  - b. Introduce and explain the aims and objectives of the session to learners.
  - c. Engage learners in discoursing the meaning and influence of the principle with regards to constructing a career. The first session will be an informative session on the aims of the workshop and the deconstruction and explanation of the term: career adaptability. The following four sessions will aim at discussing a specific principle. The researcher facilitates the discussions by "I wonder ..." questions.
  - d. Learners are randomly divided into small groups for reflective discussions and brainstorming. The small group session might be audio-recorded for data collection purposes.
  - e. The researcher asks learners to further reflect individually by creative writing or drawing in a personal journal.
  - f. The researcher collects the journals at the end of each session for data collection.
  - g. The sessions will be observed by a research assistant and notes will be used for data collection.
- III. Session 6 will consist of a focus group interview will be conducted after the five sessions has been concluded to discuss the meaning learners made of the workshop content.
- IV. A follow-up focus group interview might be requested by the researcher for supplementary data gathering purposes should time run out in the first focus group interview.

I will write a report on the study, but I will not use your name in the report or say anything that will let other people know who you are. Participation is voluntary, and you do not have to be part of this study if you don't want to take part. If you choose to be in the study, you may stop taking part at any time without penalty. You may tell me if you do not wish to answer any of my questions. No one will blame or criticise you. When I am finished with my study, I shall return to your school to give a short talk about some of the helpful and interesting things I found out in my study. I shall invite you to come and listen to my talk.

The potential benefits of this study are for you to become empowered and motivated to investigate and plan for a life-long career.

There is no potential risk involved for you.

Should you experience any discomfort at any time, a registered Educational Psychologist will be available for debriefing, as well as your School Counsellor.



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I will make use of audio recordings during the workshop for information gathering purposes and the information will be accessed by me only. I will remind you of the recording before every session.

A research assistant may be present during our sessions for making field notes. The information of these notes will be accessed by me only.

You will be asked to reflect on our discussions by writing, drawing or any art form of your choice. The material will be collected and used for research purposes by me only.

The researcher might take pictures of interesting creative writing and art for presentation in her research material but will ensure that your privacy and confidentiality is protected by using pseudonyms.

You will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for your participation in the research.

If you decide to be part of my study, you will be asked to sign the form on the next page. If you have any other questions about this study, you can talk to me or you can have your parent or another adult call me at 0825785304. Do not sign the form until you have all your questions answered and understand what I would like you to do.

Researcher: Mrs Marlene Algra



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Do not sign the written assent form if you have any questions. Ask your questions first and ensure that someone answers those questions.

**WRITTEN ASSENT/CONSENT**

I/we have read this letter which asks me/my child to be part of a study at my school. I/we have understood the information about the study and I /we know what I/my child will be asked to do. I/we am/are willing (for my child) to be in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Learner's name (print):

\_\_\_\_\_  
Learner's signature:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness's name (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

(The witness is over 18 years old and present when signed.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/guardian's name (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/guardian's signature:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's name (print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's signature:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date:



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## Addendum 4: Permission – school principal



### Request for permission to conduct research at xxxx High School

Exploring the influence of adaptability on career construction to increase employability for Grade 11 learners.

9 January 2019

Ms xxxx  
School Principle

Dear xxxxxxxx

I, Marlene Algra am doing research under supervision of Dr. Hermien Olivier, a lecturer in the Department of Psychology of Education towards a Med degree at the University of South Africa.

We are inviting you to participate in a study entitled: Exploring the influence of adaptability on career construction to increase employability for Grade 11 learners.

The aim of the study is an attempt for learners to increase their employability and empower/inspire them to investigate future career paths.

The study will entail five workshop sessions and one focus group sessions (40 minutes each). Activities will include discussions, creative writing and drawing for learners to express their views and opinions and reflect on the content. The sessions will take place after school comes out in the afternoon, twice a week for three weeks.

The benefits of this study are to introduce career adaptability principles (career curiosity, career concern, career control and career confidence) for career construction by using African Proverbs, in order to propel learners into thinking critically, planning and constructing life-long careers. The knowledge gained might stimulate learners to prepare themselves better for the world of work.

There is no anticipated potential risk involved in the study.

There will be no reimbursement or any incentives for participation in the research.

Feedback procedure with the learners will occur before each workshop and after the focus group interview.

Yours sincerely

---

MARLENE ALGRA  
Researcher



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## Addendum 5: Research assistant confidentiality agreement



### RESEARCH ASSISTANT CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Exploring the influence of adaptability on career construction to increase employability for Grade 11 learners.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ [name of research assistant], agree to assist the researcher with this study by providing observation notes. I agree to maintain full confidentiality when performing these tasks.

Specifically, I agree to:

1. keep all research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the researcher;
2. hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be revealed during the course of performing the research tasks;
3. not make copies of any raw data in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts), unless specifically requested to do so by the primary investigator;
4. give, all raw data in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the researcher when I have completed the research tasks;
5. destroy all research information in any form or format that is not returnable to the researcher (e.g., information stored on my computer hard drive) upon completion of the research tasks.

Provide the following contact information for research assistant:

Printed name of research assistant \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of research assistant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Printed name of researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



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## Addendum 6: Focus group interview questions

### APPENDIX F: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What are your feelings about the content of the workshop?

How did you experience the influence of African proverbs to explain the meaning of career adaptability?

Are you concerned about your future career path? What are you concerned about? Is there anything you can do about it?

Are you currently looking at different options for work after school – how do you do it?

How confident are you that you will get a job after school/studies?

Do you feel that you have control over your future work situation? Why/why not?

What does the phrase "to be employable" mean to you"?

Are there any other thoughts that you would like to share about ideas you became aware of in the workshop?



## Addendum 7: Workshop schedule – phase 1

| SESSION ONE  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| TOPIC  | <b>CAREER ADAPTABILITY – OVERVIEW</b>   |   |
| AFRICAN PROVERB  | <i>If the rhythm of the drumbeat changes, the dance step must adapt.</i>  |   |
| <b>Learners</b>  | <b>Researcher</b>   | <b>Research Assistant</b>                               |
| Discuss in class and small groups by reflecting on the proverb and its meaning related to career construction.<br>Written reflection – drawing, writing. | An introductory explanation of career adaptability and its four principles.<br>Facilitate group activities.<br><br>Participated as an observer.           | Complete observer.<br><br>Observe and make field notes. |
| SESSION TWO  |   |   |
| TOPIC  | <b>CAREER CONCERN</b> ( <i>Instil a habit of life-long career concern</i> )   |   |
| AFRICAN PROVERB  | <i>Where you will sit when you are old, shows where you stood in your youth.</i>  |   |
| <b>Learners</b>  | <b>Researcher</b>   | <b>Research Assistant</b>                               |
| Discuss in class and small groups by reflecting on the proverb and its meaning related to career construction.<br>Written reflection – drawing writing.  | The researcher briefly introduces the proverb and asks the learners to reflect on it.<br>Facilitate group activities.<br><br>Participated as an observer. | Complete observer.<br><br>Observe and make field notes. |
| SESSION THREE  |   |   |
| TOPIC  | <b>CAREER CURIOSITY</b> ( <i>Establish a habit of lifelong curiosity</i> )  |   |
| AFRICAN PROVERB  | <i>A baby on its mother's back does not know the way is long.</i>   |   |
| <b>Learners</b>  | <b>Researcher</b>   | <b>Research Assistant</b>                               |
| Discuss in class and small groups by reflecting on the proverb and its meaning   | The researcher briefly introduces the proverb and   | Complete observer.                                      |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| related to career construction.<br>Written reflection – drawing writing.  | asks the learners to reflect on it.<br>Facilitate group activities.<br><br>Participated as an observer.   | Observe and make field notes.                           |
| <b>SESSION FOUR</b>   |   |   |
| TOPIC   | <b>CAREER CONTROL</b> ( <i>The importance of lifelong career self-management</i> )  |   |
| AFRICAN PROVERB   | <i>He who eats an egg foregoes a future meal of chicken soup.</i>   |   |
| <b>Learners</b>   | <b>Researcher</b>   | <b>Research Assistant</b>                               |
| Discuss in class and small groups by reflecting on the proverb and its meaning related to career construction.<br>Written reflection – drawing writing. | The researcher briefly introduces the proverb and asks the learners to reflect on it.<br>Facilitate group activities.<br><br>Participated as an observer. | Complete observer.<br><br>Observe and make field notes. |
| <b>SESSION FIVE</b>   |   |   |
| TOPIC   | <b>CAREER CONFIDENCE</b> ( <i>The importance of career confidence</i> ).  |   |
| AFRICAN PROVERB   | <i>If there is no enemy within, the enemy outside can do no harm.</i>   |   |
| <b>Learners</b>   | <b>Researcher</b>   | <b>Research Assistant</b>                               |
| Discuss in class and small groups by reflecting on the proverb and its meaning related to career construction.<br>Written reflection – drawing writing. | The researcher briefly introduces the proverb and asks the learners to reflect on it.<br>Facilitate group activities.<br><br>Participated as an observer. | Observe and make field notes.<br><br>Complete observer. |

## Addendum 8: Learner worksheets – session 1

Queenāl (psydonem)

| CONCEPTS OF CAREER ADAPTABILITY |
|---------------------------------|
| Career Curiosity                |
| Career Concern                  |
| Career Control                  |
| Career Confidence               |

*"If the rhythm of the drum beat changes, the dance step must adapt"*

I WONDER WHAT THIS PROVERB MEANS TO YOU IN TERM OF YOUR CAREER CHOICES?

if my dreams don't go as planned it's up to me  
to take a stand to make bigger plans even though  
the situation is tough I should adjust my dreams  
and face them in order to conquer

REFLECT ON THE FOLLOWING:

\* Group reflection

"I wonder ....:

... what your plans are for employment after you complete Grade 12?

... if you have long-term career plan?

... where you see yourself in 5 years?

... what you will do if your plans do not work out?

... how you currently prepare for the world of work?

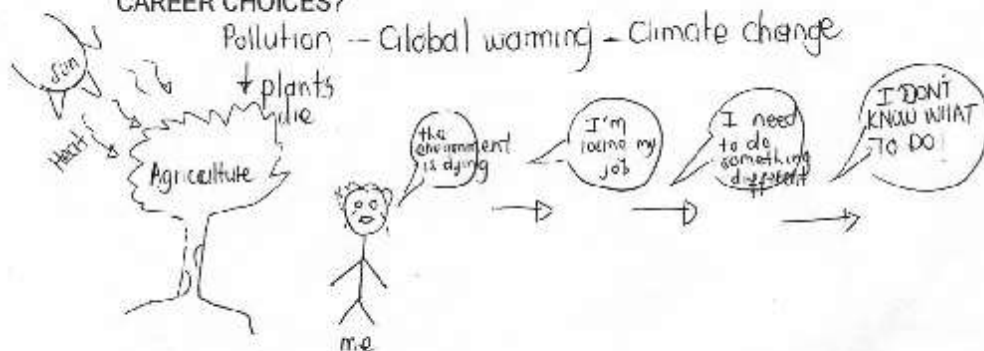
... what your understanding is of the term "to be employable?"

~~Handwritten scribble~~

| CONCEPTS OF CAREER ADAPTABILITY |
|---------------------------------|
| Career Curiosity                |
| Career Concern                  |
| Career Control                  |
| Career Confidence               |

**"If the rhythm of the drum beat changes, the dance step must adapt"**

I WONDER WHAT THIS PROVERB MEANS TO YOU IN TERM OF YOUR CAREER CHOICES?



REFLECT ON THE FOLLOWING:

"I wonder ...:

- ... what your plans are for employment after you complete Grade 12?
- ... if you have long-term career plan?
- ... where you see yourself in 5 years?
- ... what you will do if your plans do not work out?
- ... how you currently prepare for the world of work?
- ... what your understanding is of the term "to be employable?"

## Addendum 9: Learner worksheets – session 2

### Session 2

**Name:** Tommy - lee - Sparta (psychoneum)

"where you will sit when you are old, shows where your stood in your youth"

= It means that effort and hardwork or determination that you put in now will reflect on your future. behaviour set your tomorrow.

It's like if you decide to Play with your life and not making an effort of changing and making your life a Success then you will end up like a nothing.

As Im saying here my self, I am really working hard to make my life a Success so that I can be able to be indepent and have the life I have always dream of as I want to study Medicine.

Reflection: (I use my inner thought to reflect on things in my own life)

... how is the world going to look in 20 years from now with regards to jobs?

... what could I do now to make sure I will have a job?

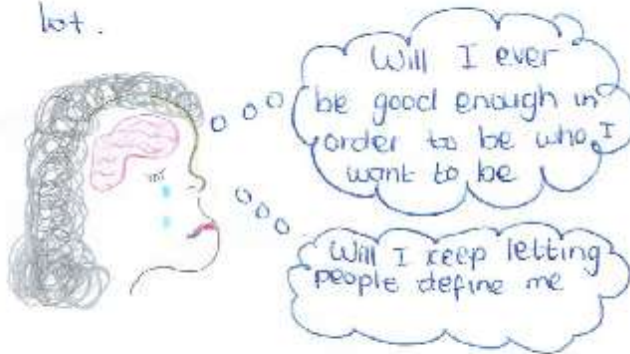
Queenal

## Session 2

Name: Queenal (psydonneur)

**"where you will sit when you are old, shows where your stood in your youth"**

This immediately makes me picture myself years later. I see myself wondering is this what I wanted in life, for me to sit here with certain failed tasks that I could've accomplished when I had the chance to do. I regret being in this position. At times because of lack of motivation and people who insist on seeing my downfall I fail to see myself positively which leads me into doubting myself a lot.



Reflection: (I use my inner thought to reflect on things in my own life)

... how is the world going to look in 20 years from now with regards to jobs?

... what could I do now to make sure I will have a job?

## Addendum 10: Learner worksheets – session 3

### Session 3

Name:

*"A baby on its mother's back does not know the way is long"* Curiosity and decisions.

Proverb regarding my career

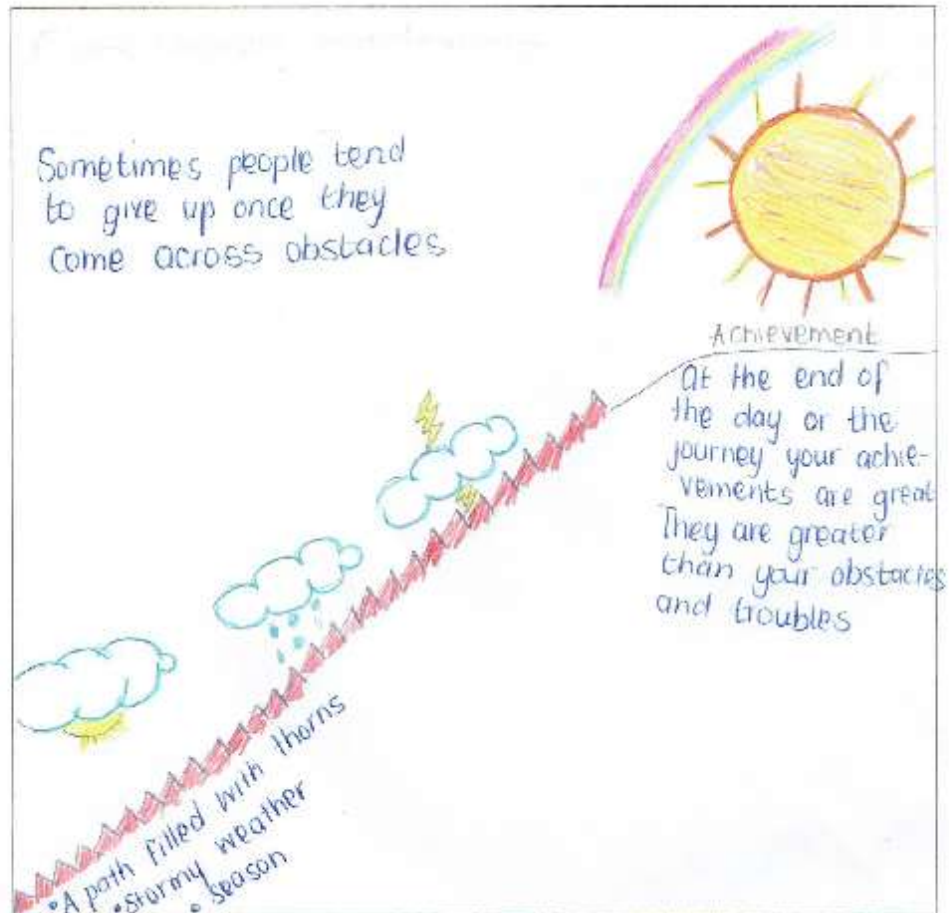
- If I rely on other people to supply me with info about my career, I might never know in which direction I'm going.
- I should advise my parents to stop making career based decisions for me. I must show them that I'm curious enough to do it on my own.
- I should stop having doubts about my decision.

I wonder what you should think about or do to overcome the above obstacle when thinking about career possibilities?

Session 3

Name: ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

*"A baby on its mother's back does not know the way is long"*



I wonder what you should think about or do to overcome the above obstacle when thinking about career possibilities?



## Addendum 11: Learner worksheets – session 4

SESSION 4

*"He who eats an egg foregoes a future meal of chicken soup". (KEYWORD: CONTROL)*

~~He who eats an egg~~

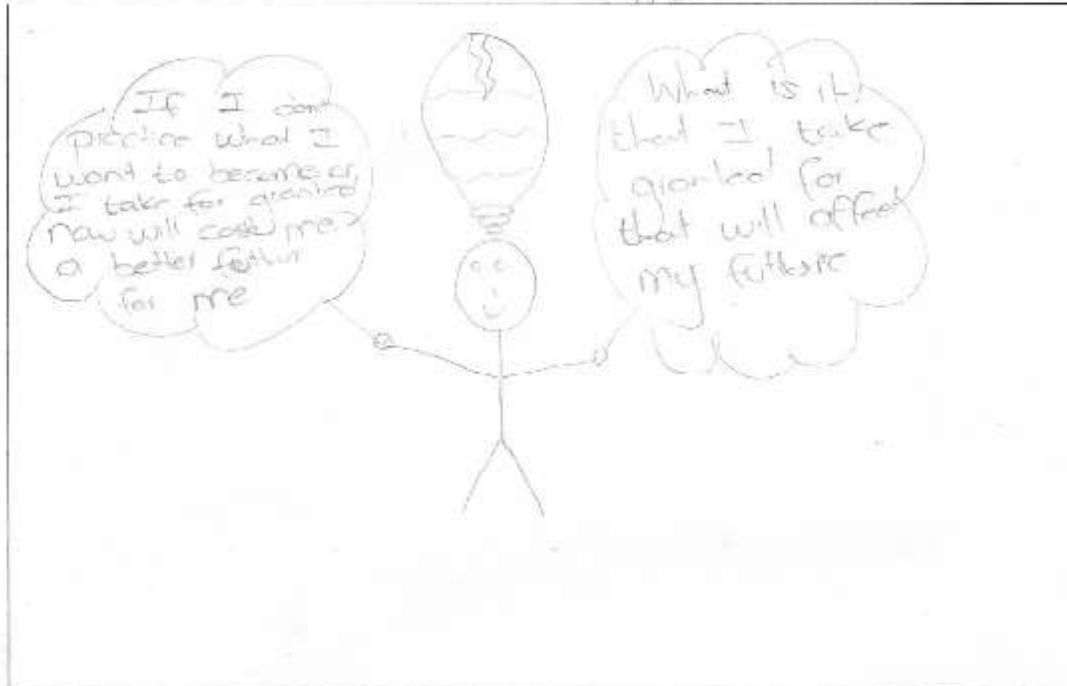
Who puts an effort into work is preparing for their future will have a successful future as you <sup>are</sup> in control of your future.

Learners reflect on ways they will be able to control their own actions and enforce resilience...

- ... what should my attitude be?
- ... who decides what I want to do?
- ... what should I depend on within myself?

- \* I should have a positive attitude by working hard and having faith in myself.
- \* I must decide on what I want to do.
- \* I should depend on abilities and Interest within myself on deciding about my future as it will have an effect on my career choice.

**"He who eats an egg foregoes a future meal of chicken soup".** (KEYWORD: CONTROL)



Learners reflect on ways they will be able to control their own actions and enforce resilience...

... what should my attitude be?

... who decides what I want to do?

... what should I depend on within myself?

- \* I should always vision my future that it's bad and only the present me can change it
- \* I myself decides what I want to do since I'll be the one that benefit's out of it
- \* I should always depend on my potential of doing better

## Addendum 12: Learner worksheets – session 5

### SESSION 5

“if there is no enemy within, the enemy outside can do no harm” (KEYWORD: CONFIDENCE)

\* If the people whom are close to me  
trys to sabotage my future and I don't  
let them Succeed with that then no  
One else can stop me from concuring  
My dreams  
\* I should not let people come  
between me and my future so  
I should always have confidence in what  
I do not matter what people say

Class discussion of proverb meaning relating to career confidence.

... what does confidence look like?

... how can I build self-confidence?

... what are my talents?

\* When you fail but still put your chin up high  
and avoid all negativities  
\* Never judge your statements and avoid what  
people say about you  
\* My talents are / drawing , arguing (standing  
for what I think is right)

**"if there is no enemy within, the enemy outside can do no harm"** (KEYWORD: CONFIDENCE)

Other people's perspectives or point of views about me will not determine my life, future and future career because I believe and know that I can get and do anything that I want to do and success in it.

Believing in myself has helped me, not only to be me but not to be easily influenced by others and not be intimidated by other people's success / good results, for everyone walking, crawling and running on their own lanes.

Class discussion of proverb meaning relating to career confidence.

... what does confidence look like?

... how can I build self-confidence?

... what are my talents?

- Confidence for me looks like the person that I am, because I don't care about what people say or think about me. So other people's perspectives doesn't define me.

- By believing in myself. Try not to catch feelings when someone corrects you or gives advice.

- Talking, helping people.

## Addendum 13: Transcript extract – group reflection

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Sp1: The first question is what your plans are after you complete grade twelve. <u>So like what do you guys want to do when you complete grade 12? What do you want to do?</u></p> <p>Sp2: I want to study, like further my studies at a university of my choice, but sometimes people think that, because I am a technical student I won't get the opportunity to go to the University of my Choice. Yea like I wanted to go to Stellenbosch and most of their things are academics, strictly academic so they expect me to be a physical science, pure math's student and where as I do take technical math's, technical science and they haven't they are not operating on a technical level yet so that's a bit of a setback for me.</p> <p>Sp3: well what I wanted to do is also study go to a university and study the same university Stellenbosch uhm... but the thing is I don't know if</p> | <p>Sp9: you know I always thought I wanted to be a geologist, but then it happened that I changed my subjects - my physics to business and well for you to be a geologist you really need physics so I am really confused right now I don't know what I want so honestly I am confused. Uhm long term career plan I always thought I wanted to work in the field I don't want to be in an office, in the field so uh... all I know is that I want to be successful I how get there I really don't know [laughing]. Honestly I am not much of a thinker so I never really think about these type of things and I think if... don't know I will just try to make it work. How I currently prepare for the world of work I honestly in my school work I put in all the effort I do Hay, cause I know that I really need this and without the platform of school then I don't think I am going anywhere, because I really want a career that's educationally based not I don't want to be an artist or whatever yeah. When I have all the skills that they are</p> | <p>Sp15: I wonder what your plan are for employment after you complete grade 12, if you have long term career plans. Where you see yourself in five years? What you will do if your plans do not work out? How you currently prepare for the world of work? What your understanding is of the term to be employable?</p> <p>Sp16: so you will answer the first question and the [crosstalk].</p> <p>Sp15: okay I am going to address the following question. What your plan are for employment after you complete grade 12. After completing my grade 12 I am going to go for the course of medicine. I am going to get medicine.</p> <p>Sp16: this is (cut) talking and I am addressing the question. My plans for employment after you complete grade 12 I am planning on doing maybe sport science or psychology.</p> | <p>Feelings about career</p> <p>Feelings: confused</p> <p>Prep for world of work</p> <p>Feelings: will my career survive?</p> <p>Long term career plan</p> <p>Feelings: I will just have to try make it work.</p> <p>Feelings: Will I still be able to get employment after matric and university studies.</p> <p>Feelings: setback with envisioned plan</p> <p>Plans after school</p> <p>Prep for world of work</p> <p>Feelings: will I be able to come up with solutions for obstacles</p> <p>Plans after school</p> |
|--|--|--|--|

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>sure where my path is so I just rely on whatever I have for now so I basically don't have anything that's my motive, but I have something because I know that I want an impact on someone and something and I want to do something for the world it is just that I don't know what it is. So even sometimes it does happen with your background where you feel like eeh how can you make it when your sister never made it or your mom can never make it so it does happen like that because of sometimes it's discouraging it's like you can't do it, but you know you can, but you just can't there is just this thing that's blocking you. So no matter your motivation is not as high as it was so you are not a better person, you are not good even with your friends, you're not good as a human being itself so I am just searching.</p> <p>Sp5: uhm I feel like my plans after I finish grade</p> | <p>career needs. Then I will have to go to school to get those qualifications in order for me to work.</p> <p>Sp11: start a fire [laughing] Guys I don't have plan so I am confused right now, like I am complex I don't know what to do.</p> <p>Sp10: okay, but you obviously have an idea of what you want.</p> <p>Sp11: I always wanted to be a lawyer, but then I just feel like I don't have the confidence.</p> <p>Sp10: but you know you can always work on that right.</p> <p>Sp11: yeah but it's not that easy you know.</p> <p>Sp10: that why you need to work on it yeah.</p> <p>Sp10: you need to know who you are inside in order for you to improve on your weaknesses and don't focus more on your strengths, you need to improve your weaknesses as well.</p> | <p>working for the rest of their lives. I want to leave a legacy where there will be charity cases where helping one generation to generation plan to helping people moving forward to move the country [inaudible].</p> <p>Sp17: yeah I am (cut) and my long term career plan is to basically after grade 12 go to university study psychology then honestly will also be doing ohm sport science and I will use my psychology in sport science to help out in companies and places like that and I'm also back when it comes to media so I will also love to be a world known YouTuber.</p> <p>Sp16: my long term career plan in the next three years I want to see myself driving planes I want to be a pilot and then I could be one with the sky.</p> <p>Sp18: my long term career plan in the next three years I want to see myself driving planes I want to be a pilot and then I could be one with the sky.</p> | <p>Feelings: don't have confidence<br/>Not easy to work on confidence.</p> <p>Feelings: what if I can't do it, feel discouraged</p> <p>Feelings: afraid to drop out and waste parents money.<br/>Feelings: not coping</p> <p>Long term plans<br/>Plans after school</p> <p>Feelings: need to know who you are. Focus on strengths, improve weaknesses.<br/>Hope things work out.<br/>Will I make it.<br/>Feelings: you are lower than those people – pressure.<br/>Not good enough even as a friend.<br/>Motivation not high.<br/>No good as a human being.<br/>Just searching ...</p> <p>Feelings: I don't know who I am inside.<br/>Feelings: insecure, want people from privileged background.</p> <p>If plans do not work out</p> <p>Group dynamics</p> <p>Feelings: insecure, what will I do if I don't meet requirements.</p> |
|---|---|---|---|



## Addendum 14: Transcript extract – Learner reflective writing

| Learner thoughts on the proverb – BEFORE THE SESSION – WHERE YOU WILL SIT WHEN YOU ARE OLD, SHOWS WHERE YOU STOOD IN YOUR YOUTH - CONCERN   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>What you put in is what you get out.<br/> All decisions took as a teenager will affect my life and career so I should aim for good and positive outcomes.<br/> The negative part is that I'm not sure that I will qualify for University because I need to pull up my socks with my marks.</p>   | <p>Future career plans - optimism<br/> Barriers motivation</p>            |
| <p>I want to become successful I want to be an independent woman who will be able to take care of her own family.<br/> Being successful has always been my dream living in a big mansion that has always been my dream.</p>   | <p>Future career plans</p>  |
| <p>The background you come from doesn't define you ... There are a lot of opportunities given to the misfortune or the people who can't afford to have what they need or want. No one has an excuse for not doing what they want. What you do in your youth or how hard you work will only be determined when you're old or whether you'll have regrets r you'll be proud of yourself. Along this whole career way, we shouldn't lose our identities or who we are.</p>                     | <p>Future career plans – decisive</p>                                     |
| <p>This immediately makes me picture myself years later. I see myself wondering is this what I wanted in life, for me to sit here with certain failed tasks that I could've accomplished when I had the chance to do. I regret being in this position. At times because of lack of motivation and people who insist on seeing my downfall I fail to see myself positively which leads me into doubting myself a lot.</p>  | <p>Barrier identified<br/> Lack of motivation – becoming aware, doubt</p> |
| <p>The choices I make today will determine my future. This is probably why I am undecisive, because I am not sure which career will last long enough.<br/> If I make the right choices (a habit) then it will stay with me forever.<br/> I don't even know where I will start after school. Sometimes I feel like I just came to school making a living.</p>  | <p>Self-esteem</p>  |
| <p>Where I currently sit right now will determine where I'll be when I'm older. I might be confused, angry disappointed and bitter. Who knows? (photo to substantiate)</p>  | <p>Confused</p>   |
| <p>What you do at the present time will make out who you will be in the future to figure out your potential within the challenges you face makes you prepared for the stronger person you will be ! But how can you train yourselves for the things you don't expect at the present time to be stronger for the future. How do I gain courage from the things I am most weak in.. Yes there is hope within me that I can, I can be better ... ? I realised that I also need me more/ as</p> | <p>Hope</p>   |

## Addendum 15: Extract – Research assistant field notes

809 Research Assistant Field notes

810 Session 1

811 Upon greeting the learners were very friendly.

812 In the beginning the majority looked **sceptical and unsure**. About all  
813 of them had a positive feeling their eyes about this. They laughed at  
814 the statement of lying on their parent's couch. They **all participated in**  
815 **the attention activity and it looked like they had fun**. It put a smile on  
816 half of their faces. They look interested in this study. They looked  
817 disappointed that they don't really do discussions in class. Someone  
818 mad a scared sound when explaining what the role of the leader is.  
819 They participate in answering questions. Some liked confused at the  
820 two theories people mentioned. They were scared to answer the  
821 questions. Where happy when they got it right. The one girl liked  
822 what she was hearing, she smiled, then it changed when the  
823 researcher said it doesn't work that way. I didn't know we are in the  
824 4th industrial revolution. They seem generally interested. Making  
825 jokes or making It funny pull them back to the topic – they like it.

826 **Two girls are discussing what was being said**. Some wrote down  
827 what the researcher said and some just listened. Putting the theory  
828 into a realistic situation they like it. Everyone is in and want to  
829 continue to come to these sessions. I wonder what they were thing  
830 when they had to do an activity. Some looked uncertain how to do  
831 this and asked questions until the researcher explained anything  
832 goes. Their faced kind of lit up when they could do anything. In the  
833 sessions they liked it when the researcher went above and beyond  
834 and exaggerated things. It was working. Joking around also  
835 worked. They seem shy and started to share the inner thoughts and  
836 answers. They need someone to break the ice. They gave good  
837 answers They were positive about the concepts. They all have plan  
838 B's. They enjoy hearing their peers' answers. They agree that their  
839 answers do not differ from each other. I wonder if they thought about  
840 it? It was confirmed, some have. I wonder how many are truthful of  
841 their expectations. Everyone is uncertain at some point in life.

842 Asking questions to draw their attention. I did not know why some of  
843 us had different views. The students really like their opinion being  
844 heard. They **like talking and hearing what their peers are saying**.  
845 They like group work. They **all started to smile when the researchers**  
846 **told them to go into groups**. They still have a positive attitude and  
847 look positive about the sessions. Some look confused at using their  
848 made-up names. **They looked focused and determined to get their**  
849 **point of views out there**. **They all smile hearing what their friends or**  
850 **peers are saying**. They told their concerns about what lies ahead.  
851 Group work works for these sessions. They all participated and  
852 listened to each other. There were a few students who looked  
853 concerned about what they were talking about or what they were

Anxiety  
unknown

Positive –  
group  
reflection

Focused

Group  
reflection  
positive

Focused and  
determined  
Group activity  
positive



## Addendum 16: Extract – Researcher reflective notes

1069 immense strain. Grade 11 also seems to be a difficult year academically. I therefore  
1070 had to shorten my workshop session and had to squeeze 2 sessions into an hour  
1071 timeframe – one after the other.

1072 The learners indicated that they loved the small group session where they could  
1073 reflect and share their thoughts with other learners. They also learned from what the  
1074 other learners were saying and found new perspectives on how to think about their  
1075 future careers.

①  
Group reflection  
discussion

1076 The group consisted of 18 learners, with 3 of them excusing themselves for choir  
1077 practice. They were sorry that they could not attend the sessions and asked for  
1078 information of the session so that they could catch up and stay on track

1079 The small group discussions worked like a house on fire. The learners liked it more  
1080 that written reflection or drawing. They were actively involved and even the most  
1081 shyest were drawn in by the conversation and had something to say.

②  
Group discussion  
③  
Reflection  
groups / Reflection  
Personal agency  
African  
Proverbs

1082 Basing the concept on African proverbs made sense to them. First, they reflected on  
1083 the meaning of the proverb and then applied the outcome on the specific concept in  
1084 their discussions.

1085 Some students felt that they were still confused on making decisions on what they  
1086 were going to do after school and that seemed to make them nervous, but after re-  
1087 confirming that these concepts in total after all the sessions, might give them  
1088 direction as to how to INITIATE the process made them more comfortable.

personal  
agency ④

1089 I had to stop discussions a couple of times as time were running out, but the learners  
1090 asked for a few moments more, as they felt they still had a lot to say on the subject.  
1091 They became animated as the discussions progressed.

1092 After the session, a couple of learners came to me to ask additional questions on the  
1093 subject.

1094 I really feel that these small group reflections are of great value to the learners to  
1095 activate critical thinking skills. It opens up alternative roads on which they wanted to  
1096 further reflect and discuss with their classmates.

⑤  
Group reflection

1097 As I was wandering through the class and offering assistance in opening up further  
1098 topics to reflect on, the learners indicated that they preferred to talk among  
1099 themselves, showing autonomy and peer dominance. The researcher remained the  
1100 observer and while group reflection was taking place, did not have a voice – and  
1101 could not influence learners – the researcher sees that as a positive

⑥  
Personal agency

1102 sign of learner empowerment.

### 1103 3 March – Session four and five

1104 I was a bit disappointed at the number of learners pitching for last weeks sessions. I  
1105 wondered if it was excuses or real pressures of their work load.

1106 At this session, I was amazed when a total of 26 learners entered the classroom.  
1107 Not only were the usual learners there, but as the word spread throughout the

## Addendum 17: Transcript extract – focus group interview

1149 indicated that they would want to participate. That might present an  
1150 administrative conundrum. I would need more hands to assist and  
1151 break the group up into two focus groups – let's see how it turns out.

### 1152 FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

1153 Number 1: Okay guys, so the first question is: What are your feelings  
1154 be fabout the content of the workshop focus on career principles?

1155 Number 1: like hum she is asking how do you feel you see the things  
1156 be to like uhm being flexible and the things like that how do you feel  
1157 about that uhm the principle that should like you got to maybe you can  
1158 say uhm you being since you are limited of stuff [inaudible] you are  
1159 not limited to one career and stuff like that and flexible [inaudible].

1160 Number 9: uhm and about the awareness and about like the this is the  
1161 principle that you support being aware of like other uhm other careers  
1162 I feel it helps, because like I was not most of the careers that ma'am  
1163 told us about I didn't know about and maybe I could have about like,  
1164 because I want to be a doctor neh maybe some of the uhm careers  
1165 that she was talking about I am better in that or I have much, like I  
1166 have bigger interest I guess in that most careers and I don't know  
1167 about them so.

1168 Number 1: yeah anyone want to add anything. Second question?

1169 Number 1: how do you experience the influence of African proverbs to  
1170 explain the meaning of career adaptability?

1171 Number 6: I feel that they help more like with the spiritual  
1172 development like even the...

1173 Number 1: yeah

1174 Number 5: [inaudible] in the future and for you to learn what you did  
1175 today is going to impact you tomorrow.

1176 Number 8: JA the way you see it and how you see it is I can't say it I  
1177 don't know how to say it, but it does

1178 Number 5: it's your own opinion.

1179 Number 8 I feel like uhm the fact that she use African proverbs we can  
1180 like uhm relate to them [inaudible] as we are growing up uh our  
1181 grandparents use to do this test maybe things like that so if she uses  
1182 African proverbs she can be you know what I mean like in honesty].

1183 Number 6: they apply, because we are black.

1184 Number 3 exactly.

1185 Number 1: okay anyone say something else.

1186 Number 5: no

Multiskill

Fostering  
awareness

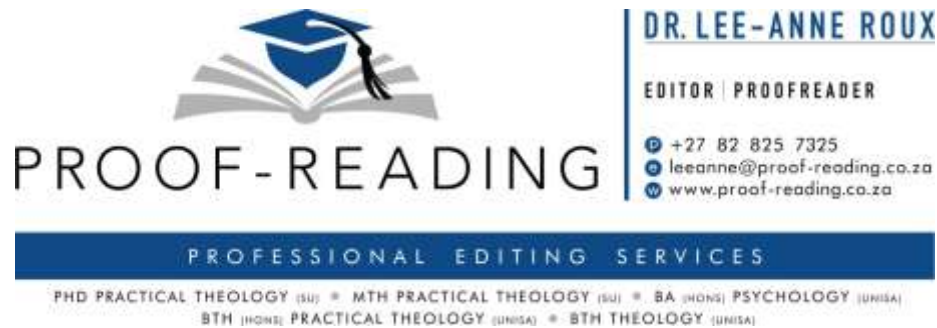
Fostering  
awareness

African  
proverbs

African  
proverbs

African  
proverbs

## Addendum 18: Editor's Letter



15 January 2021

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**RE: LANGUAGE EDITING**

This letter serves to confirm that I have edited the thesis titled:

**Self-constructing a career: Reflection following career adaptability as instructional scaffold**

**By**

**Marlene Algra**

Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Lee-Anne Roux