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Defining ukuthwasa as a pedagogy: an autoethnographic exploration into the knowledge acquisition process of ukuthwasa at a training school(lefehlo) in Soweto, Johannesburg

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Defining ukuthwasa as a pedagogy

An autoethnographic exploration into the knowledge acquisition process of ukuthwasa at a training school (lefehlo) in Soweto, Johannesburg

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Masters of Arts Degree in Anthropology under the Humanities Faculty of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

DECLARATION

I, Lebogang Esme Mokgethi declare that this thesis is my own work and that it has been not submitted for any other degree or examination at this or any other university, and that all the resources I have used or quoted have been acknowledged by means of complete references. It is submitted for the Masters of Arts Degree in Anthropology under the Humanities Faculty of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Signature *LEMokgethi*

Date 12/12/2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Let me start by acknowledging God, for my place here on this earth and for the many blessings, strength and source of wisdom that He bestowed upon me.

It is with great humility that I give thanks and praise to my ancestors, for trusting me enough to bless me with your gifts and talents. It is through your wisdom and guidance that I am here today writing about a path that was predetermined for me and documenting your presence with me throughout the journey. *Kealeboga badimo baka ba matla, badimo baka ba lesedi*.

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To all my participants, thank you for agreeing to be part of this research thank you for sharing your deepest and most sacred experiences with me. May you be richly blessed in abundance by God and the ancestors, and I wish you all nothing but the best with all your future endeavours.

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Lastly to my son, Onalerona Mokgethi, your existence in my life has been my inspiration to never give up on my research and aspirations. Thank you, son, I love you.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research report to four people who played an indelible role in my life. Although they have departed from this earth, it is their teachings and words of wisdom that I carry within me in all my endeavours.

-My grandfather Dr SK Matseke (d. 2011)

-My grandfather Mr Aaron Mokgethi (d. 2013)

-My aunt Ms Alina Mamokete Mokgethi (d. 2017)

-My grandmother Mrs Johannah “Gogo” Tabane nee Mokgethi (d. 2018)

GLOSSARY

Amadlozi - ancestors

Amagobela - teacher/trainer/senior traditional healer responsible for training initiates

Amathongo - dreams from ancestors with specific messages and instructions

Amafufunyana/inkhathazo/bolwetsi ba badimo- illnesses indicating the presence of an ancestral gift

Amakhosi/abalozi/mandawu -Nguni ancestors associated with ventriloquism

Amandawu -known as water ancestors

Amasiko - cultural rituals performed on a young child to introduce the child to the paternal and maternal ancestors

Idlozi - ancestor

Ibhayi/ihiya - a cloth used a physical representation of an ancestral animal. The colour schemes of the cloths also indicate if the person wearing the cloth has completed training or not

Impepho - a sage plant which when dried is used to communicate with the ancestors

Ingoma -singing that is done to invite the ancestors

Indumba - spiritual house used for divination and healing/ where initiates reside throughout their training

Indiki - a person who died in the family in an unpleasant manner and is within you needing to be cleansed, or requires a living individual to take on the name of the late person

Intwaso - the graduation ceremony marking the completion of *ukuthwasa*/ the process of *ukuthwasa*

Isithunywa - the ancestor who has determines the type of spiritual gift that the person must inherit. Mostly deals with the gift of prophesy

Ithwasana/ amathwasana	- initiate/s who are undergoing *ukuthwasa*
Itshoba/leshoba/ishoba	- the tail of an ox placed on a beaded stick
Iziwasho	-water remedies used by prophets for divination and healing
Izilawu/ubulawu/libhudlu	- a combination of plants and herbs used to generate a foamy substance ingested by initiates to open communication with the ancestors.
Lefehlo/iphehlo/mpande	- school where training occurs
Mkhulu	- a term used to refer to an elder/ gobela
Muthi/muti	-medicinal herbs
N'ganga	- Traditional Healer from Zimbabwe
Nganga Nkita	- traditional Healer from Kinshasa
Tangoma	- Traditional Healer from Swaziland
Thwasa	- verb of *ukuthwasa*
Ubizo	- ancestral calling
Ubuphropheto	- the gift of prophesy
Ukufemba	- an advanced healing technology performed by experienced healers who go into a trance and "sniff" aliments that are in the client's body. The healer goes into a state of trance in order to perform this
Ukugida	- rhythmic stomping of feet during a ritual.
Ukuphahla	- a ritual of communicating with the ancestors through the usage of impepho
Ukuthwasa	- a training process undertaken by those who have spiritual gifts from ancestors/ to emerge as a healer/ new moon/ rebirth
Umbilini	-intuition
Umgidi	- a ritual

Umndiki - an ancestral spirit that requires a person to undergo *ukuthwasa*

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ABSTRACT

The Apartheid Era in South Africa was not only a period of oppression of the indigenous people of South Africa; it was also a system that prohibited the right to practice indigenous customs and rituals that were in existence before the colonisation of the country. One of the practices that were prohibited and even deemed as witchcraft is that of training to become a traditional healer otherwise known as *ukuthwasa*. Ukuthwasa is defined as the active learning and training process undertaken by those who have an ancestral calling to become traditional health practitioners. Today, *ukuthwasa* is still clouded by mystery, superstition and the stigmatic notions of witchcraft. In the dawn of decolonization, various academics have taken to the fore to document not just *ukuthwasa*, but the holistic role of a traditional health practitioner (THP). Recent research has defined ukuthwasa as a process of identity formation, rituals and as a learning experience. With the strides that have been made in redefining *ukuthwasa*, there has been minimal information highlighting the role of indigenous knowledge systems involved in the process. As one with the calling to become a THP, using the ethnographic data obtained from my personal journey of *ukuthwasa*, as well as that of 2 other initiates and the trainer, one discovered that the process of *ukuthwasa* is an educational journey with its own competencies and training methodologies. Furthermore the research revealed that ukuthwasa is a developmental process that creates an environment of training and learning specifically for the critical consciousness development of the initiates. It is then outlined that through dreams, visual and audio material as well as the relationship between the initiate and the trainer, ukuthwasa is defined as a critical pedagogy that capacitates the initiate with knowledge and skills that will allow the individual to become a positive influence in society.

Keywords: *Ukuthwasa*, education, critical pedagogy, decolonization, Traditional Health Practitioner/ sangoma

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter puts the research into context through an outline of the background of the study and its relevance in South Africa. The chapter outlines the research problem and the research question as well as the significance of this study.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

According to Xaso (2015), the end of Apartheid in the Republic of South Africa saw the rise of a democratic nation which brought about socio-economic and political changes that had a tremendous impact on the identity of South Africans. It then became the aim of the democratic government to rebuild the national identity of South Africans by creating a school curriculum that would be inclusive of all South Africans, (Hobongwana-Duley, 2014). In 1994 when the late Nelson Mandela was elected as the first democratic president of the Republic of South Africa, he ensured that all schools were inclusive and that the school's curriculum would be one that replaced the educational system that was implemented by the Apartheid government. This educational system was structured on dominance and subordination and was compiled to ensure that people would become permanent workers of the middle class who were constantly exploited by the government, (Darder, 2015). The remnants of this educational system are still visible today as "education in Africa is a victim of a Western epistemological export that takes the form of science as ideology and hegemony" (Nyamnjoh, 2004:161).

Although the efforts of President Nelson Mandela ensured that all public schools were equal and open to all South African citizens irrespective of race, the school curriculum disregarded the embracing indigenous cultures, values and practices of the indigenous[1] people of South Africa, (Swartz, Harding & De Lannoy, 2012; Hobongwana-Duley, 2014).

In 1999 when former President Thabo Mbeki was elected as the second democratic President of the Republic of South Africa, his term as president was structured on the African Renaissance as an attempt of rebuilding the identity of South Africans who were shackled and disadvantaged by the effects of colonisation, (Hobongwana-Duley, 2014). What President Mbeki found was that indigenous knowledge practices were devalued and gradually

[1] For purposes of this research the term indigenous is used as a term of reference to describe the various cultural groups of people found in South Africa since pre-colonial times. This includes the Khoi and the San people.

eroding across the globe in countries that experienced colonization and oppression, and unfortunately, South Africa was no exception, (Hobongwana-Duley, 2014).

The implementation of the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) curriculum that was introduced in South African schools was an attempt at incorporating indigenous knowledge practices into the educational system; however, this was not without shortcomings. The main shortcoming of this system was that although it discussed some of the indigenous knowledge practices in its curriculum, the actual learning of these practices was not included in the curriculum and once again indigenous practices were relegated as practices which were and still are practised outside of the formal school domain, (Hobongwana-Duley, 2014). An example of an indigenous practice that has experienced the above is that of *ukuthwasa.*

According to Mlisa (2009), *ukuthwasa*; the active process of learning and acquiring traditional healing knowledge in order to train as a qualified traditional healer is an indigenous practice in South Africa which dates back to pre-colonial times whereby indigenous practices were widely accepted forms of survival. *Ukuthwasa* has like most other indigenous practices been relegated to an act of primitive and inferior practice by the effects of colonisation and is still perceived in that light even in democratic South Africa, (Mlisa; 2009).

Xaso (2015) highlights that those who undergo the process of *ukuthwasa* view it as a collection of rituals performed to accelerate and direct the transitioning of a person through knowledge acquisition and acquired by productive learning in the pursuit of personhood. With knowledge defined as, "a collective effort to name and change the world by constructing meanings that will allow one to experience the true definition of being the main subjects of our lives," (Darder, 2015:14); Thornton (2009) states that *ukuthwasa* is seen as an activity which prepares an individual to become a traditional healer but seldom highlighted as a learning experience. This is due to what Mlisa (2009) describes as the effects as colonisation.

Ukuthwasa does not subscribe to the Western view of education as well as what has been described as the "formal" educational structure however because knowledge is acquired everywhere, and is socially constructed, *ukuthwasa* is, therefore, an educational structure, (Hobongwana-Duley; 2014).

Surrounded by mystery and limited information (Mlisa, 2009; Xaso 2015), the process of *ukuthwasa* is dreaded and feared by those who have *ubizo* as they are faced with the

challenge of accepting the calling and venturing off into unknown territory that has been covered with a veil by the older generation of traditional healers who have become gatekeepers of traditional health practices in South Africa.

Set in the backdrop of Soweto, the township most recognised for the 1976 Youth Uprising against the Apartheid educational curriculum which used Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, posing a learning challenge to black South Africans who had no command of the language, (Ntsangase, Malungane, Lebelo, Brink & Krige, 2001). This research aims to describe *ukuthwasa* as a theory of practice teaching which is defined by Freire (1972) as a critical pedagogy by documenting the lived experience of the researcher as an initiate undergoing who is currently undergoing training to become a traditional health practitioner as a developmental process of the critical consciousness of the individual.

This research is an addition to the already existing literature on *ukuthwasa*.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

It all began in 2015, upon consulting with a traditional healer; I was confronted with the "dreadful" news that I have the calling and need to undergo *ukuthwasa* after a string of misfortune and illnesses which doctors could not diagnose. I then tried to read as much as possible to try and understand what the process of *ukuthwasa* was about, what one would learn as well as how I would learn and unfortunately none of the questions was answered.

I then consulted the Traditional Health Practitioners Act and found that the act fails to explicitly acknowledge what traditional healers actually do or their spiritual affiliations but indirectly implies that they are an inferior form of medical practitioners.

Furthermore, the term "traditional healing" is defined by Thornton (2009) as a misnomer as the term "traditional" has negative connotations of inferiority, informality and primitivism and this does not aid in successfully acknowledging those who become "traditional healers". In this research report, I use the terms *sangoma*, traditional healer and traditional health practitioner interchangeably without deeming the practice as inferior and primitive.

The act also does not outline nor acknowledge the process of becoming a traditional healer as a clear defined pedagogy that not only has its own customised curriculum based on the knowledge that needs to be acquired by the individual who is undergoing the training. In addition to the above, the Act does not acknowledge undergoing *ukuthwasa* as a learning

institution with its own entry requirements like those stipulated in the biomedical profession. This then still perpetuates the notion of inferiority between the two health practices.

The term 'traditional healer' masquerades the fact that just as the biomedical profession has variations, so too does the traditional profession, (Mlisa, 2009) which is why the curriculum thereof is not standardised. Furthermore, there is little or no information available, as well as no theorisation detailing the process of learning and pedagogic techniques, as well as the exact curriculum of the process which outlines just what the initiate would have learnt at the end of each of the stages of transition.

I needed to understand how this would alter my life especially because I found out that this process would vary from three months to as long as two years as well as how one would go about the process; then I realised that it is due to the lack of information that most young people who are confronted with *ubizo* (the calling) become reluctant to accept the calling because the myths surrounding *ukuthwasa* instil a sense of fear and hostility.

By partaking in this study, one aims to argue that *ukuthwasa* can be seen as a form of indigenous pedagogy that not only produces traditional healers but constantly regenerates the identity of an individual through knowledge acquisition and a form of active engagement between the student (*ithwasana*) and teacher (*gobela*).

Furthermore I aim to demonstrate how the process of *ukuthwasa* teaches one about their personal identity as well as the spiritual healing knowledge needed for them to transition from being a sick individual to understanding just how their bodies become mediums of healing and their entire being becomes a custodian of a pre-colonial tradition that continues to thrive and evolve today.

RESEARCH QUESTION

To what extent can *ukuthwasa* be viewed as a form of critical indigenous pedagogy?

SUB-QUESTIONS

The research aims to assess the following sub-areas of enquiry

1. Apart from highlighting the rituals of *ukuthwasa*, what knowledge is required to advance to each stage of the process?
2. What is the role of the teacher in ensuring the successful learning and training of the

initiates?

3. What is the role of the dreams, signs and visions in the process of *ukuthwasa* and how is the meaning an analysis thereof a product of situated learning?

SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

Johann Frederic Herbart defines education as a process of personal development through establishing and unleashing the potential within an individual, that will ensure that they become active, productive citizens in society (Freire; 1972). Freire (1972) argues that the process of acquiring knowledge is about developing a critical consciousness. This critical consciousness instils a sense of freedom in those who are oppressed (in this instance the oppressed are the amathwasana whom before undergoing *ukuthwasa* were marginalised and isolated in great confusion by the transitional crises that they were facing- but could not understand). This critical consciousness is created by engaging in a dialogue on education that results in the synthesis of thought and action, (Freire, 1972). This research intends to define *ukuthwasa* as a critical pedagogy and education system that liberates the individual.

Furthermore, by documenting the learning process of *ukuthwasa*, the myths surrounding the practice thereof will be dispelled for those who are anxious about the process and are confronted by feelings of isolation and marginalisation due to the myth of *ukuthwasa* being a primitive act surrounded by mystery and misinformation.

In the present time of decolonisation; this research will demonstrate an educational system which varies to the formally implemented system of learning found in institutions of learning. Furthermore, this research aims to set forth dialogues on how to legitimise *ukuthwasa* as a system of education that is not inferior to western education but is a system that functions on its own premise.

DELIMINATIONS OF THE STUDY

According to Creswell (2014) delimitations of a study are the characteristics that limit the scope of research and define the boundaries of the study which are in the control of the researcher. The main focus of the study is on initiates who are currently within the process of *ukuthwasa* alongside the researcher, who is also an initiate. The researcher targeted these initiates as we are all training at the same place, under the *Makhosi lefehlo*. This would not

only provide rich field data through insider perspective but also through the daily interactions, requirements and experiences that come with actually living within the particular *lefehlo/mpande*. Documented throughout a period of 5 months, this study contains data from different stages of *ukuthwasa* as well as the various spaces involved in the training.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations of the study are defined as characteristics of design or methodology that sets the parameters on the application or interpretation of the results of the study which can include constraints on the generalizability and the utility of the findings (Babbie, 2007: 357). The use of purposive sampling has the disadvantage of limiting the study with regards to generalizability. By using multiple methods of collection and triangulation, the researcher attempted to minimise the aforementioned limitation.

Insider perspective also has issues of bias and this was minimised by the usage of reflexivity journals as well as having other participants involved in the study.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter 1- Provides an introduction to the study as well as the objectives thereof.

Chapter 2- Outlines the literature review of the study as well as the theoretical framework.

Chapter 3- Provides insight on the methodology and design used in the study as well as data collection methods and ethical consideration.

Chapter 4- This chapter is the *Amafufunyana Stage*- the emergence of the calling which discusses the signs and symptoms of *ukuthwasa* and an analysis thereof

Chapter 5- This chapter is the Entering the Unknown Waters and entrance into *intwaso*. This chapter is a discussion of the entrance ritual involved in *ukuthwasa* as well as an analysis thereof

Chapter 6- This chapter is the Out with the Old and in with the new. A discussion and analysis of the daily activities and rituals that take place during ukuthwasa

Chapter 7- This chapter is the conclusion of the research report

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the already existing literature on *ukuthwasa* and validates how the process of *ukuthwasa*, regardless of the manner in which it is researched, still enforces the notion of it being a process of learning and development. The theoretical framework is also included in this chapter as well as the background of South Africa as it is this history that has led to the myths and misconceptions on the practice of traditional health and healing systems of indigenous people, (Mlisa, 2009; Thornton, 2009, Hobongwana-Duley, 2014; Moshabela, Zuma, Gaede, 2016).

HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICA

The Apartheid Era in South Africa was not only a period of the oppression of the indigenous people of South Africa. According to Ntshangase *et al* (2001) and Hobongwana-Duley (2014), the system of oppression also oppressed the right to practice indigenous customs and rituals that were in existence before colonisation in South Africa.

With the rise of missionary schools and religious institutions such as the Christian Church, indigenous practices were forcefully relegated to the sidelines and made illegal by law to practice. Traditional healing was one of the practices that were deemed illegal with dire consequences to those are firm practitioners thereof.

According to Moshabela *et al* (2016), any form of traditional healing was labelled as Witchcraft and categorised under the Witchcraft Suppression Act (3 of 1957). This then placed traditional healing under the derogatory witchcraft paradigm and made it a tremendously difficult task to differentiate between the healers and the witches. Those who were found consulting or practising any form of "witchcraft" were to face prosecution and even be executed under the law of Apartheid South Africa. With the Act in effect, it enforced the notion that "if and when other modes of being and becoming are acknowledged, they are deliberately represented not as alternatives and complementarities to the imposed dominant Eurocentric order", (Nyamnjoh, 2015:2).

According to Mlisa (2009), it is this very law that gave rise to African Christian Churches which are similar to the Zionist and Apostolic Churches found in Central and Southern Africa, (Dijk, Reis & Spierenburg, 2000). These African Christian churches serve as an interpenetration between indigenous healing practices as well the Christian ideology brought

forth by the missionaries. With the inclusion of drumming, singing and clapping these churches became the spiritual home of many who were troubled by ancestral illnesses and needed assistance.

These churches then gave rise to what is known as *abaprofeti*/*abathandazeli* who use candles, water and *iziwasho* as healing technologies instead of herbs and muti. Mlisa (2009) states that these healers also undergo training much like *ukuthwasa* although their training is shorter and is within the church domain. It is also possible to find traditional healers who have the gift of prophecy and are *abathandazeli* as well.

In the dawn of democracy and under the leadership of the African National Congress, the Witchcraft Suppression Act was abolished as an effort to allow South Africans to perform their indigenous practices. This then led to the gradual introduction of traditional healing into public discourse, (Thornton, 2009).

According to Thornton (2009) and Moshabela *et al* (2016) the efforts of legalising the practice of traditional healing was done by introducing the Traditional Health Practitioners Act (33 of 2004) which was signed into law by Former President Thabo Mbeki and amended in 2007 and reintroduced as the Traditional Health Practitioners Act (No 22 of 2007).

Despite colonisation which introduced both biomedicine and religious systems such as Christianity; with which both were used to suppress the practice of traditional healing; today traditional healing remains an integral part of African tradition and wellbeing, (Thornton, 2009); which has prompted a constitutional acknowledgement of the practice of traditional health practitioners as well as biomedicine in the country of systems of healing, (Thornton, 2009; Moshabela, Zuma & Gaede; 2016).

According to Thornton (2009: 21);

> The South African government has recently attempted to formalize and regulate these teaching and therapeutic practices by means of the Traditional Health Practitioners Act (No. 35 of 2004), signed into law on 11 February 2005 by President Thabo Mbeki. It specifies that 'traditional health practitioners' must have achieved the status of the recognized practitioner through specific 'traditional' educational and training processes. This Act explicitly defines the 'traditional health practitioner' (sangoma) and the 'traditional tutor' (*gobela*). 'Traditional health practice' is defined as the performance of a function, activity, process or service based

> on a traditional philosophy that includes the utilization of traditional medicine or traditional practice and which has as its object –
> (a) the maintenance or restoration or prevention of a physical or mental health function; or
> (b) the diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of a physical or mental illness; or
> (c) the rehabilitation of a person to enable that person to resume normal functioning within the family or community; or
> (d) the physical or mental preparation of an individual for puberty, adulthood, pregnancy, childbirth, and death, . . . [but] excludes the professional activities of a person practising any of the professions contemplated in the Pharmacy Act, 1974 . . . the Nursing Act, 1974 . . . the Health Professions Act, 1974 . . . the Allied Health Professions Act, 1982, or the Dental Technicians Act, 1979 . . . and any other activity not based on traditional philosophy. [emphasis added]

The Act fails to mention religious or spiritual mediums and trance states which as popularly associated with Traditional Health Practitioners in academic literature as well as popular culture. The omission of what Traditional Health Practitioners actually do wrongfully constructs the practice and practitioners thereof as inferior to biomedicine. Furthermore, Thornton (2009) explicitly states that the Act does not indicate the guidelines of conduct between the trainer and trainee and does not locate a specific central practice and does not address the traditional views of health, illness and death. Lastly, the Act does not acknowledge traditional healing as a practice that is constantly passed down from one generation to the next through the ancestors, who are the bearers of knowledge.

Given that most traditional healers regard themselves as members of an intellectual tradition, the practice of traditional healing must then be studied and understood as a science with its own particular standards of empirical evaluation and criticism, (Mlisa, 2009; Thornton, 2009).

It is important to note that no two traditional healers do the exact same thing nor are they trained in the exact same manner as each practice according to the gift. This then means that the process of *ukuthwasa* cannot be identical; however common themes do exist and will be discussed in great length in the following chapters.

THE PRACTICE AND PROCESS OF UKUTHWASA

Placing *ukuthwasa* as an educational structure that functions on indigenous knowledge creates a dynamic and risk of the process being viewed as informal educational structure. It is contrasted to the western view of education without understanding the theoretical dilemmas, conceptual limits of our own thinking and without the critical engagement with the intricate details and propositions within indigenous practices; one runs the risk of being confined

within the irreconcilable differences between primitivism and modernity (Nakata, Nakata, Keech & Bolt, 2012).

Booi (2004), Mlisa (2009) and Xaso (2015) have done extensive research in understanding what *ukuthwasa* means and symbolises to those who undergo the process and it was Booi (2004) who defined it as a journey of self-realisation and Xaso (2015) explained it further as a constant on-going process of identity formation- a process whereby the initiate upon finding out that they hold the calling of *ukuthwasa* feels removed from the current social group that they are in and once they undergo the process of *ukuthwasa* with the skills and knowledge that they possess, the individual is then slowly reintegrated into their social group- with a new identity upon completion of the journey.

In addition to the above, the practice of traditional healing has its roots embedded in the San culture and has undergone cultural as well as evolutionary modification (Hammond Tucke, 1998; Mlisa & Nel, 2015) - the practice of *ukuthwasa* has great variations according to the demographic regions, cultures, the various schools that train the initiates as well as the language and descriptions used in the various schools. This has then had an impact in trying to understand the process of *ukuthwasa* as even with the research that has been conducted, there are still areas of uncertainty especially regarding the learning process thereof.

Watts (2010) describes *ukuthwasa* as a secret and well-hidden process undergone by those who become traditional healers. This then means that there is little research on what really goes on during *ukuthwasa* and this has led to the creation of myths which intimidate those who have *ubizo* but are afraid to undergo the process

According to Prof. Velaphi Mkhize of the Umsamo Institute, *ukuthwasa* is a practice of ancient origin which existed during pre-colonial times and was seen as a gift from the ancestors which allows a person who has accepted the spirit of *idlozi* to work through them and continue the duties it performed when the spirit was a living human. Furthermore not just any individual can undergo the process of *ukuthwasa* as it is a spiritual calling that is dictated and governed by the ancestors who choose the candidate that they feel is best suited to inherit the gift of *amadlozi* (Booi, 2004; Mlisa, 2009; Watts 2010; Cumes, 2013).

According to Mkhize (2011) only trained traditional healers can identify signs and symptoms within a person to determine whether that particular individual has to undergo *ukuthwasa* or has to undergo a cleansing ritual whereby the person will take on the name of the ancestor who is troubling the person- this is called *indiki.*

When one has *umndiki*, it is said that the person has an ancestral gift and has *isithunywa* which is a spirit that will communicate with the person through dreams. It is this spirit that requires one to undergo the process of *ukuthwasa* as this *isithunywa,* that will determine the nature of the calling that one has, will dictate where the individual must go to *thwasa* as well as the healing technologies that will be used by the person, (Mkhize, 2011).

It remains quite difficult to differentiate between one who has *indiki* and one who has *umndiki* as the signs and symptoms are the same. Often those who have ancestral spirits around them are plagued by misfortune - such has car accidents; troubled academic performances; endless court cases; home evictions and termination of employment; as well as somatic illnesses such as constant headaches, nosebleeds, depression, shoulder pain as well as a plague of illnesses within the family (Booi, 2004; Mlisa, 2009; Watts 2010; Cumes, 2013). The symptoms of those who have *isithunywa* continue to intensify as biomedicine cannot heal the illness that the individual faces at this time.

According to Thornton (2009), *ukuthwasa* is a process that has preserved the practice of traditional healing which to this day is a distinct part of African identity and which might be viewed as spiritually dangerous by conservative Africans. According to Mlisa (2009), this negative perception is due to the influence of colonisation which has relegated the practice to that of witchcraft and spiritual immaturity.

Thornton (2009) states that *ukuthwasa* is an indigenous organisation form/institution that specialises in traditional expertise and knowledge which is transmitted through the formal educational system which involves having teachers (*amagobela*) and students (*amathwasana*) and a third force being the ancestors whom are believed to be powerful bearers of knowledge as they have lived and experienced fortunes and misfortunes, illnesses and troubles and have the power to heal and transcend them.

According to Thornton (2009) undergoing the process of *ukuthwasa* means to enter into a particular school which is known as *mpande*, *lefehlo* or *iphephlo* and it is in this particular school that one is taught about ancestors who are the source of knowledge.

Mlisa (2009) states that choosing which *lefehlo* to go to is as important as undergoing *ukuthwasa* because each particular institution works according to its own rules of governance and each *gobela* is a trained expert within a particular field of healing. According to Mlisa (2009) and Cumes (2013), the journey of *ukuthwasa* is best aided by having a sense of knowledge and understanding of the particular ancestral spirit that one has as there are

various spirits which lead to different specialities and technologies. According to Mkhize (2011), these spirits play a large role in determining where an individual goes to *thwasa* as well as who can help the individual with the process.

Thornton (2009) states that different ancestors use different healing technologies as well as different forms of transmitting traditional knowledge onto an individual who is undergoing the process of *ukuthwasa*- it is thus important to know the nature of the gift one possesses as each *lefehlo* deals with specific knowledge and practices which will be taught and learnt during the process.

According to Thornton (2009), the purpose of undergoing *ukuthwasa* is to harness and develop the ancestral gift one was born with and to groom that individual into a specialist traditional healer that is in line with the practices used by *idlozi.* An individual can become one of the following traditional specialists:

1. *Izangoma*- a term popularly used to classify traditional healers but sangomas are characterised by music and dancing (*ingoma*).
2. *Abalozi*- possessed and trained through whistles. *Abalozi* are very rare as their training process is quite lengthy because they are considered the most powerful traditional healers (Cumes; 2013) who evolve to become *isanusi* which is a seer, fortune-teller and a prophet who channels spirits through whistles.
3. *Umthandazeli*- one who heals through prayer, candles and water. According to Mlisa (2009), these are the healers who are found in African Christian Churches who relinquish their traditional gifts by not undergoing *ukuthwasa* but instead opting to be faith healers within the church.
4. *Umhlahli*- this healer indicates and tells/ shows you the individual who brings misfortune unto you by using a method called *ukufemba.*

Thornton (2009) states that knowing the particular ancestral gift one possesses also then aids them in understanding the medicinal herbs that one will use upon completion of the training. While the *ithwasana* undergoes *ukuthwasa* one of the things learnt is how to understand, use, prescribe and identify healing herbs. Mlisa (2009) states that although there is no standard curriculum of *ukuthwasa*, learning about herbs is an integral part of the process so much so that it becomes a daily routine within the *lefehlo* to have amathwasana go out into the field early in the morning to look for herbs which will be used to make healing muthi/ muti.

Identifying this muthi is aided through indigenous knowledge which is transferred to the individual.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN UKUTHWASA

According to Agrawal (1994), indigenous knowledge is defined as a form of informal learning and knowledge transmission which has been previously described as ineffective and inferior. Arguing that understanding multiple knowledge systems assists in the development and progression of people and societies, Hobongwana-Duley (2014) states that indigenous knowledge plays a pivotal role in the sustainable development of communities and harmonious relationship between the resources of nature as well as those who use them.

Indigenous healing in South Africa, much like any other indigenous healing system in Africa, functions on indigenous knowledge and those who are chosen to carry the inborn gift of indigenous healing are taught how to disseminate and understand the mediums used by ancestors to communicate information to them regarding their journey.

Undergoing *ukuthwasa* is a process of learning to acquire knowledge and interpret the signs of the environment, one's personal feelings as well as illnesses as the knowledge that is being transferred from the ancestors to the individual. This is known as the healing paradigm and is a central element behind the traditional healing profession.

According to Moshabela et al (2016), the healing paradigm views illness as a spiritual ailment and communication from the spiritual realm. This is in correlation with the World Health Organisation definition of health and wellbeing as "a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity," (2005: 12). This is in accordance with Ngubane (1979) who states that the body is central to African healing and is, therefore, the canvas of ancestral communication and instruction. Undergoing *ukuthwasa* then becomes a constant battle between health and illness and through the assistance of the *gobela*; the *ithwasana* learns to interpret personal illnesses as instructions indicating a particular competency that must be acquired, (Booi, 2004). This is then why those who have *ubizo* are plagued by illnesses that are only removed after spiritual divination and interpretation. Furthermore, illness is also an indication of social disturbances such as family conflict which requires ancestral divination to bring about wellbeing, (Thornton, 2009).

Edwards (2015) states that indigenous knowledge is deeply immersed in human spirituality as well as mutuality and the local meaning which creates relationships that are inextricably tied to ensuring endless and pure communication with the spiritual realm that is largely centred around humility, respect and purity.

With the aforementioned, it is clear that one needs a pure and clean spirit in order to communicate with the ancestors especially whilst undergoing *ukuthwasa*. Mlisa (2009) states that during her process of *ukuthwasa* they were taught how to exercise restraint from certain foods, sexual activity and were constantly cleansed by using muthi such as enemas and rituals which protect them from sorcery and anything that could hinder them from communicating with their ancestors. This is due to the fact that when one undergoes *ukuthwasa* the dreams that they have set the curriculum for the individual and determine the steps needed to be taken in order to prepare the candidate for their graduation (*intwaso*).

Furthermore Mlisa (2009) states that during *ukuthwasa* the *amathwasana* are constantly subjected to experiences that strengthen their intuition and the intensity of their dreams, but they are subjected to strenuous living conditions and social isolation that will not only instil humility within the individual but deepen the understanding of dreams, senses, illnesses and thoughts which are the ancestors methods of transferring knowledge onto the individual.

According to Hobongwana-Duley (2014), *ukuthwasa* can be seen as a non-formal educational process of reproducing knowledge. The term non-formal speaks to an intended short-term activity pertaining to acquiring knowledge on health or nutrition. Lave (1991) views non-formal education as a system of the production as well as the reproduction of knowledge which is linked to the community of practice in which the learner trains and ultimately gains mastery.

In the context of this research, I focus on how knowledge is produced within the Makhosi *lefehlo* and how it differs according to the already existing concepts of *ukuthwasa* that have been observed and recorded by other authors.

DREAMS IN UKUTHWASA

"Traditional healing does not involve books. You just dream because you are asleep. You are shown things that you need to do"- (Hobongwana, 2014: 135)

Booi (2004) states that it is through dreams that one first receives the knowledge of having an ancestral gift and through dreams that one must undergo *ukuthwasa*- and because the

individual having these dreams might not be aware from the onset that dreams carry symbolism and instruction, the person tends to ignore these dreams until misfortune befalls them.

These dreams are seen as psychological distress in Kinshasa believed to be an indication that one needs to undergo a quest and search for the *Nkita* spirits (ancestors) in which lineage and authority are vested, (Janzen, 1992). Furthermore, Janzen (1992) states that these spirits guide the individual through dreams as well as the forced seclusion of the sufferer to train and return as a *Nganga Nkita* (a fully-fledged Congolese healer). This is also a common feature seen in *ukuthwasa* and traditional healing in South Africa.

Mlisa (2009) argues that given that ancestral gifts are from the ancestors it is only the ancestor who will guide the *ithwasana* on the journey through dreams and signs and symbols which the *ithwasana* relays to *igobela* for advanced analysis and interpretation. Furthermore, Mlisa (2009) states that although the meanings of the dreams can be wrong through interpretation; the dream itself cannot be wrong as *amathongo* are from our ancestors who are our collective unconscious.

Jung (1974) states that the key to understanding the human psyche is through an unconscious that is unchallenged by experimental researchers - dreams, myth, and folklore are a form of reliable communication between the conscious and the unconscious. Ancestors who are part of the individual's unconscious communicate beliefs, ideas and feelings to the *ithwasana*. To understand these feelings, dreams and signs the *ithwasana* is constantly cleansed to grow in psychic awareness and explore the spiritual realm and understanding of the societal world view and one's true self and identity.

Jung (1974) argues that the definition of self lies bringing forward all elements of the psyche to the consciousness. This is why dreams, signs and symbols are important as they are shadows that reside in the unconscious and without dealing with the shadows a human being is likely to face some form of neurosis - much like the illnesses experienced by those who try to suppress the calling to become a traditional healer.

From a psychoanalytical perspective, *ukuthwasa* is seen as an institution that heightens one sense to understand communication from the ancestors who are part of the spiritual realm. This is done by heightening sensation, intuition (*umbilini*), and formation of logical explanations on supernatural occurrences and illnesses as well as feelings which are a function of the objective (Jung, 1974).

By ignoring the dreams and not understanding the meaning thereof the *ithwasana* will face feelings of anxiety and frustration as there is a disconnect between the unconscious and the higher self - this disharmony occurs when one refuses to accept the calling or is unaware of the calling as this a rejection or oblivion to the individual's true self and identity. This can also happen during the *ukuthwasa* process when the *ithwasana* does not articulate amathongo to the *gobela* or the *gobela* disobeys *amathongo* from the *ithwasana* as Mlisa (2009) states that this then becomes a hindrance to the individual's process of *ukuthwasa*.

The dreams are the curriculum of *ukuthwasa* which the *ithwasana* dreams and shares with *ugobela* for analysis and interpretation, (Mlisa, 2009). I argue that this constructs a problem-posing education which Freire (1972) states is a form of collective engagement through which both students (*ithwasana*) and the teachers (*gobela*) reciprocate knowledge that further enhances the development of one's identity and role as *ithwasana* who will transition to becoming *isangoma* and *gobela* who will continue to evolve in teaching and learning practices.

In the context of this research, I use the psychoanalytic school of thought to understand the importance of dreams as well as the understanding thereof in *ukuthwasa*. In addition to that this research looks at how knowledge is acquired, transmitted, and reproduced using dreams.

UKUTHWASA AS AN IDENTITY RITUAL AND RITE OF PASSAGE

According to Xaso (2015) undergoing *ukuthwasa* is a process of identity formation which is constructed by the knowledge acquired throughout the process. In this regard, the training is seen as a liminal state as identified by Turner (1967) as a process of psychosocial development and identity achievement that reintegrates an individual who has gone through struggles and misfortunes into an in-group.

In this regard, the *ukuthwasa* process is seen as an identity formation process which Erikson (1956) states that is a constant process that allows an individual to transition and gravitate towards ideal self and ego through information gained through rites of passages.

Mlisa (2009) documented *ukuthwasa* as a ritual which comprises of smaller rituals that mark a particular stage within the process. Although she does not highlight the particular criteria needed to advance to the next ritual and phase of *ukuthwasa*, Mlisa (2009) describes *ukuthwasa* as a ritual that invites ancestors into the life of the *ithwasana* to transform the individual from a sufferer of misfortune to a student with a new identity to a healer who now

helps people. She states that the individual is constantly between and betwixt (Turner; 1967) the formation of a new identity which constantly changes through the new information that the individual is exposed to. Mlisa (2009) states that *ukuthwasa* is a ritual that instils humility and enforces discipline which becomes part of the key competencies that govern how an individual should behave in society, (Turner; 1969).

Lastly Mlisa (2009) views *ukuthwasa* as a rite of passage of learning as even during the festivities and rituals and *intwaso*, knowledge is constantly passed on through singing of *ingoma* that not only invites ancestors into the proceedings but also speaks of the ontology of humanity and retells stories of life, God, ancestors, collectiveness and community. Likewise in Zaire, Tanzania, Malawi, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and extending across to the Siberian Shamans, the presence of drumming and singing, rhythm and rhyme is seen as a ritual of healing and transitioning whereby this transition is brought forth by the spiritual realm which holds all the answers and information that the initiate seeks, (Janzen 1992; Thorpe, 1993; Dijk *et al*, 2000).

Both Freire (1972) and Watkins/ hooks (1994) describe the usage of visual and audio aids in learning as an evolutionary technique to education which enhances free will and promotes a sense of internalising the knowledge as it becomes a great part of one's identity and developmental process in the world at large. This just like the Ndembu rituals of Zambia places a great emphasis on music, drumming and singing as bearers of knowledge during rituals, (Turner 1969).

CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

According to Darder (2015), the work of Paulo Freire was advocating for the role of education to be an activity of empowering and liberating individuals. Freire (1972) noted that whilst education can bring about a radical change in society, it remains a systematic use of oppression, power and control. The educational system that was introduced in South Africa during the apartheid era was built and centralised on the techniques of oppression being conquest, division, manipulation and cultural invasion (Hobongwa-Duley, 2014).

In an attempt to evolve education and to dismantle repressive social forms of white supremacy and the discarding of indigenous knowledge (hooks, 1994), Paulo Freire proposed a model of critical pedagogy known as the critical consciousness.

According to Freire (1972), the critical consciousness frees the oppressed and the oppressor from the cycle of abuse. Freire (1972) argues that the development of critical consciousness is a step towards the liberation of the thought process possessed by the individual. This allows the individual to realise their self-worth and implement a plan of action that will help the individual to achieve the goal set by the individual. This process also rests on the role of the teacher, whom according to Freire (1972), hooks (1994) and Darder (2015) has traditionally played an oppressive authoritative role in the life of the individual/student. This has then made education empty, structured on a particular curriculum and does not allow the student to think critically and freely and this results in a passive student.

The proposition of a problem-posing educational system by Freire (1972) encourages dialogue and collective engagement allows the student to pose questions to the educator that are of interest to their thought processes and allows for engagement of solutions that will equip the learner with the knowledge that they can then use beyond the restricted curriculum. Freire (1972) argues that the development of the critical consciousness restores integrity to the voices of the oppressed groups and places our cultural and historical knowledge at the forefront of our development and liberation.

Using the development of the critical consciousness as a framework for studying the learning process of *ukuthwasa*, allows one to assess the manner in which knowledge is acquired, transmitted and shared amongst the group. Furthermore, this framework assesses the role of the trainer as well as the effectiveness of the teaching methods of an informal educational structure. This also assesses how *ukuthwasa* can be viewed as a critical pedagogy whose role is to serve as a cultural synthesis between the two worlds and how it can be viewed as a betterment of the individual and the world at large.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the literature review *ukuthwasa* is seen as a learning experience which not only heals the *ithwasana*, but also educates and develops the individual in building a new identity that correlates with their personal unconscious image of self, a concept with which Freire (1972) and Watkins/hooks (1994) strongly outline as the authentic aim of education. *Ukuthwasa* is a process of transmitting knowledge and the researcher argues that *ukuthwasa* is a critical pedagogy with which the practices thereof are shaped by history and political and socio-economic influence.

Furthermore, as critical pedagogy, *ukuthwasa* is a learning process that allows for collective engagement between the educator as well as the learners and is reliant on reciprocated information between the two parties for dialogue on information from the ancestors to exist.

Drawing on the psychoanalytic school of thought, this research aims to assess the importance of dreams and the impact and influence they have in the training process of *ukuthwasa*. This then leads to an analysis of the dreams using the situated learning theory as highlighted above.

The psychoanalytic school of thought firmly believes that in the unexplored unconscious of the psyche, exists information that is pivotal in the process of becoming the ideal self, (Jung, 1976). It is in unravelling the unconscious (in this case being the ancestral and spiritual realm) that one can acquire information needed for the process of conscientization of the individual, as conceptualised by Freire (1972)

Ukuthwasa is a practice that has existed since pre-colonial times but much like culture has undergone evolution due to politics, socio-economic factors, migration patterns as well as an integration of cultures in urban areas, (Xaso, 2015) leading to the varied practices we know of and find today.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the research methodology used to conduct this study. This will be done by outlining the research design and approach as well as the research method used. Following the aforementioned is the sampling technique used as well as the location of the study. This is then followed by the instruments used in data collection as well as the reliability and validity of the data and the analysis of the data. This chapter concludes by focusing on the ethical considerations applied and ethical challenges faced throughout the research.

RESEARCH APPROACH

According to Creswell (2014), a research approach is a strategy that will be used to conduct the research and determines the specific methods that will be used to gather the most data from the research. There are three existing approaches to research namely qualitative, quantitate as well as mixed methods. For this research, a qualitative approach was used as this was the best approach to attain thick descriptions as well as be introduced to new ideas surrounding the intricate and sacred process of *ukuthwasa* from the perspective of the initiates as well as the trainer, (Sofaer, 1999). By adopting a *qualitative* approach one was able to observe the process over a period of five months, whilst participating in the process by undergoing training to become a traditional health practitioner.

To develop theoretical explanations of broader social phenomena such as the understanding of *ukuthwasa*, an autoethnographic approach was used, (Marechal, 2010). By opting for this method, as the researcher as well as an initiate who is undergoing *ukuthwasa*, I placed myself as a figure of an intersection of diversity. According to Glowacki-Dudka, Treff and Usman (2005), as the researcher as well as *ithwasana*, I was placed at the forefront of experiencing two different pedagogies and displaying the diversity between the two worlds of learning.

The main challenge faced throughout the data gathering process was learning to adjust between the traditional mode of learning used in *ukuthwasa* as well as the successful management of higher learning commitments of the university. As an academic, one was

initially excluded from the other initiates as I was always carrying a notebook around, taking notes and observing every detail without paying attention to the protocols and process of *ukuthwasa*. This was a reminder that as a researcher, I was imposing my institutionalised learning practices upon the other initiates hence their reluctance to speak and engage with me. Although they did give their consent to participate in the study, they withheld a great amount of information until I learnt to clearly distinguish between academic commitments as well as *ukuthwasa* commitments.

In an attempt to contribute information to transformative learning I resorted to fulfilling my scholastic duties during the day when I was within the surroundings of the university and focusing on *ukuthwasa* duties when I was back *ephehlweni.* Using an autoethnographic approach might be seen as unscientific as the results cannot be generalised to the population, however, the thick descriptions and personal narratives on *ukuthwasa* will contribute to positive social change and prompt a dialogue on deliberations and discussions on *ukuthwasa*, (Bochner, 2000).

The disadvantage of autoethnographic data is an excessive focus on self in isolation. To tackle this disadvantage two other initiates were included in the study as well as the trainer. This has helped in providing different viewpoints and experiences on *ukuthwasa* and once again validates that the process cannot be generalised and standardised.

Furthermore, the researcher adopted a qualitative exploratory approach as this research serves as an attempt to make a theoretical contribution to *ukuthwasa* from a different perspective, (Neuman, 2007). Although there has been substantial research on *ukuthwasa* ranging from Booi (2004) whose focus was on the three perspectives on *ukuthwasa*, to Mlisa (2009) whose elaborate study was on the stages of *ukuthwasa* to Xaso (2015) whose focus was on *ukuthwasa* as a journey of self-actualization, this particular research focuses on *ukuthwasa* as a knowledge acquisition process hence the exploratory nature thereof.

RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Sofaer (1999) and Creswell (2007), a research design is an elaborate guideline detailing how a particular study will be conducted. It is a description of how a research idea is turned into a research project and which measures were selected to answer the research question as best as possible (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, a research design considers the best way of gathering data that will ensure meaningful and valuable insights which will assist in the procurement of substantially objective knowledge about the social world, (Xaso, 2015).

Just as Booi (2004), Mlisa (2009) and Xaso (2015) used a case study design of enquiry on their research on *ukuthwasa*, so too was it used for this particular research. The purpose of using a case study design was to develop a detailed analysis of the process of *ukuthwasa.* This was done by focusing on the learning experiences of three candidates (who are currently undergoing the process of *ukuthwasa)* in addition to my own observations and experiences as a initiate, as well as the *gobela* who is currently training the initiates. Detailed information was recorded throughout a period of five months in an attempt to understand and explore the knowledge acquisition processes of *ukuthwasa* as well as the experience thereof according to the initiates, and the experience and insight of the *gobela* who is responsible for the training of the initiates (Creswell, 2007).

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

According to Creswell (2007) and Givens (2008) data collection instruments are the tools used to gather information which will aid the researcher to answer the proposed research question. For this research semi-structured interviews, as well as participant-observation and recording of visual material such as video and photographs were used.

1. **Semi-structured interview**

   According to Givens (2008), semi-structured interviews are best suited for exploratory research as the nature of the questions can stem from the responses of the participants. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher had semi-structured interviews with the initiates as well as the trainer. Although the interviews were conversational in nature, the researcher had a general overview of the questions that were to be answered (see Appendix A and B). All the initiates were interviewed separately (this was suggested by Mkhulu as the participants were sharing sensitive and private information, some of which was unknown amongst the other initiates in the group). Mkhulu was also interviewed and through discussions with him, I was exposed to new information and themes that were not covered in the questions, but served part of the pivotal information relating to the learning process of *ukuthwasa* (Givens, 2008).

2. **Participant-Observation**

   Given that I was also undergoing the process of *ukuthwasa*, my personal experiences are also included and documented through reflexivity journals as well as actively participating in the process of *ukuthwasa* as an initiate. This provides an emic

perspective that adds rich descriptions and data that could not be obtained from an etic perspective, (Givens, 2008). The disadvantage of participant observation is the bias of the researcher which was recorded in the reflexivity journals. By having more participants in the study, the issue of bias is addressed as the data that will be analysed is beyond that of the researcher and is about the collective group involved in *ukuthwasa*, this being the initiates, the trainer as well as the researcher, who is an initiate herself.

3. **The usage of media devices to record video and obtain photographic material**

   Permission to use media devices to record both video and photographic material was obtained from the *gobela*. The inclusion of visual data aims to enrich the research report however through continuous consultation with ugobela, certain rituals and events were omitted or not photographed at all. This was done to not only respect the sacred nature of the ritual but also to protect the identity of the individual as well as their personal integrity during their "weakest" moments.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

To obtain participants for this study, the researcher used a non-probability sampling method called purposive sampling as it is used to seek participants who meet particular elements of the set criteria, (Neuman, 2007; Givens 2008).

The criterion that was set by the researcher was that the participants needed to be currently undergoing the process of *ukuthwasa* within the *lefehlo* that I am also part of as this was the main focus of the study. Furthermore, this criterion ensured that the researcher was always present to record information and note events as she was also part of the group living and training in the *lefehlo.*

LOCATION OF THE STUDY

This study is set in the backdrop of Soweto in an area known as Tladi. This area was chosen because this is where the researcher was undergoing her training as well as alternating between Soweto and Sebokeng in the Vaal where many sacred rituals were conducted.



Map image of Gauteng Province indicating the location of Sebokeng.

Image Source: Times Live (2014)



Aerial Photograph of Sebokeng. Image Source: Google Maps (2017)



Photograph of a street in Tladi, Soweto. Image Source: Times Live (2017)



Map image of Soweto

Image Source:www.sowetobusinesshub.co.za

DATA RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

According to Neuman (2007) and Givens (2008), it is important for research to be replicable to a certain degree in qualitative research.

The inductive approach of data analysis was adopted as this provided the researcher with themes that are strongly linked to the data as well as the opportunity to code the data without attempting to fit the data into a pre-existing frame of reference, (Neuman, 2007). This approach was adopted to also tackle the issue of bias which although cannot be eliminated completely, but through analysis of reflexivity journals, can be minimised at great length.

Triangulation was used to validate data by testing a source of information against the other. The usage of literature and observation, as well as frequent consultation with the participants, assisted greatly in the validation of data from collection to analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

The audio recordings, as well as field notes, were transcribed into the languages used in the discussions; this ranged from isiZulu, Setswana, Sesotho and English. The data was then translated into English through the assistance of the participants by constantly reverting back to them to obtain the meaning of said words and statements.

The data was then categorised according to thematic content analysis which assisted the researcher in grouping statements and observations according to particular themes that were relevant to the research question and aims and objectives thereof, (Crabtree, 1999). These themes added important descriptions to the phenomenon of *ukuthwasa*, (Crabtree, 1999).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout the conducting of the study, the following research ethics were adhered to;

1. **Permission to conduct the study**

   Verbal permission was obtained from the *gobela* to conduct this study in his *lefehlo*. Given that the *lefehlo* is a non-formal educational structure, the *gobela* stated that the researcher did not need to get permission from a particular body or governance structure. With his permission, I was able to conduct the research and gather the required data.

2. **Informed Consent**

The informants who were asked to participate in the study were given a participant information sheet (see Appendix A) as well as a Consent Form (See Appendix B) for them to complete. The participants opted to not sign the consent forms but rather give verbal consent to protect their identity as they are still undergoing training and did not want to be identified based on their experiences.

3. **Anonymity and Confidentiality**

Given that the process of *ukuthwasa* is a private and sacred one and some of the initiates undergo the process without informing their relatives, (Mlisa 2009; Xaso 2015), the researcher uses pseudonyms to protect the identity of the initiates. The name of the *gobela* has been kept anonymous to protect the identity of those who are training within his *lefehlo*. Mkhulu had told the researcher that it is important to protect the progress of the initiates as it is believed that exposing their process will make them vulnerable to forces who will try to hinder their progression by means of witchcraft. This is why the researcher also uses a pseudonym when describing her sacred experiences and journey of *ukuthwasa.* The images that were selected for this study were selected after consulting with *ugobela* and obtaining permission to use them. The researcher was urged to shield the faces of the initiates as well as the *gobela*.

4. **Non-disclosure of sacred information and rituals**

Given that *ukuthwasa* is a sacred process with rituals that are very specific to the individual, the researcher constantly consulted with the *gobela* to seek clarity on the appropriate information to disclose. Information that was deemed too sacred to disclose was not included in the research.

CHAPTER 4: AMAFUFUNYANA- THE EMERGENCE OF THE CALLING

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the analysis of the data collected from the semi-structured interviews as well as participant-observation and autoethnographic notes. As outlined in the methodology section, the phenomenological approach was used due to the exploratory nature of the research.

According to Lambrecht (2014), the process of *ukuthwasa* can be defined as a process of separation, transition and incorporation. This research focuses on the separation and transition phases of *ukuthwasa* as the participants have not reached the incorporation phase of their training, which is signified by a graduation ceremony known as *intwaso*.

Xaso (2015) describes the separation phase as the acceptance of the calling and the decision to finally undergo *ukuthwasa* however in this chapter I argue that there are two separate elements within the separation phases, each of equal importance in the learning process of the initiate.

I argue that the first level of separation occurs during the experiencing of *Amafufunyana* as the individual becomes confused and withdraws from society. This is caused by a lack of information on the causes of these troubles and difficulties.

The second stage of separation is the process of entering and undergoing *ukuthwasa*. This is after the initiate has received information and clarity on the causes of these misfortunes that are beyond comprehension.

Based on the narratives of Lerato, Tebogo, Matshidiso (pseudonyms have been used, as discussed in the ethical consideration) and Mkhulu (the *gobela*) this chapter aims to shed clarity on the above-mentioned points.

AMAFUFUNYANA

Lerato

Lerato, a 25-year-old female academic from Soweto recalls her story:

"*I grew up in a home where we weren't really heavily into the church but we were very spiritual. I recall just how my grandmother would always announce that she is having a thanksgiving ceremony and that we need to be there on Saturday afternoon as that's when the slaughtering was to take place. I really did not think much of it. For me, it was just a thing that we did at home and then on Sunday, we would all have a feast of very plain African foods which consisted of pap, cabbage cooked with just salt, pumpkin and chicken and mash potatoes. I used to ask my grandmother as to why the food had no flavour and why we couldn't throw the bones in the bin and she would say that it was the food of the ancestors and that the bones needed to be burnt as an offering.*

Anyway, I left it at that and didn't really care much.

In grade 9, I remember one morning I woke up with really bad stomach cramps and my stomach felt like it was burning. I woke up my mom and we rushed to the casualty ward of Mulbarton Hospital. When we got there, the doctor examined me and said I had gastric flu (never asked what that was) and prescribed medication and sent me home.

When I got home I felt so much better and managed to sleep. This was short-lived because a few days later, I was at school and the pain was back again. I waited until after school to get home, drank my medication and hoped that I would be fine. My aunt then came home from work and rushed me to the hospital yet again.

I was then admitted and had scans conducted on me which revealed that I had ovarian cysts and an enlarged appendix, so much for gastric flu hey. I was then booked for an operation to remove all the problems. Looking back, that was the beginning of my journey in and out of hospitals.

After having the operation and being discharged from hospital, I was admitted twice again in that same year, with the same pain that just would not go away. Honestly at time doctors were tired of seeing my face and didn't know what to do anymore.

Then suddenly the pains stopped…

In the year 2009 when I was Grade 12, I started getting hectic migraines and was dependent on anti-inflammatories for pain relief. The GP that was treating my headaches was very confused as to why my headaches were not responding to his

treatment. He then referred me to a neurologist who did some scans and found that there was NOTHING wrong with me.

I was just so annoyed by all this when my uncle decided that he would take me to the Zion Christian Church that he was a member of. As a girl who was active in the Anglican Church at the time, I felt very scared and wasn't keen on going there simply because they were different from our church.

Anyway, I decided to give it a shot as prelims were approaching and I could not study because of the headaches. When we got to the church the men were separated from the women and I sat there with the women trying to listen to the sermon.

After the service ended we all proceeded outside to stand in a queue. This queue was to receive the ZCC tea which was believed to cure illnesses and bring about peace and prosperity and spiritual wellbeing to those who drank the tea. Members of the church believe that the tea was prayed for by the prophet of the church who receive their strength from a man called Lekganyane, the leader of the church- or at least that's what my uncle told me.

Anyway, I drank the tea and was instructed to sit on the floor while drinking the tea and exercise some humility- and I guess when in Rome, you do as the Romans do.

After drinking the tea my uncle called me and we went to one of the prophets who then called one of their messengers (one who delivers the message from the prophets). This prophet told me that these headaches are caused by the ancestors and that he would pray for me and the headaches would go away. I was such a sceptical being at that time but nonetheless, I let him pray for me.

The prophet and the messenger started hitting my head and some paper and pouring water on me (which was annoying because I had just done my hair). We left and went back home and I put this whole experience behind me- oh, the headaches stopped.

After finishing matric and passing well, I received a letter of rejection from Wits saying that I did not qualify to study at the university. I found this so strange because my matric certificate had good results, 5 Bs to be exact. When Wits rejected me I then took a gap year.

The headaches came back and my mother decided to take me to go consult with her friend- a sangoma. When I got there with my level of scepticism I was annoyed by how the sangoma made incisions on my head and put funny things on me. She then told my mom that I have a gift and that when the time is right it will show itself.

I didn't understand what she meant by gift, but she turned my luck around because I was able to apply again at Wits and this time I was accepted. I was going to be a first-year student in 2011.

My undergraduate years were ok I guess, no major incidents to recall, except for the time when my hand swelled up on the morning of an exam I had to write.

The drama started in 2015. On the 7th of July that year, I complained of chest pains and collapsed in my grandmother's kitchen while asking for water. I gained consciousness later that night on a hospital bed in the ICU ward. I was very confused and wanted to ask for clarity but I couldn't as I had tubes stuck deep in my throat and had wires and drips everywhere. I remember falling asleep and dreaming of 3 people who said to me that they are with me and carry me everywhere that I go.

Again I dismissed that dream and focused on what the doctors were saying when they thought I was asleep. From what I could gather, I found out that I had had a stroke, and that there was something wrong with one of my lungs and that I was not going to live to see the weekend. Hearing that broke my heart as I thought about my son who was barely a year old at that time.

Falling asleep again and I was visited by the 3 people who told me to breathe and that the doctors would take the machines off. I actually thought that I was dead and was in heaven because one of the people in the dream was wearing church uniform.

Just as the dream predicted, the doctors saw that I was stable and breathing on my own again. When they conducted another x-ray to check the damage caused to the lung, they found NOTHING.

I was discharged a week later, with no signs of ever having a stroke.

In 2017 I decided to go back to school again and get another qualification. This was all good and well until the headaches started coming again. Whenever I was in class these headaches would get stronger and stronger and I was always bilious. At times

when I was in class, I would hear gentle whistling, followed by a ringing sound in my ears. I remember at one point during a lecture I saw someone standing next to my lecturer- and that person looked like one of the 3 people that visited me in my dreams.

I walked out of the lecture room and spent a few days away from school. I spoke to my mom about the incident and the headaches would just keep getting stronger to a point whereby I stayed indoors all the time and hardly went anywhere. I was not eating but I kept on gaining weight.

I used to have dreams of cows, gatherings and drifting off into flowing water. Come to think of it these dreams were present in my childhood but I never paid attention to them because I used to think that dreams were just dreams.

The dream that made my family realise that we actually had to consult some form of diviner was when I dreamt of being underwater with two elderly men and as I tried to run away from them one of them grabbed onto my thigh. When I woke up from the dream I had a huge bruise on that exact spot of impact and my clothes were soaking wet.

My mother then took it upon herself to try and consult with a different traditional healer, and we went to see Mkhulu, who when we arrived at his house, said to me "I have been waiting for you".

I was confused by this because; he does not even know me. And without throwing bones (I was expecting bones because I saw that on TV), he immediately started reflecting on all the challenges I had faced and concluded with the following words, "your ancestors chose you to be a healer and to be a prophet. You are carrying many ancestors with you"

He further went on to say that my grandmother, was the one who had the gift before me but because she did not complete her training the ancestors became angry and chose someone else- and that someone was me.

I was shocked because my grandmother had never said anything about this. Instead, she constantly referred me to the ZCC to get some form of healing.

Mkhulu then said that my grandmother had always known about my calling but was afraid to tell me about it because of the intensity of the journey. I mean she herself did not finish her training so I actually understand.

I cried because then it became clear that I was not crazy, or dramatic. I actually have an ancestral calling… but now that I knew what was wrong with me, I was scared of the unknown.

Matshidiso

Matshidiso, a 21-year-old reserved young lady from Soweto shared her story:

"*How I found out that I had a calling was very simple. I was 13 when I started getting nosebleeds and having random episodes of seizures. In school, I would always cry when some of the other learners would want to play with me. I just always wanted to be alone.*

When I was asleep I would have dreams of brown snakes and these snakes would never hurt me in any way.

Sometimes when I woke up I would find dried plants on the side of the bed find a small brown snake sleeping on the floor. The snake always vanished though and did not harm me or try to bite me.

In grade 8 I started having problems at school. I was struggling to see what was written on the board, I was struggling to hear the teacher speak and when the teachers would check my work and find that my book was blank, they would punish me by making me sit on the floor or stand outside.

When I was standing outside this one time, an elderly woman came to me. She had a red cloth wrapped around her and she stretched out her hand to me and said that I should follow her. I knew this woman from family photos. She was my great grandmother. I was walking towards her and away from the classroom when my teacher came out and shouted at me. I looked back at the teacher and looked turned again to look for my great grandmother. She was gone; she had vanished into thin air.

The school sent my mother a letter telling her that I have been expelled because they said I was a problem child, a rebel who had no desire to go to school. My mom was upset, disappointed, you name it.

She thought I was bewitched because I would always want to be alone and that I was struggling at school because of jealous people who did not want to see me succeed.

My aunt was a sangoma so she immediately diagnosed me and said I had to thwasa and train under her. I didn't know much then so I agreed, my mom agreed to it and I went to go live with my aunt.

When I was living with her, I had stopped having dreams and would get sicker. I was always vomiting and losing weight. When I asked my aunt why this was happening to me she said that some people get sick while they are training because their ancestors want them to complete their training because someone before them did not finish their training. She said that it was the ancestors' way of ensuring that we completed the training.

My aunt's husband was also a sangoma who would always say to me that in order to become a powerful sangoma I would have to sleep with him. He said that the ancestors told him to do so and that if I did not listen and do what they said I would get sick and eventually die.

It was a horrible experience. I was hardly fed because they (my aunt and her husband) would always say that they were testing my resilience because they did not want me to be a weak sangoma. They made me do their laundry, cook for them and their children but I was not allowed to eat that food and I would eat brown bread and warm sugar water. I was not allowed to talk to people and tell them what I was going through because it is said that your training is a secret journey.

I collapsed this one time while walking home from the mall and collapsed outside of Mkhulu's gate. Mkhulu was the one who gave me some water and then called my mother. But before I left with my mother, he then told her that my aunt is trying to kill me because she isn't training me according to the will of the ancestors and that she was doing foul things to me in the name of ukuthwasa.

My mother refused to believe this but noticed that I was very thin and frail. Mkhulu then took us into his indumba and said my mother does not have to pay for this consultation because he has been sent to help me.

Mkhulu told my mom that my aunt's husband was abusing me and that they gave me substances to stop me from dreaming so that they could control me.

He went to say that the ancestors were looking for a way to get me out of there because they could see that there was trouble looming. He explained that the fact that I had collapsed in front of his gate was not a coincidence and that he has to help me remove all the toxins that they had put in my body - nobody just collapses outside the gate of a sangoma.

My mom was so heartbroken. She could not believe that her own sister could do this to me. I was angry, hurt and so confused and did not want to be around anyone because I felt betrayed by those close to me"

Tebogo

Tebogo, a 36-year-old female professional from the East Rand narrated her story:

"I am originally from the Mahikeng and I was raised by my grandmother as my mom passed away when I was 7 years old. I grew up in a Seventh Day Adventist church and was in church every Sunday because my grandmother used to drag the whole house to church to worship the Lord.

When I was preparing to go to grade 8, I got a bursary from a private school in Johannesburg to study and live on the school premises as a boarding student. I was so excited because finally, I was about to see the Joburg they always showed on Generations.

My grandmother was very happy and proud of me because the school that I was going to was a Christian school and that would mean that her teachings would not go to waste and that I can continue with the fellowship within the school.

When I got to Joburg I was an excellent student. I excelled academically and was involved in extracurricular activities such as singing in the choir, playing tennis and ultimately in grade 12 I was made the captain of the debate team.

My grandmother used to say "oh thank you Lord" every time when I would call her with some good news to share.

Honestly speaking I had a very good upbringing and I am grateful for that.

I completed my matric in 1999 and was accepted at the University of the Witwatersrand to study a BA in Media Studies and English. I was so excited to be at the university where Nelson Mandela studied, and I think I saw Winnie Mandela on campus once and my heart nearly stopped.

I did my Honours and Masters in Media Studies and was offered a job in 2008 at a well-renowned media house. I was the communications director and basically, I was the girl who made everything happen.

Later on that year I bought a house in Johannesburg so that my grandmother could stay this side with me as she was getting old. This was also the perfect opportunity for my older brother to re-evaluate his life and hopefully decide to study instead of just sitting at home, doing nothing.

My grandmother loved the idea and in March 2009, they moved to Johannesburg to live with me. I decided to buy my brother a Fiat Uno just so he could get around and go to interviews as I was unable to drive him around because of my busy work schedule.

I mean I was travelling around the world and always in meetings and typing reports and as my grandmother would say "let's give thanks to the Lord our God for showering us with endless mercies".

In 2012, while at the peak of my life I found love, met a man who was in marketing and we started dating.

In 2014 he then asked me to marry him and I agreed. We tried to fall pregnant but we couldn't. We even went to see fertility specialists who confirmed that both of us were fertile and that nothing was wrong was us.

In 2015, my grandmother was diagnosed with cancer and ultimately passed away that year.

The year 2016 started off on a bad footing with my brother being involved in a fatal car accident with a new Polo that he had bought for himself (he was actually starting to get his life on track).

My husband to be impregnated a colleague of his and left me to be with her.

I was alone, stuck in a job that long longer fascinated me, I stuck in a house that held so many memories and the most painful thing was that I had nobody to call.

I remember in July 2016 after I was demoted at work for being late for a meeting, I got home and overdosed on all the medication that I could find. Anything from laxatives, to pain tablets, to mild sedatives and alcohol. I was trying to kill myself.

I passed out after feeling so dizzy and fell to the floor. I then had a dream of a man who was dressed weirdly and he was shouting at me telling me that they gave me a smooth life and I failed to recognise them. The man told me that they brought challenges and I still did not seek guidance in them. I asked him who he was and he faded into the dream.

Then the strangest thing happened, I woke up and I felt nothing. The dizziness was gone and I was no longer drowsy. But I was on edge because of that man in my dream.

I went to church that Sunday and spoke to this other lady and she said that I should go to her cousin's church. She gave me the details and I went there the following week. I had heard so much about this church because its services are always on the TV and their pastor always performs miracles of discernment and healing.

I went there and during a special prayer, I went to the front and asked him to pray for me. He did just that and rubbed holy oil on my head and told me that my troubles had left and that I should keep coming to the church to receive healing.

I was given holy water in a 5-litre bottle which cost just over R50 and was told to bath with the water and to drink some of it as well.

I was happy simply because I had found healing in a church and my grandmother would be proud because she raised me in the church of God.

In November 2016 after having an outburst with a colleague I was given a written warning for attacking an employee. I ripped it to shreds and ran to the bathroom

where I cried my eyes out as I did not understand where these temper problems were emerging from.

While I was in the bathroom, one of the cleaners walked in and said to me that the ancestors want to talk to me and I am not listening to them. She was a sangoma and she told me that my ancestors are going to stop everything in my life until I listen to them.

I told her that I do not believe in ancestors as this was not how I was raised but then she said that my grandmother kept a secret from me and that secret is the reason why my life is a mess.

So I asked her if I could come to consult with her and she was willing to help me after work. So that day I left with her and headed to her home in Alexandra Township where she lived and practised. She threw the bones and told me that I have to train and become a sangoma because my mother had the gift and she chose to not fulfil it and she ultimately died because she had upset the ancestors.

She further said that she would not train me but that I needed to ask for directions on where to train. I refused to accept this and paid for the consultation and left.

Driving back to my house I was involved in a car accident and the car was a total write off and insurance refused to pay it because I drove into a rock so they assumed that I was under the influence of alcohol.

I survived the accident without a scratch on me.

In January 2017 I was fired from work for attacking an employee yet again. I walked out of the office building and cried.

I knew then that I had to do something about this.

I went back to the sangoma in Alexandra and asked her what I had to do. She instructed me to pray using white and yellow candles and light a sage plant called impepho.

In March 2017 I had a dream of myself walking and entering Mkhulu's yard and I woke up from the dream and called an Uber and told the driver that I did not know the address of where I was going but that I could direct him because I know exactly

how to get there. The driver was confused but asked me if I would be able to pay and I said yes and we proceeded and eventually got here."

ANALYSIS ON NARRATIVES

The narratives shared tell a story of how three individuals found out that they have a calling and are to undergo *ukuthwasa*. I argue that this stage is important because it is the beginning of the learning process. The new information determines one's path for the rest of their lives. With this information, one then makes a choice to either ignore or heed the call- both with its own implications and consequences.

According to the psychoanalytical school of thought, (Jung, 1976), all three participants were facing a form of neurosis characterised by the illnesses and frequent hospital admissions experienced by Lerato, the nose bleeds, headaches and unending sicknesses experienced by Matshidiso as well as the outbursts of rage and destitute feelings of Tebogo. This was an indication of the disharmony between their personal unconsciousness (the ancestors) as well as their higher self.

The three participants were isolating themselves from the general population and limiting their social interactions as they could not understand what was going on with their lives. This confusion is due to a lack of information and knowledge as to what was causing tensions in their present lives.

Lerato and Matshidiso recall hearing sounds and seeing animals and people in their alert state. The psychoanalytical school of thought argues that this is the undiscovered-self attempting to permeate the present self and inform the present self of an unconscious purpose that the person must fulfil in order to become the higher self that they are envisioned to become.

Lerato and Tebogo recall seeking guidance and healing from Pentecostal churches as well as the Zion Christian Church. Lerato was advised by family members to seek help at this church because it acknowledges the role and presence of ancestors but the healing methods used are different to that of those used by sangomas, (Dijk *et al*, 2000). Most family members refer people with *intwaso* to these churches as it is believed that they are capable of modifying the calling and eradicating it altogether, (Mlisa, 2009). This is not the case as Lerato and Tebogo continued to face misfortune and illness despite undergoing treatment from these churches.

According to Jung (1974), the communication from the unconsciousness does not only end in dreams but also through signs and symbols and events that occur with the sole purpose of aligning you with the information from the unconscious. The collapsing of Matshidiso at Mkhulu's gate as well as Tebogo's sudden misfortune in life and Lerato's constant illnesses indicate ideas, beliefs and feelings the individual does not know but needs to know as this information contributes greatly to their wellbeing and development.

The ages of the three participants show that there is no specific age for *Amafufunyana* to present themselves. However given that all three of them are still considerably young, one can support the argument made by Xaso (2015) which states that *intwaso* reveals itself at the prime of the lives and stages whereby they are most able to learn and process the knowledge acquired throughout the training.

Matshidiso, as one who has trained under a different *lefehlo*, recalls a story of education and oppression. Following Freire (1972), one can say that Matshidiso was constantly sick and frustrated due to the educationally oppressive nature of the environment she was in.

Her accounts speak of an authoritative teacher who imposed a learning system that not only violated her rights but also hindered her training as *ithwasana* who is on her journey to become a *sangoma*. Her experiences have become a norm in the present time as *gobela*s tend to abuse their power by engaging in sexual activities with their initiates under the guise of "ancestral instruction". Mlisa (2004), as well as Xaso (2015), note that sexual interactions whilst undergoing *ukuthwasa* are taboo and forbidden; however, both researchers acknowledge a power dynamic whereby trainers abuse their power and demand sexual deeds from their initiates.

Matshidiso's critical consciousness was crippled and oppressed firstly by her expulsion from her high school as well as by the violation she faced during her first training at a different *mpande*.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The emergence of *amafufunyana* is a time of great confusion and tribulation in the life of the initiate. Due to this confusion, the initiate often isolates themselves from society and goes on a quest to seek clarity on what they are going through.

The news that one has the gift of *intwaso* allows the initiate to understand and logically explain the existence of *amafufunyana* by creating meaning and understanding that will

ultimately pave the path to self-mastery and free will thinking, (Freire, 1972; Jung, 1974; Lave 1991).

The separation phase leads to the initiate accepting to the call and entering the process of *ukuthwasa* whereby the initiates are isolated from people as a process of educational transformation.

CHAPTER 5: ENTERING THE UNKNOWN WATERS (LITERALLY)

INTRODUCTION

This chapter highlights the process used by the *lefehlo* when one has accepted their calling and undergoes the process of *ukuthwasa*. This is the acceptance stage whereby the person accepts their calling and is then removed from their family and surrounding areas to train at a *lefehlo* and learn more about themselves and the gifts.

This chapter focuses on the experience of the researcher as when she entered the *lefehlo*, the participants had already gone through this process.

Under the guidance of Mkhulu, I am able to use the first person in this chapter as it does not provide any information on how far I am in the training process. It rather references a standard ritual performed by all those who have undergone *ukuthwasa*.

Below is a process which we all underwent upon entering the *mpande*. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the ritual.

UKUGATSHELWA/ UKUSHAYELWA KWEDLOZI

When an individual makes the decision to accept their calling and undergo *ukuthwasa*, they have to engage with their immediate families first because the process is financially demanding, as well as considered dangerous and emotionally strenuous as well.

Mkhulu, as the trainer, consults with the family to find out if *amasiko* were performed when the initiate was born. This is important because it provides clarity on whether the initiate was introduced to both the maternal and paternal ancestors who form part of the unconsciousness of the individual.

Mkhulu says that these days because of many broken families and tensions that arise within families many young people were not performed rituals of introducing them to their ancestors. What he then does is he uses the process of entering the *lefehlo* as a ritual that also unites the paternal and maternal ancestors of the initiate.

He explains that doing this shows the ancestors that the individual acknowledges both sides and embraces them both regardless of the situation of family history. This then brings about

harmony from the ancestors as they are now balanced and acknowledged equally by the initiate.

The ritual of entering *ephehlweni* is the registration process of undergoing *ukuthwasa*. The initiate has to come with two white chickens known as *Mokoko le Sithole* (a male and female chicken).

The chickens are then taken into the *indumba*, where using *impepho*, Mkhulu communicates with the ancestors by means of *Ukuphahla*. This is done by lighting candles which are white, blue, green and yellow and then lighting the sage plant over some charcoal. When this is done Mkhulu then informs the ancestors that you have accepted your calling and are now starting the process of *ukuthwasa*. He then allows you the opportunity to speak to your ancestors to ask them for guidance and protection throughout the journey. I remember I asked them to help me learn very quickly so that I can go back home and resume with my life. Mkhulu laughed at this and said that this process cannot be rushed.

After the chickens have been introduced to ancestors, we then step outside the *indumba* with the chickens and prepare to slaughter the chickens.

In full view of the other initiates as well as those who had accompanied me, I was told to slaughter the chickens. I was used to the slaughtering of chickens as sacrifices to the ancestors so I had no issues with that.

Mkhulu explained that the slaughtering of the chickens also serves as an indicator of approval from the ancestors. He says that in his *lefehlo*, if a chicken does not make noise when it is being slaughtered, then the ancestors give their blessings for the individual to train there. He also said that if the chicken makes noise then it indicates some form of trouble or distress from the ancestors. He expressed that not all of the schools hold this regard. Some believe that the noise is an expression of jubilation and the silence is a call for concern. He does, however, stress that when slaughtering a goat during rituals, he holds the view that the silence becomes a call for concern. These field-notes illustrate this ritual:

> *"Anyway my chickens were slaughtered peacefully and then after the slaughtering, I was then taken behind the indumba (a sacred room for the ancestors where divination takes place) and told by two female gobelas as well as a male to strip naked. The disbelief and shock in my face clearly told them that I was not willing to do so and*

they said "ok don't take off your clothes, we will pour the blood over your clothes and the stains won't wash off".

I remember being so confused. why must they pour chicken blood on me??? What kind of a cult is this?"- I thought to myself as I began to take off my clothes. Mkhulu (means grandfather) the male gobela went into the indumba and brought along with him a 20-litre bucket filled with a concoction that comprises of chicken blood, water, and cleansing muti believed to removed evil spirits as well as any witchcraft that was performed on me. He carried in his hand a leshoba which is a stick with animal hair and this is what he used to splash me with the mixture.

I had to kneel down as I was poured with the mixture from all angles and I remember feeling nauseous wanting to regurgitate and sobbing to go to my parents who were sitting on the other side of the yard engaging in the festivities that welcome ithwasana to the lefehlo and eating meat unaware of what was taking place behind the indumba.

After the ritual took place I was given a traditional cloth (Ibhayi) to wear as well as a red skirt, white t-shirt and beads and instructed to not bath for the remainder of the day. I ran into the house and asked for my bags and looked for body spray to hide the odour but I was told that I could not use any as the ancestors need to familiarise themselves with my scent- but how was this my scent if it mixed with chicken blood???

For the remainder of the activities, I had to watch the dancing and feet stomping rituals whilst sitting on the floor, on a straw mat, indicating that I was the one who was inducted into the school and because I am still new I had not learnt how to dance yet.

From being drenched in chicken blood, to walking barefoot and sitting on the floor I was convinced that it would not get any worse off from here until night time came.

I went into the main house and asked which bed I would be sleeping on and Mkhulu laughed at me along with the other initiates and said: "we sleep with the ancestors in the indumba". Believed to a sacred space, initiates sleep in the indumba as the purity of the place allows an initiate to have clear dreams which dictate the process of their journey.

So I thought that great since we are sleeping in the indumba let us move the beds into it so that we can sleep because I was genuinely exhausted and needed to see a new day so that I could bath and remove this dreadful smell off me.

Little did I know that in the indumba we sleep on straw mats, with no pillows and just one blanket- enough to keep away the winter cold but not warm enough so that you wake up at 3 am, and to add insult to injury because we are taught that we are family, we sleep in the same indumba as the male initiates…"



Figure 1: The *indumba* is a sacred hut/room used for divination and healing. This is the place where the initiates reside until they complete their training

Image Source: Author (2017)



Figure 2: The *indumba* is a sacred place where ancestral items are placed. Here is a display of *ihiya* (cloths), *itshoba*, and calabashes used to represent ancestors

Image source: Author (2017)



Figure 3: the *impepho* used as a communication instrument to speak to the ancestors. The usage of *impepho* goes beyond the process of *ukuthwasa* because it is a fundamental tool in

establishing communication with *amadlozi*. Used for divination, for seeking clarity, for notifying amadlozi of any action taken by the individual

Image Source: Author (2017)



Figure 4: The slaughtering of the chickens

Image Source: Author (2017)

Following this ritual one was then given the rules of conduct whilst living in the *indumba* and undergoing training under this particular *lefehlo.*

The rules are as follows

1. Respect- for the *indumba* in which you live in, for the clients who will be coming to consult, for the ancestors, for each other, for the *gobela* and his family, for everyone in general as well
2. We were told not to consume alcohol during the training process
3. Adhere to client/patient confidentiality
4. Respect the uniform of the school
5. No sexual activities at ALL
6. Always address senior sangomas on your knees as a sign of humility
7. Always sit on a straw mat and not on chairs

After entering *ephehlweni*, one undergoes a strict regimen of cleansing rituals. These rituals are to cleanse the initiate as well as the ancestors. It is believed that ancestors will not communicate with an individual who has toxins in their body or someone who is not spiritually pure and clean.

This is done through means of early morning rituals of *ukughabha, ukufutha* and *ukugeza emfuleni. Ukughabha* is a cleansing process of self-induced vomiting after the ingestion of a concoction of *imithi.* This is done to remove any harmful and toxic substances that were in the bloodstream of the initiate upon entering *ephehlweni. Ukufutha* is the process of steaming using a blend of cleansing muti combined by the *gobela* and serves the same purpose as *ukughabha. Ukugeza emfuleni* means to bath in a river of flowing water. Rivers are believed to be sacred spaces because of the spirits that reside in the rivers. Believed to be the home of the precious *amandawu* spirits, the rivers are the ultimate cleansing rituals and space whereby the initiate can reconnect with their ancestors and constantly recharge their spirit.

A few days after the ritual of entering *ephehlweni*, a process of *ukushayelwa kwedlozi* must be done. This is a process conducted to raise the *dlozi* within you to answer questions relating to how your training must be conducted. During this ritual the questions that must be answered by the *dlozi* are the following:

1. The name and surname of the *dlozi*
2. The lineage of its origin
3. Why it has chosen you
4. The nature of the gift that you possess
5. The healing technologies you will use
6. The regalia one will wear

This ritual is conducted by the *gobela* with the others initiates in the *indumba*. After the lighting of the candles as well as *ukuphahla*, the *gobela* then burns what is known as *imithi yokuphula idlozi* which is medicinal herbs used to “raise the ancestor”.

Through drumming and singing and clapping the initiate is then instructed to sit on the floor and is covered by *ihiya* as well as a white cloth. The inhalation of the smoke of the *muti* induces a trance state. In this trance state, the initiate then speaks under the possession of the *idlozi*. It is said that the voice of the initiate changes from female to male depending on the

gender of the *idlozi*. The *gobela* then asks the initiate who is in a trance to speak and declare themselves to the group. Sometimes the *idlozi* will use signs and symbols to speak to the *gobela* therefore close observation is important during this process.

The name that the initiate will use going forward, is the name that the *idlozi* identifies itself by as well as the healing technology that will be used by the initiate going forward.

It was observed that during my ritual, the white cloth I was covered with became wet indicating water as the main healing technology. This also indicated the presence of *isipohorofeto*, the gift of prophecy as well as the presence of *amandawu*, the water ancestors.

To reduce the trance state as well as calm the initiate, the tempo of the drumming and the singing is reduced. This process is a very challenging process on the initiate. The raising of the ancestor is intense and draining however, once this is done it then becomes easier as more ancestors will reveal themselves and declare their presence to the initiate. As the training progresses, the original owner of the particular gift, known as *umnikazi wesikhwama* reveals themselves to the initiate and shares personal information directly with the *ithwasana* without the presence of the *gobela*.



Figure 5: *ukushayelwa kwedlozi*. The initiate is under the white cloth

Image Source: Author (2017)

Following this ritual, the *gobela* then prepares a mixture of herbs (undisclosed), animal oils and red ochre. This is known as *idumane*. The *idumane* is applied to the head of the initiate. According to Mkhulu *idumane* is used to essentially unlock the unconscious. It is to connect with the Nguni ancestors of the initiate and serves as a resemblance of the Nguni ancestors through the red colour. It is to help one in understanding dreams and to recall any signs of visions and symbols that are passed on to the initiate by the ancestor. It also helps the initiate to remember things which need to be relayed to Mkhulu for analysis and interpretation. Mkhulu also laughs and says that it is to show the world that you are undergoing *ukuthwasa* and that the men must not desire to have sexual relations with you.

I remember that after applying *idumane* to my head, I was granted permission to go to school wearing a wig so as to hide this.



Figure 6: *idumane* on the head of *ithwasana*

Image Source: Author (2017)

ANALYSIS OF THE UKUGATSHELWA RITUAL

The process of entering *ephehlweni* is important as it serves as an indication to the ancestors that their selected candidate has accepted the calling. To the candidate who is undergoing the training, this process serves as a clarity seeking ritual that cleanses the individual and outlines the training that the initiate is to undergo, based on the information provided by the ancestor.

According to the psychoanalytical perspective, the ritual of *amasiko* serves as an attempt to equally balance all elements of the unconscious, (Jung, 1974). This is important as it creates harmony between all the elements of the unconscious that cannot be explained by experimental and scientific researchers. The harmony then aids the individual who is on a quest to discover their higher self and it is these very elements that are responsible for guiding the individual on their journey to self-actualization.

In the ritual of *ukushayelwa kwedlozi*, the signs and symbols and trance are elements of the unconscious once again, permeating into the conscious state of being, to inform the initiate on the nature of the gift that they possess. This gift can be equated as the self-actualization that they need to reach by undergoing the training process of *ukuthwasa*.

The new name indicates a new identity that is constantly changing and will continue to change by the fulfilment of the requirements of the unconscious, (Jung, 1974). This is also the realisation of self-worth that has been oppressed by the suppression of indigenous and cultural knowledge (Freire, 1972).

The cleansing rituals, as well as the training being conducted in the sacred space of indumba, is to create an environment that harnesses the potential of the individual in order to create a sense of critical consciousness, (Freire, 1972; Darder, 2015)

According to Freire (1972), the process of developing critical consciousness starts with the creation of a productive learning environment. This is what Darder (2015) describes as a key complement of the conscientization process. Grounded in Marxist theory, the process of conscientization focuses on the attainment of a deeper understanding of the world by creating an environment that allows for the formulation of social ideas and analysis of political contradictions based on the free will and innate thought process of the individual, (Darder, 2015).

This means that the removal of the individual from their normal surroundings to the *indumba* of the *mpande* serves to create an environment that allows for the understanding of the *amadlozi* as well as the gift that they possess.

By creating an environment like this, it ensures that the individual can undergo the process of liberation and critical awareness development by being prepared to receive messages and instructions from the *amadlozi.*

The authorization of Mkhulu to allow me to wear a wig when leaving the *mpande* to fulfil my academic obligations is a display of cultural synthesis, that shows the existence of two worlds with parallel and different views and expectations that need to be met by both worlds- no matter how strenuous it is to the individual.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The entrance into *ephehlweni* serves as a separation phase in which the individual is isolated from the social structure to train and prepare them for the harnessing of their spiritual gift. This is done by reconciling the maternal and paternal ancestral lineages of the individual so that the initiate undergoes training without ancestral disharmony. This is achieved through conducting rituals of purity that will allow the ancestors to communicate to the individual as they are the sources of the knowledge. The rules of the *mpande* are set to ensure that the purity and cleanliness of the individual are maintained from the entrance phase, throughout the training leading to the graduation (*intwaso).*

CHAPTER 6: OUT WITH THE OLD AND IN WITH THE NEW- THE DAILY TRAINING ROUTINE OF UKUTHWASA

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the daily routine of training and learning within this particular *mpande*. It also serves a display of daily events and how they lead to rituals of knowledge transmission. Also included in this chapter is an analysis of the events as well as the conclusion of the chapter.

RUDE AWAKENING

The day starts at 3 am with prayer and the beating of the drum. It is the drum that signifies a new day and marks the beginning of a day of ritual, activities and practical assessments all in the name of *ukuthwasa*.

After waking up and praying, the initiates prepare to clean the *indumba*, to clean themselves by bathing by the riverside, or bathing in a basin with water that was a mixture of cleansing *muti*. After this is done, the initiates have to undergo *ukughabha* as well as *ukufutha* to remove any harmful spirits or attempts that were made to harm the individual.

After this has been done, the initiates are then ready to have their breakfast, which is usually porridge with brown sugar, butter and no milk. Milk is one of the restricted foods whilst *ephehlweni* as it is believed that it hinders your progress by disrupting your dream patterns. The same has been said about eggs, pork, the insides of an animal, Coca Cola and all dairy products.

After completing this routine, the lessons for the day begin.

THE BLUEPRINT OF UKUTHWASA- DREAMS

According to Mlisa (2009) dreams are the blueprint for the curriculum of the initiate during *ukuthwasa*. They serve as a unique, personal guidance experience which is directly from the ancestors to the initiate. Given that dreams are messages from the ancestors regarding a gift that they had whilst they were still alive; it is important to seek clarity on what the dream means as well as abiding by the dream. The dreams provide information on the type of beads they are to wear; the type of cloth; as well as all the knowledge they need to advance to different stages of their training.

Every morning, once all the chores have been completed, all the initiates have a personal discussion with the *gobela*; to tell him about the dreams they had the night before. According to Mlisa (2009), the daily dream analysis and interpretation is a form of a dialogue between the conscious and unconscious minds of both the trainer as well as the initiate. This is a continuous journey of knowledge transmission and spiritual growth for them both.

Below is Lerato's experience and challenges with dreaming and recalling during her process of ukuthwasa:

> *Upon entering ephehlweni I remember I used to struggle with recalling my dreams, each morning when we would sit with Mkhulu to tell him what we had dreamt of the night before I could never remember anything and this posed a great challenge because it meant that I could not advance in my training to become a traditional healer. With dreams being the main driving force that dictates what one is to do, being unable to remember dreams meant that my journey would not go anywhere.*
>
> *Mkhulu then consulted with the ancestors to try and understand what the cause of this was and he was told that I was to wear a white cloth on my head and pray using yellow and white candles as well as impepho. The white symbolises light and is used to ask for prosperity in one's endeavours and the yellow candle is used to ask for clarity and vivid dreams. The impepho is used to invoke the ancestors and to let them know that one is attempting to communicate with them.*
>
> *I used to dread waking up in the morning because the other initiates were having dreams and these dreams indicated that they were advancing in their training. I felt very stagnant and confused that maybe this was not for me. Dreams are so pivotal in ukuthwasa as they are conflated with knowledge from the ancestors; the very people who bestow this gift upon you.*

Jung (1974) states that dreams are vital in the process of inner development and self-actualisation as through dreams a constant interaction and receptivity towards the border crossing from the conscious (tonal) to the unconscious (nagual) is possible. If the unconscious and the conscious self cannot connect or correlate with each other it is then when feelings of anxiety and identity crisis surface. These processes are revealed below in an account of Lerato's dream experience:

> *It then happened that I had a dream, I dreamt of two white chickens, and then dreamt of a river, and dreamt of holding the aloe plant in my hand. As the dream continued I further dreamt of my son or rather a baby that I thought was my son. In relaying the dream to Mkhulu he then told me that the dream is a message saying that I need to perform a ritual slaughtering of two white chickens and in order to grow my gift and to advance in my training I would have to go to the river. He further told me that the presence of a newborn baby in dreams often indicates a gift that needs to grow and the presence of the river in the dream indicated that one has what is known as water ancestors.*

The discussion had with Mkhulu is what Freire (1972) defines as collective engagement. This is an active process of learning whereby the student and the teacher engage in a dialogue discussing and learning information which is of vital essence to the development of the student. The *gobela* plays the role of the teacher and he is to act according to the dream of the initiates but Mkhulu states that this is not always the case as some *gobela*s act according to their prerogative and neglect the dreams of the initiate especially whereby an initiate dreams of completing their training at a different place.

During *ukuthwasa,* the initiates are constantly negotiating feelings of what Turner (1967) defines as "between and betwixt" their old self and position in society as well as the person that they are becoming during the training.

The more knowledge one learns about their gift as well as how to use their gift is the more the person drifts away from their former identity and is gradually moving towards the identity of being a traditional healer.

The dream Lerato had about the river indicated that this was the place she had to go to and constantly revisit throughout the duration of her process as this was the sacred place that was aligned with her gift. According to Darder (2015) that the knowledge acquisition process takes requires one to be in tune with elements of nature, as well as having a relationship with nature itself and that education is not confined to spaces such as the normalised image of a classroom with desks and chairs.

Visiting this place is an indication of agreeing to the death of the old and the rebirth of the new self. It is through being this place that the flow of the water serves as a constant cleansing mechanism and removal of blockages and hindrances one faces on their journey.

Entering the sacred place allows the ancestor to communicate with you directly and relay information which is meant for you without the presence of the *gobela* to serve as a mediator.

Lerato continues below:

> *I remember my first river ritual as this was the turning point in my life where I realised that there is more to life than the seen.*
>
> *The Saturday before the ritual the gobela had invited priests from the Apostolic church (this is an African Christian Church that accommodates those with spiritual gifts especially because those who possess the gift of healing also heal within their churches) to pray and conduct a night revival session to prepare us for the journey into the Vaal River.*
>
> *I was so confused by how walking into a river would require so much mediation and prayer and slaughtering of two chickens which were offered as a sacrifice to the ancestors.*
>
> *At 9pm there was singing and dancing which was done by the sangomas which hypnotising and captivating- given that I am still new and have not learnt much I was not allowed to dance yet I sat with the gobela on the chair and watched the festivities, my fellow initiates were not pleased by this as it is tradition to sit on the floor when you are an initiate, and here comes this girl with a notebook, claiming to dream of going to the river and is now sitting with the gobelas… they were not impressed.*
>
> *The singing and dancing and prayer took place all night and at 7 am I was draped in a white cloth and escorted to the river in dead silence.*
>
> *When we got to the river the water was a clear blue, very still and very smoky. The priests and sangomas who had accompanied me were praying at the river banks and I just stood there and froze because once again I did not see what the importance of this ritual was- I did not know anything about it… I just dreamt it… In the midst of it all I was worried about my schoolwork as I was not able to concentrate at all; the migraines were getting persistent and I just zoned into a mind of my own thoughts until I heard my name being called out by one of the gobelas from Free State- telling me to go into the water and to follow the archbishop in the water.*

With hesitation I went in, put my right foot in first and felt the icy cold chill I used to feel in my dreams, I walked on what I thought was sand which later was told was the body of "the one who owns the water"- umlambo wamanzi, the water snake.

Walking deeper and deeper into the water I started panicking for the water was starting flow and I thought I would flow away with it- once we stood still the prayer ritual began, then I was told to submerge myself into water 3 times with my eyes closed- I managed to do it the first two times and then the third time a force so powerful submerged me underwater and kept me there for a while. And suddenly I was warm, no wetness, no shivers, no cold, nothing.

Emerging from the water I was greeted by loud drums and clapping and singing because it meant that the ritual was a success and thereafter I was handed with a white beaded necklace as well as a white headscarf to wear for clear dreams, protection and concentration.



Image 11 and 12: Taken at two different river rituals

Image source: Gontse Kwapeng shared with permission to the author (2017)



Image Source: Author (2017)

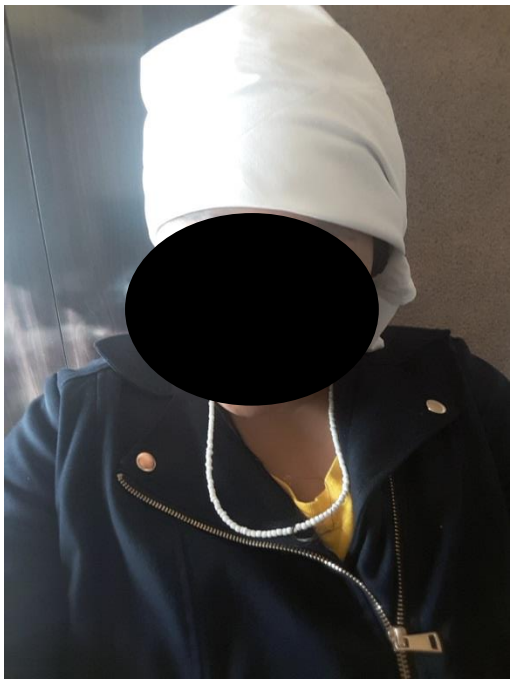


Image 13: a white headband and neck beads

Image source: Author (2017)



Image 14: white hand beads

Image Source: Author (2017)



Image 15: accumulation of hand beads- these symbolise different ancestors as well as gifts of healing and divination

Image Source: Author (2017)

Mkhulu is very strict in following *amathongo* relayed to him by his initiates. Although according to him this has been an issue because some of the initiates lie about their dreams with the hopes of advancing their training. He laughs and says "*you can lie to me, but you can't lie to the ancestors. Rushing to go the river, the mountains, caves and forest when you are not ready places your life at risk. You upset the ancestors who own and protect those*

spaces and you upset your ancestors as well. So it is actually better to just be honest and be under the protection of the ancestors."

Mkhulu also told me that initially, he used to have a group session in the *indumba* whereby everyone would share their dreams with each other as this allows for varied interpretations of *amathongo* but these were stopped when some of the initiates used to copy the dreams of others in an effort to try and complete their training quicker.

After the sharing of the dreams, the initiates are to then eat a substance known as *izilawu* or *ubulawu* or *libhudlu*. Believed to be the food of the ancestors, this concoction is believed to help initiates communicate with their ancestors clearly and maintain a powerful communication line with them.

Izilawu is a mix of various *muti* such as:

1. *Ubhubhubhu*
2. *Madlozana*
3. *Amaphakama*
4. *Isimemo*
5. *Iphahla*
6. *Moya wezwe*
7. *Ndlela zimhlophe*
8. *Luru*

This *muti* does not have English translation as stated by Thornton (2009) that the herbs and substances used to make *muti* are named according to the gender, colour and age of the plant, time of harvesting and the purpose which it will be used for.

The *muti* is then placed in a calabash and water is added to the concoction. The initiates are to kneel on the floor and stir the mixture using a stick with a fork like an end. As the initiates keep on stirring, Mkhulu will instruct the initiates to speak to the mixture so that the ancestors hear their cries and pleas. The mixture will start to foam and the initiates ingest the foamy substance.

The initiates then place their hands on the floor and ingest the foamy substance directly from the calabash using their mouths. It is important that the initiates are dressed in white sleeveless t-shirts during this because they will also place the foamy substance on their hair, on the shoulders and the face.

This ritual is repeated again, at 3 pm.

I did not participate in the daily activities as this was when I was at school, was when she was at school, however upon returning *ephehlweni* after attending lectures, I would then have to catch up and attempt to do all the things that were required of her.

During the times when we were given the chance to go home and visit our families, we were given the muti used for Izilawu to continue ingesting at home and Mkhulu told us to always keep notebooks to record dreams so that we can then share with him when we return.

One of the conditions of going home to visit our families was to use the enamel plate and cup we use for eating whilst ephehlweni. This is done to avoid us contracting anything that will cause blockages to dreams.

Blockages are caused by bodily toxins; dirty environments such as our homes which fall susceptible to practices of witchcraft, ancestors whose spirits have been neglected and need to be fetched from the river or any of the spaces selected by one's particular ancestors. It is important to always have a clear line of communication with the ancestors because if it is contaminated in any way whatsoever, Mkhulu says the ancestors will always look for more aggressive ways to reach out to you- even using illness throughout your journey *ephehlweni*.



Image 16: Image of *amathwasana* consuming *ubulawu*

Image source: Author



Image 17: Image of *ithwasana* mixing *Izilawu* concoction

Image Source: Author



Image 18: *libhudlu* mixture prepared at the home of an initiate.

Image Source: Author

ILLNESSES

Having spoken to the participants regarding how they actually found out that they had an ancestral calling, one found that all three of us shared similar symptomatic illnesses ranging from headaches to losing sensation in our feet. These illnesses are used by the ancestors to indicate that one has an ancestral calling and they intensify over time to indicate the urgency to consult with a traditional healer.

Throughout the process of ukuthwasa one is constantly plagued with illnesses as these not only challenge you to grow your gift but also serves as subliminal communication from the ancestors if one ignores a dream. Below is an excerpt from my field notes;

> *I remember that on the 9th of August (it was a public day and I was with my family on that day) and I took a nap as I was feeling lightheaded. I then had a dream that I had to wear white beads on my hands - the main focus in the dream was the right hand.*
>
> *I ignored the dream; simply because I did not want to wear these beads and have everyone know that I am a traditional healer of some sort. Later on that night I had the same dream again and I ignored it and did not share it with Mkhulu. A few days later leading to the weekend my hand started swelling and was in immense pain. This was the weekend of my chicken ritual (the ritual of slaughtering chickens upon entering ukuthwasa to indicate to the ancestors that one has accepted the calling to become a traditional healer) and the Friday before the ritual my hand was in excruciating pain. I then told my grandmother about the dream as well as Mkhulu who then said that I need to wear white beads on my right hand to heal.*
>
> *Upon wearing these beads, I felt a rush of energy go through my hand, felt a cold chill which later subsided. Within a matter of hours, my hand had returned to its original size and I learnt to never ignore dreams.*
>
> *The remainder of the beads that I wear, the instruction came from having aches on my wrist and the occasional swelling and burning sensation underneath my feet Mkhulu says that wearing these beads indicates that I am a novice traditional healer and the colour white symbolises purity. These beads communicate with the ancestors and inform them that I have accepted my calling and have completed my first ritual of ukuvuma idlozi (which means accepting the ancestral calling).*

> *Illnesses in ukuthwasa are perceived as more than a biomedical condition; it is seen as an opportunity to strengthen your gift by conquering the illness, also perceived as a message from the ancestor indicating that one needs to advance to their next phase in training or it could be an indication that one is ready to go to the sacred spaces of transition that are aligned with their ancestral gift.*

According to Darder (2015), Freire viewed the body as an integral figure in seeking liberation; it becomes a symbol of protest and resistance if it receives information that violates its pursuit for liberation. Liberation, in this case, is learning how one should utilize their spiritual gift, learning information about the gift and following signs and indications that constantly grow your gift. In this regard, illness is seen as an act of resistance and an indication to the body that there is incomplete knowledge and that one should seek guidance in order to heal and advance to the next stage of the process.

I was constantly plagued with illnesses, with hypertension being the main illness. Throughout the efforts to use traditional remedies to assist me, the symptoms never subsided. Eventually, I was admitted to hospital where I was treated for severe hypertension. The usage of biomedicine and traditional remedies proved to be effective as I was able to function and was discharged from the hospital. Although the symptoms kept on recurring, further consultation with the ancestors indicate that illnesses teach one about the experiences of what their patient/clients will experience. By actively finding ways to heal one's illnesses through the guidance of the ancestors, one is then also learning how to heal patients in future- this is what being a wounded healer is about.

LEARNING ABOUT MUTI (MUTI101)

Based on the healing technologies that one will use, Mkhulu always takes the initiates into the field to learn how to identify plants which are used for *mut*i. This is also the process of developing the *umbilini* (intuition) of the initiates as sometimes in the field, one is drawn to a specific plant which they might have dreamt about but did not understand or discuss the dream with Mkhulu. Mkhulu then teaches the initiates how to harvest and collect the plants as well as how to dry and store them. The medicinal containers that the *muti* is stored in are not labelled because again as a test and development of *umbilini*, the initiates and healers are supposed to know which *muti* serves a purpose based on the knowledge and guidance of the ancestors.

Throughout the time spent *ephehlweni* Mkhulu prepares exercises that test our knowledge of herbs by asking us to identify barks and leaves and explain what they do. In the case whereby one struggles to trust their intuition, Mkhulu tests them by constantly hiding items of value and asking them to find it.

I remember that Mkhulu used to hide my pens, and sometimes my laptop and would make me search for them. If I felt stranded then he would always ask me to pray and ask for guidance and listen to the inner voice as these were the ancestors speaking to me.



Image 19: Image of *muti* found in nature in its natural form

Image source: Author



Image 20: Sage plant being dried to be used as *impepho*

Image Source: Author



Image 21: *Muti* dried and ready for storage dispensing during a consultation

Image source: Author

LEARNING ABOUT DIVINATION

The most important thing that one is taught *ephehlweni* is the techniques of divination. Through observing Mkhulu as he deals with patients and clients, he teaches us that as a genuine healer, one is expected to know the ailments faced by the person before they speak to you about it. This is why *umbilini* is so important.

We learn to observe the procedure when a patient enters the *indumba*. Then observe the usage of *inhlolo* and learn how to explain and analyse them according to the positioning thereof. *Inhlolo* is instruments used during divination. Anything from bones, dominoes, sea shells, whistles etc. These are used to speak to the ancestors known as *Amakhosi*, which are invoked during a consultation process with the patient. The placement and positioning of *inhlolo* paint the picture of the patient's life and illnesses. Mkhulu then uses *itshoba* to point to a particular instrument when explaining the sequencing of *inhlolo* to the patient.

When we are training, we use *inhlolo* that belong to Mkhulu because we as initiates do not have our own as yet- we acquire our *inhlolo* just before and during the ceremony of *intwaso*. The *itshoba* also belongs to the *gobela* and initiates receive theirs after *intwaso* because it is made from the tail of the cow that will be slaughtered during their *intwaso*.

Mkhulu then allows us to practice using his clients' because this practical exercise teaches us about divination and how it shall be conducted once we complete our training. Mkhulu informs the clients that his initiates will be doing consultations however should they not feel comfortable with it then he will do the consultation instead. Most of the clients did not have a problem with initiates conducting the consultation process provided that Mkhulu was in the *indumba* monitoring the session and guiding us as we go along.



Image 22: *Inhlolo* used for divination

Image Source: Author

DIVINATION AND ISITHUNYWA

According to Mkhulu, because most ancestors used their spiritual gifts within the African Christian Churches such as the apostolic church, more and more initiates have *isithunywa* which indicates to healing and divination that must be done within that particular church.

The *isithunywa* is a messenger that needs to be merged and introduced to *idlozi* to avoid conflict between the two ancestors. Those with *isithunywa* and *idlozi* heal and divine through prayers and *muti*. The *isithunywa* must also train and grow much like *idlozi* and this is done through attendance and worship at an apostolic church, which the initiate is shown through dreams.

The uniform and regalia that the person is to wear are shown through dreams, much like the mechanisms used by *idlozi*.

Those with *isithunywa* undergo special retreats to what is known as *iladi*, similar to an *indumba* where they are trained to harness the gift of becoming *umthandazeli* (one who heals

through prayer) and *ubuphoropheto* (the gift of prophecy and healing through water and prayer).

Given that Mkhulu is an archbishop of an apostolic church, he also conducts the training of *isithunywa* using mechanisms similar to the above. The initiate with *isithunywa* is compelled to attend church services held on Sunday mornings, as well as Tuesday and Wednesday evenings as that is when their training takes place.

The researcher has *isithunywa* as well, which revealed itself during the ritual of *ukushayelwa kwedlozi* and had to attend these evening services as well. Mkhulu states that it is taboo to discuss what happens during the services, therefore, it will not be discussed in this paper.



Image 23: Regalia of a prophet

SINGING, DRUMS AND UKUGIDA AS MEDIUMS OF TRANSFERRING KNOWLEDGE

To conclude the activities of the day, the initiates go through a session of singing and prayer.

At first sight, one might assume that these are just songs, but upon listening to the words, one hears that these songs are actually messages from the ancestors. The drumming invokes the ancestors who are then present at the session and the *gobela* leads the songs. These songs tell a story of signs and symbols and the symbolism of the ihiya and beads worn by the initiates. The songs further tell a story of the ancestors and their lives here on earth and how they divined and healed people.

In the state of trance, the initiates will then rise and stomp their feet. This is known as *Ukugida.*

After this is done the session ends in prayer and the initiates then sleep. This is at midnight when they are given time to rest and receive instructions from their ancestors.



Image 24: *amahiya* worn by traditional healers. These cloths are used to represent the type of ancestor as well as the gift of the person

Image Source: Author

ANALYSIS OF THE OUT WITH THE OLD AND IN WITH THE NEW

This phase reveals the mechanisms used to train the initiates who are undergoing the process of *ukuthwasa*.

According to the psychoanalytic approach of Jung (1974), the elements of the unconscious are pivotal to the growth and development of the higher self. This is why it is so important to create an environment that allows the unconscious to come forth and communicate and guide the individual to reach maximum capacity.

Illnesses are once again viewed as the unconscious permeating through to the consciousness of the individual. The illnesses faced by the initiate fill the gaps of knowledge needed to advance through the training process.

The practical learning methods and visual and hearing aids used by Mkhulu are critical in creating a dialogue of engagement (Freire, 1972). According to the Freire (1972; 2005), the out with the old and in with the new is a contrast between conventional teaching methods used in institutionalised structures of learning as well as the unconventional methods used in *ukuthwasa*.

The role of Mkhulu encourages dialogue and collective engagement; which through deliberation and conversation with him the initiates begin to search for meaning in the words, actions and dreams. The syllabic abundance and high charge of experiential learning allow for various meanings and understandings to be formulated to explain dreams and signs and illnesses (Freire 1972).

This collective engagement between Mkhulu and the initiates allows for the first codification of words into visual images that stimulate the initiates to become conscious makers of their own culture.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The training phase of *ukuthwasa* is an endurance test of the willpower of the individual. The activity-filled journey is a process of not only teaching the initiate about divination but also about teachings of nature and respecting the elements of nature which are involved in the holistic healing of the individual. Throughout the training, the identity of the initiate undergoes a constant change and evolution from being the patient who came to consult to becoming a traditional health practitioner.

CONCLUSION

This chapter serves as a summary and conclusion chapter of the research.

The aim of this research was to attempt to define *ukuthwasa* as a critical pedagogy by assessing the mechanisms used to transfer knowledge and train the initiates in preparing them to become traditional healers. By drawing on the politically oppressive history of the Republic of South Africa, more especially within the educational domain, one found that the current state and myths of *ukuthwasa* are as a result of the Witchcraft Suppression Act.

In chapter 4 it is brought to light that the emergence of the calling is often misunderstood as it is not taught within the formal educational domain. The narratives used in the above chapters highlight just how the initiates struggled during this period of tribulation as they had no knowledge of what was happening to them. The narratives of the initiates show a theme of recurring illnesses which are often misdiagnosed in the biomedical realm. This is largely due to the historical mistrust and strained relations between biomedical practitioners and the traditional health practitioners, (Wreford, 2006). A collaborative effort between the two would make for more holistic healing and accurate diagnoses and understanding of the two practices. Given that only a trained and qualified traditional health practitioner can diagnose and certify that one has a calling, it remains important to establish a functional relationship between the two spectrums as one can prevent misdiagnoses and the other can treat initiates who have a biomedical illness that requires biomedical treatment.

This research further provided information on the relationship dynamic between the trainer and initiate and just how trainers sometimes impose authority on the initiates and take advantage of them. The research also highlighted the role of the trainer using the experiences of the initiates as well as the input of the trainer to understand that the trainer is meant to facilitate the training process according to the dreams of the initiates; instead of dictating the process according to personal expectation.

Throughout this research, it became evident that the training process of *ukuthwasa* is largely dependent on the creation and maintenance of cleanliness which will allow for the dreams and elements of the unconscious to come through and guide the individual throughout the process. This cleanliness then allows for knowledge transference to occur. Ukuthwasa is a transformative process that changes the identity of the initiate by equipping them with the knowledge they will need beyond the initiation and well into their practice.

Although the process of *ukuthwasa* cannot be taught in the formal education system, the curriculum as well the teachers in institutions of learners should be taught an trained on how to identify the symptoms of *ukuthwasa* as well as how to handle and assist a candidate who

has to undergo *ukuthwasa*. In the present day of decolonization of institutions of higher learning, it is of pivotal importance to engage on the pedagogic role of indigenous knowledge systems as practices as well as the robust inclusion thereof within the schooling curriculum of South Africa.

In including indigenous knowledge practices in the academic domain, it makes it easier for those with ubizo to not only gain factual information regarding their calling as well as training process, but it also highlights just how processes such as ukuthwasa are processes of liberation and conscientization according to the critical consciousness concept of Paulo Freire (1972).

Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 are the on-going processes of conscientization whereby the initiate is constantly learning and identifying generative themes and representations which positively impact the daily lives of the initiates. The process of conscientization is about reaching a stage of freedom and liberation. This liberation comes in the form of completing the process of ukuthwasa and being healed from the illnesses and misfortunes that one faced. The illness and misfortunes are seen as elements of oppression and factors that indicate that the person is in agony and is hindered from reaching and achieving their personal goals and objectives. This is largely due to the fact that the education that they receive is not in line with their calling of ukuthwasa.

The inclusion of the psychoanalytic school of thought through the work of Jung (1974) and the undiscovered self brings to light the importance of dreams and the unconscious. This is a dimension that cannot be understood by science and it is through the dreams that the individual is taken on a journey to go beneath the surface meaning of things. Through the understanding of dreams, one can then create a deeper meaning and understand the root causes of experience and subject matter, (Freire, 1972).

In using the process of critical consciousness as well as the psychoanalytic school of thought to understand the process of ukuthwasa, this paper has proven that the dreams that an individual has, both prior to undertaking the initiation journey of *ukuthwas*a as well as during ukuthwasa aid the individual to learn about the higher self that they are to become as well as provide an indication of the turmoil within the unconsciousness.

Understanding *ukuthwasa* as a science with its own competencies, curriculum and processes of evaluation further validates that education is not merely an activity that occurs within a formalised structure. It validates that cultural practices which date back to pre-colonial times

are not just practices of habit but instead are practices of knowledge and character development. It is after all the late Martin Luther King Jnr who said: “intelligence plus character is the true goal of education”. Given that character cannot be successfully acquired without a liberated mind and a holistic balance between the conscious and unconscious elements of the whole self, it remains a very important task to incorporate the traditional teachings into the formal educational domain.

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Annexure A

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (Ithwasana/Initiate)

Thokoza, my name is Lebogang Esme Mokgethi, an Anthropology Masters student from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg and I would like you to participate in my research as outlined below.

I, much like yourself have an ancestral gift which requires me to undergo the process of *ukuthwasa* and my research is on documenting the journey of *ukuthwasa* and understanding the how the *ithwasana* (which is us the initiates) undergoes a learning experience that equips us with the knowledge that will eventually allow us to be able to diagnose, treat, heal and protect our clients from illness and/or bad spirits.

The reason why I am doing this research is to provide an understanding of the training involved as well as to shed light to those who have the calling about what it all entails. I myself was afraid because I did not know what to believe, did not know what lay ahead of me and I was very confused by the different terms used by the different regions and schools (*lefehlo*) which might have similar or contrasting meaning.

I selected you to form part of the study because I am focusing on our school that being the Makhosi *lefehlo* and because we are currently undergoing the same process with the same spiritual guide and I would like you to share your journey of learning with me- through interviews as well as recording of the interviews through audio guides and visual recordings of the milestone rituals as well as physical training we go through.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, I as the research vow to animosity when writing about the information; confidentiality and non-disclosure of private things that we cannot share with the world, at all times I will respect your journey and should you feel the need to withdraw at any time then you are more than welcome to do so. Please note that participation in this is voluntary and no compensation will be rewarded.

The findings of this study will put together into a thesis which will be made available online and a copy thereof will be made available to you.

If you have any questions please feel free to share them with me verbally or we can communicate telephonically on 0749954090. You are more than welcome to email my research supervisor, Dr Matthew-Wilhelm Solomon on wilhelmsolomon@gmail.com.

Thank you so much for your time, *Thokoza*.

CONSENT FORM (Ithwasana/initiate)

I, _____ (insert name in blank space) an initiate who is currently undergoing *ukuthwasa*; have been informed about the topic of this and I hereby declare that I will/will not be participating in the research.

Furthermore, I declare that the researcher has informed me that

-my participation in this research is voluntary and that no compensation will be offered

-my identity will be protected should I wish to remain anonymous and that a pseudonym will be used in the final report

-my identity will be protected during the research process by the researcher through protecting the raw research data from any of the participants

-should at any point in the research I begin to feel uncomfortable or compromised in any way whatsoever, I have the right to withdraw from the research and this will not be held against me in any way.

-the findings of this report will be made public in the form of a research report.

I have read the participant information sheet and are fully aware of my role and participant in this research project

_____

Signature of participant

Annexure B

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (*gobela*)

Thokoza, my name is Lebogang Esme Mokgethi, an Anthropology Masters student from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg and I would like you to participate in my research as outlined below.

I, have an ancestral gift which requires me to undergo the process of *ukuthwasa* and my research is on documenting the journey of *ukuthwasa* and understanding the how the *ithwasana* undergoes a learning experience that equips us with the knowledge that will eventually allow us to be able to diagnose, treat, heal and protect our clients from illness and/or bad spirits.

The reason why I am doing this research is to provide an understanding of the training involved as well as to shed light to those who have the calling about what it all entails. I myself was afraid because I did not know what to believe, did not know what lay ahead of me and I was very confused by the different terms used by the different regions and schools (*lefehlo*) which might have similar or contrasting meaning.

I selected you to form part of the study because I am focusing on our school that being the Makhosi *lefehlo* and because as the spiritual trainer you are the custodian of traditional healing knowledge and through your expertise and guidance; your insight determines our journey and determines when we learn, how we learn and what we learn- through interviews as well as recording of the interviews through audio guides and visual recordings of the milestone rituals as well as physical training we go through.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, I as the research vow to animosity when writing about the information; confidentiality and non-disclosure of private things that we cannot share with the world, at all times I will respect your role as the teacher and should you feel the need to withdraw at any time then you are more than welcome to do so. Please note that participation in this is voluntary and no compensation will be rewarded.

The findings of this study will put together into a thesis which will be made available online and a copy thereof will be made available to you.

If you have any questions please feel free to share them with me verbally or we can communicate telephonically on 0749954090. You are more than welcome to email my research supervisor, Dr Matthew-Wilhelm Solomon on wilhelmsolomon@gmail.com.

Thank you so much for your time, *Thokoza*.

CONSENT FORM (Spiritual Teacher/Gobela)

I, [ ] (insert name in blank space) a qualified Traditional Health Practitioner and Spiritual Teacher; have been informed about the topic of this and I hereby declare that I will/will not be participating in the research.

Furthermore, I declare that the researcher has informed me that

-my participation in this research is voluntary and that no compensation will be offered

-my identity will be protected should I wish to remain anonymous and that a pseudonym will be used in the final report

-my identity will be protected during the research process by the researcher through protecting the raw research data from any of the participants

-should at any point in the research I begin to feel uncomfortable or compromised in any way whatsoever, I have the right to withdraw from the research and this will not be held against me in any way.

-the findings of this report will be made public in the form of a research report.

I have read the participant information sheet and are fully aware of my role and participant in this research project.

_____

Signature of participant

Annexure C

Interview Questions (Ithwasana)

Given that the interviews were semi-structured; below is an outline of the questions that were posed to the initiates; however more questions rose from engaging with the participants

1. At what age did you know that you have the calling to become a Traditional Healer/Sangoma?
2. How did you know that you have the calling to become a Traditional Healer/ Sangoma?
3. Upon entering initiation what are some of the things you have had to do to learn what is required of you as a sangoma?
4. How do you learn all that you need to know about your training?
5. What stages of your training are you currently on and please share the journey thus far?
6. How did you choose your trainer?
7. How has your *gobela* treated you and aided you in your journey?
8. What were your expectations of your *gobela* upon entering training and how have they changed if at all at this point?

Annexure D

Interview Questions (*gobela*)

Given that the interviews were semi-structured; below is an outline of the questions were posed to the trainer; however more questions emerged from engaging and observing the trainer.

1. At what age did you know that you have the calling to become a Traditional Healer/Sangoma?
2. How did you know that you have the calling to become a Traditional Healer/ Sangoma?
3. Upon entering initiation what are some of the things you have had to do to learn what is required of you as a sangoma?
4. How does one become a *gobela*?
5. What are the indications that one is meant to become a *gobela*?
6. As a *gobela*, what is your role in the training of *ithwasana*?
7. How do you as a *gobela* accept initiates and train them/ is there a particular criterion that you use to select initiates that you will train?