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Names of Power and the Acquisition of Academic Literacy

A B S T R A C T Creating lectures, tutorials and classes that are playful as well as serious remains a challenge in the South African language education field. This article indicates how student names, both given and self-created, can be used to provoke important and meaningful writing by students in tertiary and late secondary levels. It can also be used to create a research project, without losing the personal narrative commitment of the student. There is direct instruction on how to create the project as well as theoretical background. This work continues to explore the possibility of a democratic, narrative pedagogy, wherein lived experience and academic discourse can interact to strengthen each other.

Keywords: narrative pedagogy; learner-centered; names; academic literacy; democratic; writing as discovery

If someone understands the meaning of Mahambehlala probably he will know exactly what is happening to me ... I am just like a taxi which is working locally, moving to and from town. The only difference between me and a taxi is that I've got two legs and a taxi has four wheels. — a student in English for Educational Development

In the Beginning

It is with some sense of nostalgia that I now look for the beginning of my fascination with the linguistic act of naming. Studying for a Masters degree at New York University in 1982, I came to read Suzanne Langer's distinction between a 'sign' and 'symbol' (1942: 60). She points out the more restricted nature of a 'sign' which 'acts as a proxy for their objects and evokes conduct appropriate to the latter instead of to themselves' as when you call my name 'Ed' and I turn around to answer that I am here. Indeed, even a dog can answer to such a call. But a symbol goes far beyond this simple pointing function:

Symbols are not proxy for their objects, but are vehicles for the conception of objects. (Langer, 1942: 60)

In short, a symbol has the power to evoke a series of meanings – both minor and profound – connected to an object, even when the object is not physically present. And how a proper name functions as such a symbol is described:

If I say: "Napoleon, you do not bow to the conqueror of Europe as though I had introduced him, but merely think of him..."

A personal name evokes a conception of something given as a unit in the subject's experience, something concrete and therefore easy to recall in imagination. Because the name belongs to a notion so obviously and unequivocally derived from an individual object, it is often supposed to "mean" that object as a sign would "mean" it. This belief is reinforced by the fact that a name borne by a living person always is at once a symbol by which we think of the person, and a call name by which we signal him. Through a confusion of these two functions, the proper name is often deemed the bridge from animal semantic, or sign-using, to human language, which is symbol-using. (Langer, 1942: 60)

But all of language is infused with symbolic functions, and suddenly a concept which I had restricted to use only in literary analysis, seemed to light up the entire use of language. Indeed, Langer (1942: 41) insists that such use of symbolization can be called a human need, 'like eating, looking and moving about'. There seemed to be a secret revealed here about learning language. Every word was in its most basic sense a symbol for something that touched both the mind and the world. Could I use names to get my students to experience this broad power of language? Could I develop an effective method of teaching from such insights?

It was John Rouse, mentor and language lecturer, who demonstrated what powerful effects proper names could have in a classroom. Reading his *Provocations: The Story of Mrs. M* (1993) was a profound event. Mrs. M (Rouse, 1993: 4) tells her students a story modeled on an American Indian folktale in which the young male hero rescues himself by calling on his 'secret name'. Mrs. M proceeds to suggest new names to her various students. Names like 'my friend' had a definite purpose and effect. And indeed, Mrs. M provokes her students to reflect on the names that they too have been calling themselves and each other.

An amazing energy is released by this seemingly quiet topic. I often noticed the same energy in my classes when we began our first day with an exercise which called upon the students to write about their own names. It would seem that many language teachers commonly use this exercise, and I can hardly hazard a guess as to its origin. In 1982 it was a common class opening writing activity many preceptors (a name-title which nestled somewhere between lowly 'tutor' and the sought after 'junior lecturer') used in New York University's writing programme. At that time – and it remains with me today – the idea was that writing should concern itself with some meaningful object. It must evoke some meaningful experience in the student writer, and hopefully in his or her audience. Though we could not precisely give a definition to this general term 'meaning', we understood that some things resonated in our students' minds and engaged both feeling and thought. What more obvious step to feel that such 'meaningful' discussions or writing projects would result in more powerful learning of language?

So I have been using this approach with my students in the first year, one semester long English for Educational Development Programme at UWC. Whereas previously, students were given

two tutorials and one lecture, a more appropriate small group setting for language development, students are now given two lectures (100–150 students) and one tutorial (about 20 students). It can be noted that Rouse describes a situation where a maximum of 30 or so students were involved. Perhaps my contribution could be seen as implementing these strategies in large groups more common in the South African situation. Can they be similarly effective? Our hope is always that we can promote more classroom discourse, stimulate more meaningful writing and move students to be critical language users?

Since our concerns are for more meaningful discourse from students, I would also assert that such considerations introduce the concern of making educational research and reporting more meaningful as well. This article is more or less a story, a narrative with examples from my practice. It has some resemblances to 'educational biography' as promoted by Thomas (1995) and is perhaps also supported by Clough (2002: 80) who explicates how 'narratives of educational practice' can find 'a language which will reawaken ethical and aesthetic sensibilities that increasingly have been purged from the scientific discourse of too many educators' (Apple, 1996, cited in Clough, 2002: 85). So, within such a narrative paradigm this article proceeds – I tell a story to our students:

There was once a young man who lived way southwest of here in the dry country, near Sleeping Child Mesa it was. Or, as you might say in isiXhosa: 'Intaba Yinbtwaba Oleyelo' And in Afrikaans it might be 'Die Dorp van die Slapende Kind' ...

I read aloud Rouse's (1993: 3) story, couched as an American Indian folktale (see Appendix A). I presented Xhosa and Afrikaans translations alongside the English and Spanish names and other terms in the reading.

This move endorses a multi-lingual inclusiveness and the gasps and delighted sighs of the students also suggests that such inclusiveness remains rare – even at a university where at least 70% of the student body have English as a second or third language. A tricky area, this one of multi-lingualism. In the past, the apartheid system forcibly separated the language groups, but bringing them together in meaningful educational interactions presents its own difficulties as has been widely recognized. But what better place to begin a multi-lingual interaction than with the various names that appear in our classrooms.

A New Look at Our Own Names

After a second, dramatized reading of the story, often a necessity where English is a second or even third language, I asked the students to point out confusing or difficult to understand lines in the story. This gives rise to substantial discussion and also shows that for these students, a grasp of the literal meaning of the story cannot be taken for granted. Since I wished to experiment directly with the ideas about names, I pointed out how names were used in the story – to reveal character and to give power. I then asked the students to write about their own given names – 'simply write whatever comes to mind about your own given names!' My instructions were something like:

Do you like your name? Do you like some of your names? Or parts of your name? Do you like the sound of your name? What does your name mean to you? You've had this name for 20 odd years now, what are your reactions to this name? Just put down whatever comes to mind about your name. Do this in a free-writing style.

We wrote for about ten minutes and then divided the class into two groups of twelve students each. We read aloud what we had written. Suddenly we were getting to know each other as people. That's the sense I have of it. It seems impressive how revealing even these brief writings can be. So for example Mtandeni writes:

My name is 'Mtandeni'. I was named by my father in my infancy. I was so named because I looked ugly when I was a baby. Everyone used to say, 'Hey, this child is ugly'. So my father named me 'Mtandeni' which means 'Love Him'. I like my name and it is very uncommon. I have never heard of anyone with a similar name to mine. That is why I'm proud of it.

Zukiswa writes:

My name is Zukiswa which means 'Harmony'. My mother gave it to me before I was born. She guessed that I should be a girl. But my granny wanted me to be called 'Zoliswa' which means 'quietness'. There was a little bit of conflict amongst my family. Some sided with Granny and some with mother. At last they all agreed to call me Zukiswa. This name is taken from the Bible. Mother thought that I would be a nice girl and obedient in life. To me, my name sounded so nicely and I am proud of it. Some of my friends even wanted to call their kids by my name.

Noluthando:

When my father gave me that name I was 3 days old ...

When it was nearly ten o'clock he saw somebody riding on horseback coming near him. Somethings come out in his mind and then he remembered about his wife. She was in hospital three days before. The man was carrying a message from the nurses. That man told him that his wife had a baby girl.

He got a wonderful message because he thought for himself that he would never had a baby girl because the first five were boys. He went inside the kraal and thought of a name. He started talking to his ancestors. And then he heard the name Noluthando in his ears...

The name Noluthando means lovelyness. It also means to build relationship amongst our people. I love people in so much that I have follow my name. Sometimes people gave this names wishing that one could follow it, but they do the opposite. Like for instance some parents gave their children the name Ntlupeko meaning that he could suffer for the rest of his life and yet that Ntlupiko would suffer in so much he could end up walking down the street seeking for food and money. Other would be Chithilma and he will chased all inside the house and sell even clothes and then there will be no more family ...

One soon becomes aware that speakers of Xhosa frequently referred to a practice in which names have an explicit function so to speak in moulding the character of the child. According to names researcher Neethling (1995: 957):

Probably one of the best known categories is the one in which the expectations that parents have for their children are reflected in the names. The most common way is to utilize a positive characteristic like patience, trust, kindness, etc. in the name.

In Rouse's *Provocations ...* (1993: 11) it is remarked that, 'The name given to a child is the first burden it must carry in this world.' A provocative comment, for here we have some ironic hint

of a different direction - of choices, of more freedom, perhaps of responsibility. It turns us from the parental wish to the student's choice. It insinuates the questions: 'Who has the power to name?' and easily suggests the question 'Who has the power to think?' or 'Who has the power to speak in a society and be heard?' Can we name ourselves? Surely there was something for my students to think about with this innocent beginning. I might also point out that such explorations promote and fill out our understanding that 'Writing is a creative act, not an assembly-line operation of locking words together into sentences' (Brannon, 1982: 2). It is an act of discovery.

'Well, perhaps we can consider a new name for ourselves,' I said to the class. 'What would you name yourself if you could do so now? Of course you can choose a new name in your mother tongue.'

'Do you mean you want us to give ourselves another name? I won't do it. My mother gave me this name – Thembinkosi. It means "Trust in God" and I am proud of it. It is a Xhosa name. I will never change it.' Themba spoke with an authority that was also matched by his impressive bulk. Indeed, I was surprised when his point of view was challenged by Sono.

'Hey, but you're taking this so seriously. Why must everything be like that? If you want to take a new name, I don't see anything wrong in that!'

Hale spoke. 'And suppose you don't like the name your parents gave you. My parents called me Halejoetse, which means "Death is here", because before I was born my sister died. But now, I don't like this name. I don't tell it to anyone. The names our parents gave us are not always so good.'

The discussion raged on for a while and some agreement was reached that a 'new name' could just be added to ones' family names. I might note here that such lively discussions repeatedly occur in large lecture groups as well as tutorials. Although up to ten students, still a fraction of the total lecture group, might speak, many of the others are listening carefully. More carefully than when I am offering long explanations! Then we all wrote for a short time, thinking up names which we might now use. Sono called himself 'Kabila', obviously interested in the new powers this might give him. Nondomisa said her new name was 'Mosquito' and several other names were 'Pumelo' meaning Faith; Masinyonyo which means Shark's Teeth; 'Bashin' and 'Low Budget Jones'. Lindilize read what he wrote to us:

I think the name that will fit me best is "Mahambehlala". This is a Xhosa originated name which means someone without a permanent place of residence. Since the beginning of this year I have changed residence four times and quite obviously the reason is the high amount of rent, which I could not afford. I was staying in Dos Santos (hostel) then Cecil Esau ... I don't like this moving up and down. I think this name gives a clear picture of what I am. If someone understands the meaning of Mahambehlala probably he will know exactly what is happening to me.

... I am just like a taxi which is working locally, moving to and from town. The only difference between me and a taxi is that I've got two legs and a taxi has four wheels.

The students seemed to enjoy doing this and such enjoyment speaks against the argument that suggesting such name changes is too politically incorrect to be tried. Re-naming can be a touchy

subject, especially in the light of a past wherein people took on different names because of colonial pressures, or to be re-classified under the apartheid laws. (See Fugard, Kani and Nthona's (1972) workshopped play *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* for a powerful evocation of these problems about names.) Thankfully, we are already some distance from the heyday of the colonial past. The attempt to establish democratic practices moves slowly forward, but never entirely safe from all sorts of insidious authoritarianism.

Choosing a name indicates a more democratic and individual ethos. And personal choice is subtly at the heart of the modern education enterprise. Still relevant, Bernstein (1971: 151) makes the point that the codes or discourses of education are characterized by an 'elaborated code' ... that allows and evokes personal choice. 'Where control is personal, whole orders of learning are made available to the child which are not there if control is positional.'

Furthermore, according to Bernstein (1971: 176):

Elaborated codes are less tied to a given or local structure and thus contain the potentiality of change in principles. A university is a place organized around talk. Restricted codes are more tied to local social structure and have a reduced potential for change in principles. Where codes are elaborated, the socialized has more access to the grounds of his own socialization, and so can enter into a reflexive relationship to the social order he has taken over.

Bernstein is making the important point that modern educational systems are heavily implicated in the construction of a new kind of individual self. He is further pointing out that such changes of the self are necessary for a student to adopt in order to be able to enter the conversation of the educated. The student must add new 'secondary' discourses to localized language patterns which Gee (1996) refers to as the 'primary discourse' of a particular community. And personal choice is implicated in this new discourse. Rouse & Katz (2003: 246) build on these theorizings and call this approach a 'narrative pedagogy ... which departs from a course of study as students find a direction or activity suggested by their own concerns and ongoing lives'.

Humour is a lubricant which can make these negotiations of meaning and discourse more possible and acceptable. There was humour in the Names activity. Students felt included in that humour, as often noted in their anonymous student evaluations. The humour itself allowed for objections and argument to proceed with remarkably little rancour. Some students were thoroughly aware of that colonial past and hesitated before the idea of taking any sort of new name. And, indeed, there was no insistence that anyone engage. But there was a whiff of freedom in the air that accompanied the humour. Students began to play with new names; why not a new academic identity as well?

The humour was allowing us to become part of a community, perhaps a micro-academic community in our particular lecture group, but later part of the larger academic community. Gee (1991) and others suggest that membership of such communities is the most significant element in the acquisition of new discourse patterns. The humour and vibrancy in our classrooms would lower the barriers to joining this community. Humour, like irony, has the quality of placing us all at some distance from the subject under discussion. It provides a more ambiguous space which reduces the threat of new ideas and language patterns that might be experienced as threatening.

I am persuaded that such work here indicated assists in the development of a general literacy in English, which can certainly not be taken for granted in graduates from South African High Schools. South African universities have tried to sidestep this issue, and the drive to make academic literacy courses specialize in particular disciplines – such as English for Science, Academic Literacy for Commerce, etc. – has plunged students into situations where the subject matters are too dense for acquisition. Secondly, it has forced language practitioners to surrender insights into language acquisition and go along with expectations and demands of subject-lecturers who are not familiar with research in language development. This has led to an emphasis on the direct, or explicit, teaching of supposed subject-specific academic genres. Great care is taken to analyze specific genres, identify their features, and then teach them in a more or less prescriptive manner.

Freedman (1993: 229) advances arguments and evidence that such moves are premature and questionable. She observed that students in a university law school, 'not an elite institution', acquired the specific genres of law writing without being exposed to 'samples' and 'with no explicit instruction' and 'Finally, the students made no attempt to formulate the rules underlying the genre ...'

My sense is that students with a reasonable general literacy in English can acquire subject-specific genres without specialized subject-specific language courses and that helping those students without that general literacy should be the focus of general language development courses. The work with students' names, described here, would fit more effectively in such a course.

This is not to say that practice in narrative makes no contribution to the acquisition of academic genres as well. Rouse (2003: 194) points out that personal narrative has recently assumed a much more important place in the social sciences. He presents examples from current journals where articles often have a narrative structure such as 'In one of my basic writing classes two years ago, we were discussing an Algerian text.' He goes on to point out:

In fact, much writing that is not ordinarily thought of as story has a narrative progression which provides a frame for the inclusion of facts, analysis, and commentary. Academic discourse in general is a specialized kind of narrative.

And perhaps we might note the secret expository functions of names and naming. For of course naming is a form of generalization, categorization, classification – bases of analysis. Finding the right name is finding the correct truth for a given circumstance. It dawns on us in our lectures and tutorials that we must be careful which names we give ourselves and each other. So in our peer group commenting session, I note the interested wariness of student Vanessa, when I asked her for a descriptive name and she replied: 'Well now, that would be revealing more than I might want to at this time.'

I thought for a moment and said, 'Hmm ... all-right. Then perhaps I might name you Secret Cloud.'

'Okay, you might indeed. I rather like that.'

But the students are right to be somewhat wary, even as they test their own freedom. After all, a new idea can upset old patterns. We'd rather hold fast to the fixed, the unchangeable. Thinking is risky, who knows where it might lead? And lecturers and tutors, too, are not so easily wooed to this narrative pedagogy. It has taken me a long time, and the process is certainly not complete,

to allow myself the freedom of evoking and listening to what students think – their stories and expressions. But having tried it, who can return to the old pedagogies?

Naming it a Research Project

A way of combining narrative with a more academic genre – the research paper – was to present the project in a more systemized form. Such a form would also make the process more transparent and more clearly reveal the outcomes required by present governmental policy. (See Appendix B for using this work within the Outcomes paradigm). Therefore I drew up a worksheet for the students – which provides a point form structure for a research project. The sections contain room for narrative as well as discursive prose; personal reactions and imagination as well as interviews; opportunities for reading and referencing:

THE NAME-SEARCH: SEEKING NAMES OF POWER

1. Given Name(s): Can include nick-names

1.1 My reactions to my own name(s)

Write about any feelings and thoughts you have concerning any or all of your given names. What do you like about it (them)? Don't like? What meanings does this name have for you? In what way(s) has this meaning changed over the years of your life?

Ask yourself any questions you wish about your name. Write freely. Add material as you wish. Writing about my name today is different from writing about it yesterday.

1.2 Other People's Reactions to Your Name

Ask others (friends, family, classmates, strangers) what they imagine, think and feel when they hear your name. Talk with at least two people about this.

1.3 History of Given Name(s)

1.3.1 First Names: Ask how you came by these names. Consult books. Write up the story of your search. Who did you ask? Where did you ask them?

1.3.2 Family Names: Find out about your family name. What history can you discuss about this name? Are there customs or notions about naming that might be interesting to write about? How would you go about naming your own child?

2. Descriptive Name(s)

2.1 What name described you when you started this course? Tell about its meaning for you. Or, write a story about the name.

2.2 Invent another name that describes you now. You are different now. Explain your new name. Write a poem about it as an option. Describe how this name fits you in your present circumstances.

3. Names of Power

What names of power have you discovered for yourself? Find at least one. Ask others to suggest such a name. Your name of power must deliver the goods. Try it out. Does it bring you some sort of power? Tell the story of how you found this name.

And in the End

Thus, this project would stretch over at least two quarters of our four quarter course. We would do some of the investigation in the tutorial, and time over at least one school break was allocated for some of the family interview work. Two examples of a student-research papers are contained in Appendix C.

Rouse (1998), informed of this procedure, rather objected to its formalism. Rouse prefers a classroom where discoveries as to how to proceed should occur in a more spontaneous manner, arising from the discourse in the class. He succeeds marvelously with this stratagem. And the fact that he can implement his ideas so freely in the American system is perhaps significant. In a South African context, such independence might be more difficult to come by. For one thing, our programmes are more collaborative because we cannot afford individual lecturers for many small group meetings. When several lecturers administer a programme, a certain uniformity results.

In any case, I found that transforming the names project into a more formal 'research paper' still had the power to evoke spontaneous and interesting texts, while adhering to a more traditional research paper form. After all, there really is a secret power in names.

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Appendix A:

There was once a young man who lived southwest of here in the dry country, near Sleeping Child Mesa it was, and his parents thought the time had come for him to be getting married. 'There are many fine girls here,' his father said. 'I long for grandchildren,' his mother said. And

they offered to arrange a marriage for him but he refused. There was no girl around there who pleased him.

Then early one morning as he went outside he saw a fine young woman passing by the hogan alone. He spoke to her and she answered, so they went on together until the sun was almost overhead. He found her conversation as pleasing as her appearance and, as they sat together in a field of gramma grass, he decided to marry her.

The parents were very pleased their son had finally decided on a wife, and they welcomed her. But as the newly married ones were preparing for sleep their first night together, the young man's mother overheard a strange conversation. The new wife said, 'Perhaps my people will think you have stolen me. After all, no-one asked them to give me away or sent twelve horses for the bride-price. They might come to punish you. How would you escape?'

'I would call out to my father,' the new husband answered, 'and summon his help.'

'Well,' the wife said, 'your father's name is Wandering Water, so perhaps he would be too long in coming. What would you do then?'

'I would call out to my mother and summon help from her clan,' the husband answered.

'Well,' the wife said, 'your mother's name is Slower-Than-You, so perhaps she would not bring help in time. What would you do then?'

Before the young man could answer that question his mother spoke up from where she was listening. 'This night is not for talking, my son,' she said. And it was a good thing she did speak up because her son was about to reveal his secret name, the name that would summon the help of his guardian spirit in times of trouble.

When the coming of dawn awakened them, the new wife said, 'Let us visit my brother and make peace between my people and yours. He will help us. After all, a husband should go with his wife's people, for that is our custom.'

So in the coolness of morning they started out. But they had not gone far from the hogan when a band of men rose silently out of an arroyo, and the young man knew if they captured him, he would be made a slave or killed. He called out loudly to his father but Wandering Water had already gone off. Then he called out to his mother and Slower-Than-You heard him, but by the time she reached the hogans of her people her son was already surrounded.

Then he spoke his war name under his breath and immediately felt strength flowing through his arms and swiftness into his legs. He raced through the circle of men around him, cut one with his knife as he went and ran like a deer.

A short way off he looked back, thinking of the wife left behind. His enemies had already given up the chase and only their shouts of anger could reach him. But his wife was nowhere to be seen. Near the cholla cactus where he had left her, a coyote was sitting with its head raised, watching him.

Then he knew at last that his wife was a witch, come to learn his secret name and weaken him. So he returned to the hogan alone, meeting on the way his mother's people coming to help. And so it was in that good day. (Rouse, 1993: 3-4)

Appendix B:

Outcomes of Names Project

According to the South African Qualifications Authority (1995: 3.1), what are termed 'Critical Outcomes' include:

1. identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decision using critical and creative thinking have been made.
2. work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, community.
3. organize and manage oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively
4. collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information
5. communicate effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written persuasion
6. use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others
7. demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognizing that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

The above outcomes are included in an Academic Development Plan presently under discussion at UWC. In addition to these, the following outcomes which might be expected from the EED course are:

8. academic literacy in English
9. understanding of how to learn effectively
10. critical and creative thinking skills
11. interpersonal and communications skills
12. ability to apply knowledge and skills flexibly
13. independent outlook which is self-confident, democratic, culturally tolerant, concerned with equity, ethical, environmentally sensitive, locally rooted and globally aware, proactive and entrepreneurial
14. research competence

Of course the above outcomes are suggested for graduating students, though it is expected that such skills and competencies learned in EED will lead to the above outcomes.

I propose that the names project will impact on all of the above listed outcomes. And I will specify the particular outcomes and a brief statement of how that outcome will apply.

1. Developing a community by the use of names
2. Use of the creative imagination in creating names
3. Using local knowledge and building on that knowledge to develop knowledge recognizable as academic.
4. Using a point form research plan
5. Interview and note-taking skills used in gathering information on name history and responses to names.
6. Fluency in the use of English, recognizable in the motivated writing.
7. Drafting and Editing procedures
8. Ability to listen and accurately record
9. Moving from personal narrative to more distanced discursive prose
10. Development of positive self-image

Appendix C

Pumla

The Names Research

Normally when parents plan about the family they also plan the number of children they want to have and it is usual that they must have assorted sexes i.e. girls and boys. The parents also discuss about the name they will give their child while the mother is still pregnant. The naming of children may either follow a certain event of incidence occurred or a child may be named after an elder in the family. At the same time this is done with the aim of reaching a certain goal in future. Therefore it is very much important to choose a name with a good meaning as the child may resemble the name in behaviour.

Given Names

One day I was talking to my mother. We were having a conversation. As the conversation went on I asked her why did she give me this name? What was the motive behind? She told me everything about my given name. She narrated the story to me, the story about my given name. My mother is a sole breadwinner who is struggling to bring up two children, to maintain education and all the necessary requirements of the family. She had played a very important role in my life as a role model and she was also firm and fair. She decided to name me Pumla. This name means rest and relax. The only reason for her giving me this name was that she hoped and still hopes that I will relieve her after obtaining my degree and get a good job.

The story about my first name (Pumla) is as follows: It was 1974 and my mother was training as a student midwife in a missionary hospital when she fell pregnant. On the fourth month of her pregnancy she was summoned to the matron's office and was questioned and scolded about her pregnancy. She was expected to terminate the training before the end of the training because that was a missionary hospital which could not keep a pregnant nurse. This was a shock to my mother because she had to get back home. She was also thinking about her reception by her parents and also she was going to be without a job whereas she was expecting a child. She was not married so there was no one who was supporting her. So she decided to go and find a piece job. She worked very hard struggling for me to succeed in future. She decided to name me Pumla as she hoped that I would give her relaxation and relief from the trauma she had by working hard and took over her and let her relax and all the things she was doing.

Nicknames

My mother decided to name me Pumla and she also gave me the nickname which was Mntanana. The feelings I have about my given name are strange. The reason why they are strange is because I have witnessed my mother struggling for me, suffering to bring me up and also catering for my studies. This thing worries me very much so I must study hard to obtain the degree I am doing so that I can qualify for a better job in order to fulfill my mother's wishes. I want to work hard to render her the relaxation she requires in return. This is how I feel about my given name. The feelings I have about my nickname are good.

They are good because when my mother call me by my nickname I become very happy because I knew and I still know that she is going to tell me something that will make me very happy. My mother gave me this nickname because it means "small baby". Although I am no longer a small child she will always regards me a small child because I am the last born. The other purpose of her giving me this nickname was to show how much she loves me because I noticed something. When she call me by my nickname she always smiles and that shows the love she has for me. The is why I am having a good feeling about my given name.

Other Peoples Reactions

I asked my friend about my given name and my nickname. I asked her how she feels when she hears my names. She said my given name (Pumla) is very popular and common. She said many people do have my name. She also said something about my nickname. She said I am no longer a small child I am too old to be called a small child. She thinks that the only reason why my mother calling me by my nickname is because she wants me to always have in mind that I am still young so that I must not do things that are done by other big girls. She also said that my mother wants me not to overcost her by demanding everything that girls demand especially when they reach the adolescence stage.

Sources:

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Ndhlovu, M 2002 Interview. D.O.S. Room S

Gcina's Research:

Family Name

My family name is Gcina which mean "keep". The story about my family name is as follows: There were four sons of Ndungwana our clan name. Of the four sons the smallest son was named of Gcina and we took after him. We were not a big family. The custom is that the elders of our family must choose a man who will look after the family. The fact that we were not a big family Gcina (Keep) was chosen by the elders to look after our family and take care of it. That is how our family name became Gcina.

Descriptive Names

The name that described me well when I started this course was Faith. I had faith in everything that I was doing and also I had faith towards people who were helping me about my academic work. I trusted very much doing everything that they are suggesting me to do. The fact that the people I was asking to help me were not in their first year at the university made me beleive everything they told me, and it also made me not to realize that they were still students. They didn't know everything. The story about my descriptive name is as follows: One day we were given an assignment in my department. It was a very difficult topic such that I didn't know how to approach it so I decided to go and ask one of my friends to try and help me. She was doing the 3rd year so I hoped that she would help me. I became very much suprised when I found out that she also did not know ho to approach this essay.

As from that day I stopped believing that people who are not doing their first year who are doing maybe their second or third year know everything because they passed their first year. I started doing things on my own and joined some discussion groups.

The name that describes me now differs from the name that described me at the beginning of the year because I am also a different person now. The name that describes me now is "A Planner". I am not the same person as I was during the beginning of the year. I stopped asking people to help me on my essays. I do things on my own because I plan all my work. I constructed a programme for myself. I plan everything before doing it. I don't just do things without planning it. I first plan my work and then do it after planning. I think this is a good thing for me so that I can be successful in life.

My friends reactions

There is a name which my friend gave me one day. The name was "The Hawk". She said the reason why she gave me such a name was because she noticed that I am a brave girl and sometime can be dangerous although a person cannot easily see that because I am an introvert.

The hawk is a bird but not just an ordinary bird – a dangerous bird. This bird is fed on dead bodies of animals. When people call me by this name I start feeling power all over my body. Usually people who are calling me by this name are my friends.

They usually call me by this name when I am fighting to make the person whom I am fighting with to be afraid and eventually I defeat that person because of the power I gained when I was called by my power name. They also call me by this name when I am playing games and that encourage me to win the games.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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