

'ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS': CONCLUDING A DEANSHIP

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ABSTRACT

This article presents an auto-ethnographic process of self-reflective writing during the transition period at the end of an academic deanship. As a career intervention strategy, the author adopted a self-guided process of writing based on the Schlossberg model for career transition. The article shows how self-reflective writing can craft a pathway for successful personal navigation towards the last phase of an academic leadership position. It focuses specifically on the latter part of a deanship, with the explicit intention of contributing to the relatively sparse literature on the *exit* phases of academic leadership positions. This article highlights the narratability of career counselling and the potential of autobiographicity to support career transition.

Keywords: career counselling, auto-ethnography, deanship, dean, leadership, transition, education, self-reflective writing, career perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Internationally, career and leadership literature has seen unprecedented growth in the last two decades. However, the literature on leadership and management in particular is dominated by texts on the *beginning* phases of leadership positions. Creating a new vision, building a strong team, adapting to change, developing and implementing strategic plans, ensuring efficiencies, putting people first, strengthening cycles of effectiveness and productivity and so forth – all of these themes have been explored on multiple levels and in various contexts around the world. It has been done by researchers in a wide variety of scientific fields ranging from business to engineering and social science to education (Bassaw 2010; Bray 2010).

Yet, this plethora of literature seldom focuses on the *exiting* phase of leadership positions, e.g. the phase where a leadership position draws to a close. Literature on *transitions* in different career phases is generally available, but studies with a specific focus on the exit phase are sparse (Burlingham 2014).

I have turned to books for all the major events in my life. Whether it was for my first

school assignment at the age of eight, being pregnant with a first child, dealing with deep personal loss, or planning my lectures as a young academic in the 1990s – I have always found solace and support in the pages of a book or a journal – especially if it was scientific. There in the pages of someone else's experience or empirical data I often found answers to questions that have been scouring through my mind. I have found much delight in many moments of 'recognition' between myself and a text. I have experienced even more delight when views and research results were shared that completely changed my own personal views. New ways of looking at the same challenge and changes in perspectives or paradigms – these are the things that intrigue me. I have always been pulled towards literature that offers novel ways of looking at the world.

When I had one year left of my term as dean, I did what I have always done in times of introspection and reflection: I turned to the literature. In this instance it was the broad leadership and management literature. I was surprised to find that so very little has been published that focuses on exiting a leadership (or even a managerial) position. When I turned to literature on *deanships*, I found literature on gendered aspects of deaning (Nguyen 2013, 123–138; White, Bagilhole and Riordan 2012, 293–307), whether deans should be qualified in the scientific field of the faculty they are leading (Svensson 2015, 1–3), preparation for a deanship (Draugalis and Plaza 2010, 1–9) and determinants of a successful deanship (Bassaw 2010, 1002–1006). All of these provided ample food for thought, but none addressed the exiting phase that I was hoping to explore.

At long last, I found two excellent sources that focus specifically on the final phases of an academic deanship (Dessem 2013, 327–334; Gmelch, Hopkins and Damico 2011, 1–88). One (Dessem 2013, 327–334) is written by a dean who left a deanship after 17 years. In this publication I found not only pragmatic advice, but also an implicit sense of humour, tinged with what seems to be a very deep understanding of the processes of transition out of a deanship. Many of the themes raised in this work resonated quite strongly with me: for instance, the kinship one feels with fellow deans both at your own institution and across the country; a deep commitment to a smooth decanal transition; a one-year notice to the provost/vice-chancellor; planning to absent oneself for an extended period once the new dean has taken over; taking care with the way in which the upcoming departure is communicated. There were also one or two matters where for me, the experience was slightly different. I would have, for example, also included a kinship with *international* deans, because many of my most meaningful exchanges during my term as dean were with fellow deans at international institutions with whom we had institutional partnerships. Nevertheless, the internal dialogue within a dean's mind when it

comes to ensuring a smooth transition was brought to the fore in Dessem's work and I felt validated within my own experience.

The second resource from the literature was a book published by Gmelch, Hopkins and Damico (2011, 1–88). I picked this up, almost as an afterthought, at the conference of the American Educational Research Association in Philadelphia in April 2014, but never really reverted to it in the months after the conference. It conceptualised an academic deanship in terms of seasons, e.g. spring, summer, fall and winter. In this book, data was gathered from more than a hundred deans. It adopts an interpretive perspective. The study was conducted by deans who collectively had more than 50 years' experience as deans. All of the participants were in different phases of their deanship. The book therefore challenged the notion that the experience of being a dean is an 'undifferentiated experience across time' (Gmelch, Hopkins and Damico 2011, 14). I was thinking back to myself in the 'spring-time' of the deanship, not even being 40 years old at the time, and the 'winter-time' dean that I was now and I lauded these authors for differentiating the phases of a deanship in this way.

This auto-ethnographic article has therefore been brought forth from a need to reflect on a deanship that is concluding, but simultaneously it seeks to contribute to a research field in which I have identified scarcity. I was relieved to have found a number of authors who explored the field and I am sure there are others that I did not encounter in my search. However, I believe I can contribute to this field of literature by sharing my own experience of concluding a deanship. I do this in the hope that it will assist others who may be seeking pathways similar to mine. I recognise that there is some risk in writing about a process that is still unfolding, but at the same time there is an urge in me to capture the moment. I am also quite uncomfortable with the seeming 'self-indulgence' of writing about one's own experience (as opposed to writing about research with 'others'). Yet, I also subscribe to the idea of personal narrative and reflexivity as described by Ellis and Bochner (2000, 735) when they say that 'we need a form that will allow readers to feel the moral dilemmas, think with our story instead of about it, [and] join actively in the decision points that define an auto-ethnographic project'. In a similar way, Maree (2015b, 227) encourages the advancement of autobiographicity and the role of the career counsellor to make narratability possible.

The article in hand will seek to explore ways in which a deanship can be concluded so as to serve the needs of the Faculty and the institution where the dean has served – to ensure what Dessem (2013, 328) calls a 'smooth decanal transition'. In positioning the article as such, I do not underplay the possible advantages (and disadvantages) of a *turbulent* decanal transition. Rather, I declare the position of the outgoing dean as one where there are active attempts to

ensure a stable transition and it is assumed that this transition will be to the benefit of all stakeholders who are affected by the process.

BACKGROUND

At the time of writing I am dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. The Faculty of Education is situated on the Groenkloof campus in the city of Tshwane in the Gauteng province of South Africa. The Faculty is the professional home of between 80–95 academic staff members and another 50–60 support staff members. Over the years the residential student numbers have remained fairly consistent with approximately 3500 undergraduate students and another 900–1 000 postgraduate students. In distance education, the Faculty served up to 21 000 students at one point during my deanship. At the moment there are approximately 7 000 students in distance education, in addition to the residential on-campus students. The Faculty consists of five academic departments in different fields in Education.

I became dean of the Faculty of Education in early 2008. Before that I acted as dean for extended periods of time and had been School Chair for Educational Studies and also Head of Department for Educational Psychology. My appointment came with an executive directive for a comprehensive restructuring of the Faculty of Education. The restructuring was meant to strengthen teacher education and to re-position the Faculty for more research and postgraduate studies. As dean, I had to lead this process of restructuring. Since the Faculty incorporated a teacher education college (e.g. *Normaalkollege* Pretoria) in the early 2000s, this was no easy task. It was complex, involved multiple faculties and was a long-term exercise. Even though the restructuring enjoyed strong support in the external environment, it presented significant challenges in the internal environment. The strategic plan for the required restructuring was however developed through processes of multi-level consultation and gained executive support at the end of 2008. Implementation started in 2009 and the final phase was concluded in early 2015, when the first students from the new teacher education programmes graduated.

During this period, the university saw significant transitions at the executive level. A new vice-chancellor was appointed in 2009 and most of the executive portfolios were also filled with new incumbents. At the same time, a new institutional plan was developed (UP 2025, 2011, 5) in which the vision of the University of Pretoria is stated as follows:

To be a leading research-intensive university in Africa, recognised internationally for its quality, relevance and impact, as also for developing people, creating knowledge and making a difference locally and globally.

The navigational markers for the new institutional plan were quality, diversity, relevance and sustainability. The plan provided a clear vision towards greater research intensity. As an active researcher myself, this plan excited me and I could identify with the underlying principles. As dean, however, I experienced increased pressure, because the deliverables in terms of the faculty agreement for the period after the restructuring were still years ahead of us. These deliverables were mostly in terms of teacher graduates from the new programmes. They did, however, also include increased postgraduate involvement, and this aligned well with the institutional vision.

Now, towards the end of my second term, the original agreement between me as dean and the executive of the university has been honoured and completed. In addition, the Faculty has performed well in the delivery of high-quality postgraduate students, the diversification of the staff complement, the contingent of highly regarded researchers and the quality of undergraduate students. Pass rates at the undergraduate level has improved, while academic standards and expectations have concurrently increased. New programmes have been introduced and strategic international partnerships have been established and developed. As outgoing dean, it is my intention to ensure a stable transition into the next phase for the Faculty so that its performance will continue to improve in the years ahead.

AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHIC CAREER SELF-COUNSELLING

The purpose of this auto-ethnographic article is twofold: i) to contribute to the literature on the *exit* phase from academic leadership positions, and ii) to provide an example of how an ethnographic writing process can serve the function of career self-counselling. In view of the scarcity of literature on the *exit phase* of academic leadership positions, I will extrapolate key constructs from the framework of Schlossberg for career transitions. I will also lean on the notion of blending retrospect and prospect in career counselling, as presented by Maree (2015a, 3–24) when he deconstructs career and life stories with the use of continued dialogue, reflection and the promotion of forward movement. I am also intrigued by the narrative writings of Inkson (2015, 21–39) who states that for ‘those of us who are connected professionally with the study or practice of careers, the task of understanding our own careers takes on special importance’.

APPLYING SCHLOSSBERG’S TRANSITION MODEL TO CAREER TRANSITION

Schlossberg developed her theoretical transition model for career counselling during the 1980s. This model utilises the 4Ss System for Coping with transitions (Schlossberg 2011, 160), and

suggests that one should consider the following four areas before creating action plans, namely Situation, Self, Support and Strategies. As mentioned earlier, Schlossberg's framework and the current writing process will serve as a form of 'career self-counselling', seeing that I am not being coached or counselled by someone else during this time. I depend on my private reflections on my own career and use the theoretical knowledge at my disposal to support this process.

An individual's relationships, behaviours and expectations about the self and the world change during periods of career transition (Schlossberg 1984). Barclay (2015, 221) contends that an individualised approach in aiding individuals through transitions is vital. I would like to extend this notion by arguing that this can indeed be a personal, *self-guided* process, within specific theoretical parameters. Schlossberg (1984, 65) states that when viewing adults in transition, 'we need first to examine the transition for type, context, and impact, then the transition process in terms of phases of assimilation and the individual's appraisal of the process'. In this article, therefore, it is the individual herself who will be conducting the appraisal.

The transition in this case is an *anticipated career event*. Barclay (2015, 221) states that an anticipated career event is 'those events that an individual knows are imminent'. In this case, it is the end of a deanship and the beginning of a new career phase.

Schlossberg (2011; 1981) conceptualises the transition phase in terms of four distinct, but interlinked parameters, namely Situation, Self, Support and Strategies. These four concepts usually structure the interaction between a career counsellor and the client as a career transitioner. Certain options are offered to explore the various concepts as they manifest in the life of the career transitioner. For instance, probable questions are suggested, as well as assessment tools that can be utilised to garner more information and gain deeper insight into the transition processes.

In this text, I will utilise the four concepts as presented by Schlossberg, but instead of using them within a conversation with a career counsellor, I will utilise them in a self-exploratory, text-based conversation. My rationale is twofold: i) to create a vehicle to support my own career transition, and also ii) to provide a textual resource for others who face similar career transitions.

The optics of this endeavour will emerge as the text emerges. Other than the theoretical framework provided by the Schlossberg model, I do not have set parameters for the textual content. It will be approached much in the same way as a counselling process and will require a fair amount of internal flexibility in what the text brings.

Situation

Schlossberg's 4Ss model positions the first conceptual parameter as the 'Situation'. It refers to 'the person's situation at the time of transition' (Schlossberg 2011, 160).

In addition to my appointment as dean, I am also a full professor in Educational Psychology at the institution where I have served as dean. Outgoing deans at the University of Pretoria are usually afforded an opportunity for sabbatical leave to allow them to reconnect with their scientific disciplines. This aspect has been critical in my thoughts and decision making about the way forward.

I entered academia because of a deep love for my discipline. At the time I treasured the idea of spending my work-life reading, writing, lecturing and doing research in Educational Psychology. Throughout the years of the deanship I have managed to stay fairly connected to my discipline by supervising postgraduate students and conducting research in the field. In the last eight years, it has however, been second to my responsibilities as dean.

In anticipating the transition out of a deanship, this reconnection to my discipline is therefore a supportive factor. I look forward to being able to read extensively again, to connect with scholars in the field and to perhaps even employ the experience that I have gained as dean, within my scientific discipline. Having Educational Psychology as a background has certainly served my deanship and I hope that having been a dean can somehow serve the field of Educational Psychology – especially in terms of the research choices I will make in the future. Some of the international deans (of Education) with whom I have collaborated have been educational psychologists themselves and we have often reminisced about the ties to our field, and particularly the difficulties in remaining connected.

When Schlossberg (1981, 10; 2011, 160) presents eliciting questions to counsellors who are supporting individuals through career transitions, they go beyond the individual's professional 'situation'. Personal and family situations are also considered. In my case, my personal and family situation has been central to my thinking about the upcoming transition.

I have been married for 26 years now and am a mother to two young men who are full-time students at the time of writing. We live in the same city. I take tremendous joy from this life phase of our family. Even though my children (actually young men) are becoming increasingly independent, I enjoy the time we spend together as a family. Over the years, I have had my share of guilt feelings due to the hours and days that I have not been present during their adolescence. These absences were a direct result of my responsibilities as dean. Since their father, however, grew up in a house where both parents were in academia, he was easily

reconciled to the fact that our children would also grow up in a house where it is perfectly natural for a mother to be in long senate meetings, instead of next to the sports field; or that she would work through thick meeting documents, instead of being at the dinner table.

In addition to my core family, I am also close to my family of origin. My brother and his wife live in a nearby city and my sister and her children have recently moved back to South Africa from London after having worked there for more than a decade. We enjoy each other's company. As adult siblings we frequently turn to one another for support, often spending free time and holidays together.

At the start of my deanship I had extensive friendship circles and I valued them dearly. However, as the extensive nature of my responsibilities as dean became clearer, I realised that 'something would have to give'. There simply were not enough hours in a day or week to attend to everything. I knew that I would have to make choices between family, work and friends – and in my case some friendships had to 'give'. Difficult though it was at the time, my family was first and foremost in my mind and I had just committed to a position as dean that I was taking very seriously. As a result, my friendship circles shrunk to only a few trusted friends. The broader friendship circles were still active, but they moved to the periphery of my life. The *inner* circle of friends consisted mostly of lifelong friends, most of who were not in academia.

Apart from the relationship aspects, the geographic region within which I live also plays a part in my preparation for the transition. I live in a large city in South Africa's smallest province. It is vibrant, dynamic and diverse. Pretoria has a deep sense of history, yet at the same time a strong orientation towards the future. It is home to several universities and, after Washington DC, it is the city in the world that hosts the largest number of embassies. When I was young, I moved to Pretoria for personal reasons and to this day I have truly felt at home here. As I prepare for my exit as dean, I often look forward to the time I will then have to enjoy the city. It may seem strange to say this, but a deanship can take you out of your immediate surroundings in many ways. I often felt that I was missing out on much of what the city has to offer, due to my dean responsibilities.

Hence, my 'situation' in terms of Schlossberg's model is fairly positive for the upcoming transition. My family life is currently stable, I enjoy the environment in which I live and I have prospects for future research in Educational Psychology.

Self

If a career counsellor were to use Schlossberg's model with a client, they would be asking questions such as: Are you optimistic? Are you resilient, and can you deal with ambiguity?

(Schlossberg 2011, 160). Asking such self-excavating questions within a self-exploratory writing process is perhaps slightly more challenging than within a reciprocal personal counsellor-client interaction. However, some attempt can still be made, even as it acknowledges the inherent complexities.

I am fairly optimistic by nature. I do, however, also think of the future with some caution at times. I tend to anticipate all the aspects that can possibly go askew even as I nurture positive expectations. As a result, I oscillate between a firm belief that 'things will work out' and that if they don't, it will still be for the better. I am also fairly resilient. I have faced a number of life challenges since my childhood and these have extended into adulthood. Others have described my coping processes as resilient. Whilst I do not prefer it, I also seem to be quite comfortable with ambiguity and turbulence.

The above-mentioned traits suit me well in the transition that I am now facing. I am not involved in the appointment of a successor dean, which leaves me with a distinct area of jurisdiction, as well as clarity on where I have no influence. I can influence the effective management of the Faculty up and until my last day in the office. I can take preventative actions that will make the transition easier for colleagues in the Faculty. I can take care of certain challenging situations, and the difficult decisions that accompany them, prior to the appointment of a new dean – in order to save the new dean from having to make unpopular decisions right at the start of a deanship. I can also plan my sabbatical leave in a way that will allow sufficient time for me and the new dean to have the necessary transition discussions, but then for me to be away from the Faculty for a substantial period so that s/he can build the team and lay the foundations for the new phase in the life of the Faculty.

Support

When applying Schlossberg's transition model to career transition, Barclay (2015, 223) recommends that career practitioners 'facilitate activities and discussions with career transitioners to ascertain both their real and perceived social support systems, which may be family, friends, co-workers/colleagues, or neighbours'. She specifically assesses the proximity of the identified support and also mentions the role that professional organisations and communities can serve during transitions.

I am struck by the notion of 'real and/or perceived support' – realising full well that 'support' that I may perceive to be real, may perhaps not be. At the same time, I know that there is, and most probably will be, sources of support that I have not anticipated myself. So the sources of support that I mention here are bound by my own current perceptions. They are also

time-dependant in that sources of support at the start of the transition may not necessarily be sustained throughout the entire process.

My first level of support is my family. I have the benefit of a supportive husband, who not only supported my career choice to become a dean many years ago, but who is also supportive of the choices I am making at the moment. In particular, he is providing wise counsel as I move through this process. Some excellent opportunities have already emerged with leadership opportunities at other institutions and I have contemplated them carefully. My husband has been a sort of beacon, a point of reference, as I weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the different potential pathways. Our young sons have played a similar, though more limited, role in this regard. Making decisions in ways far different from me, I may bounce thoughts off them and they provide instantaneous yet highly confident opinions.

As an intrinsic source of support, I have noted the wisdom of other deans over many years. In a sense they have provided support to me in my decision making, almost without them knowing it. In the last year specifically I have paid attention to the choices that former deans from a variety of disciplines at various institutions have made. Their choices varied greatly. Some deans remained within their faculties, others left for positions at other institutions or moved on to executive positions. I noted deans who were careful with the commitments they made during the period of transition. I noted the multitude of opportunities that arise for former deans. I have also seen deans who continue to make high impact contributions at their institutions or in their own scientific fields. They do so with the benefit of experience and a nuanced understanding of the complexities of the tertiary environment.

Furthermore, I can identify with Schlossberg's notion that professional organisations and communities can serve as a source of support during career transition. In my case, I have found several circles of professional communities that have become critical to me during this period. I am part of an international task team on teacher education as it relates to the global goals for quality education (<http://www.globalgoals.org/global-goals/quality-education/>). My leadership role in a national organisation that promotes the arts and sciences has recently been expanded. Within these roles I am optimistic and satisfied that I will still be able to make contributions in fields that are important to me and where my years of experience will be utilised effectively.

Hence there exists what Schlossberg (1981, 10) calls a 'convoy of social support' for my transition. I anticipate that this 'convoy' will shift over time and that the necessity for some sources of support will fall away, while new support will also be emerging.

I have actively attempted to rely less on the support of colleagues during this transition period. I value my collegial relationships highly, but in this instance, my departure as dean will

affect my immediate colleagues. I have therefore opted to rather be a source of support to them than the other way around (Pryce-Jones 2010).

Strategies

Being an educational psychologist myself, I am familiar with coping strategies and I have published on the phenomenon of coping (by individuals and groups) under circumstances of adversity. Even though this transition requires that coping strategies be employed, my current work-life transition is by no means an adverse event. It is rather a fruitful opportunity for the Faculty to move forward to new levels of achievement and for me personally to explore the next phase of my career.

There is a plethora of coping questionnaires available to career counsellors who are in conversation with career transitioners. These questionnaires are underpinned by a variety of coping theories that conceptualise coping strategies in various ways. As psychologists we are all well-versed in the notions of problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping and approaches that make the implicit directionality of coping explicit. There are narrative approaches that explore whether the 'problem' is influencing you, or whether you are exerting influence over the 'problem'.

Schlossberg (2011, 161) refers to coping strategies that attempt to i) change the situation, ii) reframe the situation, and iii) reduce the stress for the individual. In my transition I opt to focus mainly on coping strategies that reframe the situation by trying to find the opportunities that are inherent in this transition. I became dean before I was forty years old and in all likelihood therefore have many years ahead to make a contribution in the world of academia – now with the benefit of years of experience as dean. I understand the pressure on faculties to perform on key performance indicators and the challenges of delivering on a vision despite the fact that the available resources may be unpredictable. I understand the (often competing) challenges of teaching and research. I have insight into national agendas and the ways in which they can and should be connected to global challenges.

Since the start of my deanship I have employed coping strategies that reduce stress actively – with various degrees of success. Even though I have taken much satisfaction from the deanship, I view a deanship at a large institution as a highly stressful position. It entails long days and long weeks and many sacrifices of personal time. It requires a full immersion in the details of the running of a faculty, while it also requires visionary leadership. There are days of excruciating frustrations and days of complete delight. One is confronted with one's own shortcomings in tangible ways and you are often alone as you seek solutions to multifarious

challenges.

Within this time of transition, the stress levels actually seem to have increased in some ways. There are key projects that are developing at both the faculty and the university level. I need to lead and oversee some of these projects, knowing full well that I will not be in the deanship to see them come to fruition. I need to make decisions that will ensure successful implementation of the projects, but must keep the multiple levels of uncertainties in mind as I do so. My stress levels are managed by engaging with these projects fully, rather than to seek external stress-releasing mechanisms.

CONCLUDING AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHIC CAREER COUNSELLING

I have written this article over the span of many months. During this time, we have seen student and staff protests nationwide and also at the institution where I serve. It has been the most unprecedented upheaval since the birth of our democracy. As we have navigated the turbulence from a highly predictable, sophisticated working environment into uncharted territory where lectures are cancelled and examinations postponed, I have found this writing process to be profoundly helpful. The uncertainties of my own inner transition have, for me, in some way been echoed in my working environment.

I have come back to this article at some points, with weeks in between. Yet all the time, it has milled about inside my head. Sometimes I was uncomfortable with what I produced; not being sure if I was ready to share it with the world and whether it would serve the process of transition and smooth exiting. I purposefully left the script as it is, with the intention to decide much later what will remain. Although large sections of what I initially wrote have since been deleted, the exercise has served a personal purpose, because it has helped me to shine a light on aspects of the upcoming transition and exit that I have not yet confronted.

I have spent the last eight years being consumed for most of my waking hours with the priorities of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. I have often castigated myself for my inability to negotiate an effective work-life balance. I often felt that I had neglected my personal life and personal priorities. This reflective writing process has afforded me the opportunity to turn inwards and focus on my own priorities. It has been a challenging, but ultimately fruitful journey.

Recent months in academia in South Africa have shown clearly that no-one can predict the future. What we can do, however, is to make use of the theoretical, often very practical, parameters that are available to us. In this instance, I used Schlossberg's theoretical markers to establish a process of self-reflective writing for a career transition. But in career counselling

there are copious options to serve similar purposes (Taber 2015, 101). Savickas (2015, 138–139) refers to 'healing narratives' that reconstruct macro-narratives in the form of a life portrait, and specifically refers to the therapeutic nature of career counselling. Both of these concepts have certainly resonated within this writing process and I therefore subscribe to his notion.

LIMITATIONS

This essay has its limitations. I did not engage other deans in the process. I did not elicit the support of a professional coach or career psychologist. I focused inwardly. I had wanted to focus more on the wellbeing of the faculty, but my commitment to the Schlossberg model for this particular process required another focus. The notions of flow and fragmentation in the life of a dean (Gmelch, Hopkins and Damico 2011) and the links between wellbeing and career counselling (Robertson 2013, 254) that are implicitly present here have not been explored in-depth and perhaps constitute the theme for another ethnographic article. At the outset I had also wanted to explore the dialogue between the inner voice of a dean and the demands from the external environment. As the text emerged, it did not become prominent though. At the time of writing there have also been tectonic shifts in the national context of tertiary education in South Africa. Besides transient reference to these shifts, they are not explored in depth in this article.

MAKING THE TRANSITION AND CONCLUDING THE DEANSHIP

It is my hope that I will pick up this text at some point in the future, and that it will still hold meaning for me. Perhaps aspects of this process will prove to be much different from my current expectations and planning. Perhaps the parallels that arise will be astounding. Either way, this writing process has been helpful to me on an individual level, and I hope for it to resonate more widely and benefit those who may read it.

Postscriptum

In the title of this article I refer to the well-known quotation of 'All's well, that ends well', but I have deliberately used an adapted version of this quote, e.g. 'All's well, that ends'. I first heard this comment at a seminar which was hosted by the Faculty of Theology on the Groenkloof campus of the University of Pretoria. It struck a chord with me. Perhaps it was because I was contemplating the end of my term as dean. Perhaps it was because it startled me to think differently about a very familiar quotation. After hearing this 'quote', I thought that the notion of 'All's well, that ends' is perhaps particularly relevant to leadership. All leadership positions come to end and in my mind it is good that it ends. There is a time for new leaders to step in and for new eras to begin. So in using this title, I specifically confound it to my thinking about leadership and the notion that exiting a leadership position can be an experience of 'All is well'.

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