



**EXPLORING THE ADAPTATION CHALLENGES FACED BY
NOVICE FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THE NELSON
MANDELA METROPOLE**

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2022



**EXPLORING THE ADAPTATION CHALLENGES FACED BY NOVICE
FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THE NELSON MANDELA
METROPOLE**

By

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NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my mother, Louise Grimbeek, who showed me what it means to be strong and to persevere through any challenges or obstacles that life may throw at us.

“Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful.”

Joshua J. Marine

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Lastly, to the novice Foundation Phase teachers who took part in this study, thank you for your time and your honesty in sharing your challenges experienced.

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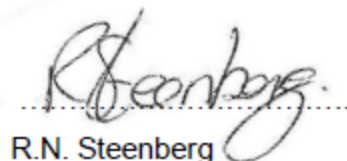
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ABSTRACT

The challenges faced by novice teachers have been widely discussed in the last decade (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; Burkman, 2012). It is believed that the first year of teaching is found to be exceedingly challenging to the novice teacher due to the complex demands of the profession, as well as a result of a lack of training and induction into the work environment (Burkman, 2012). Researchers highlight that some of the many challenges that novice teachers experience are shortcomings in curricular planning, classroom management and discipline, instructional techniques, access to materials, and dealing with parents (Burkman, 2012). These challenges, along with feelings of inadequacy due to lack of experience in the working world, often have a negative effect on novice teachers and their ability to cope, subsequently resulting in high stress levels and burnout (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014).

This qualitative study incorporated an interpretivist paradigm and used both semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion to explore the adaptation challenges experienced by novice Foundation Phase teachers in the Nelson Mandela Metropole. Grossman's Teacher Knowledge Theory and Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory were used to frame and make meaning of the findings of this study.

The findings of this study indicate that novice teachers experience a range of challenges upon entering the working world. The numerous factors influencing these challenges experienced by novices include: the work environment; prior training and education; personal knowledge, values and attitudes toward teaching; and professional and social support received within the workplace.

These findings were used to formulate guidelines to help support novice teachers in their adaptation from university to the professional work environment.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION OF STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Novice teachers experience several challenges when trying to cope with their new role as professionals, often labeling this transitional period from being a student teacher to becoming a working professional as a reality shock (Botha & Rens, 2018; Caspersen and Raaen, 2014; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; McCormack & Thomas, 2003). New teachers generally have to “sink or swim” and “learn by trial and error” upon entering the world of teaching (Killeavy, 2006, p.168). Hence the title of this study focuses on the adaptation challenges experienced by novice teachers, as these novices find themselves having to adapt and overcome several challenges to complete their first year of teaching.

The immersion into professional practice often has a negative effect on novice teachers and their ability to cope, subsequently resulting in feelings of inadequacy due to their lack of experience, which causes burnout and stress (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014). According to Dishena and Mokoena (2016), during the first year of teaching, some novices become demoralized, depressed, or face teacher burnout, resulting in them deciding to abandon teaching as a profession. Furthermore, Dishena and Mokoena (2016) highlight factors such as navigating curriculum instructional challenges, the responsibilities of teaching, and non-supportive school cultures as being accountable in making the initial year of teaching challenging for novice teachers.

Thus, the first year of teaching is found to be incredibly overwhelming to the novice teacher due to the complex and challenging demands it places on teachers coupled with their lack of training and induction into the work environment (Botha & Rens, 2018; Dishena & Mokoena, 2016; Burkman, 2012). These challenges experienced by novice teachers vary with each individual and require a certain level of support, training and adaptation in order for novices to successfully navigate their first year of teaching.

In South Africa, most tertiary education institutions that offer Foundation Phase teaching degrees adopted the strategy of integrating student-centered approaches and practices that provide valuable learning experiences within and beyond the classroom (Manqele, 2017; Moate & Cox, 2015). The implementation of equal elements of skills training and education (theory and practice) within the Foundation Phase teaching degree was intended to help students fulfill their roles and responsibilities as future teachers. However, one must first ask what teachers' roles and responsibilities are and who defines these roles.

1.1.1 Clarification of the expectations of teachers

According to Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall (2014), the roles and responsibilities of teachers are to put learners at the centre of teaching and learning. Novice teachers find themselves having to adapt to the world of a working professional and successfully fulfill the roles and expectations that are required of them, whilst simultaneously navigating their way through any challenges they face within the school environment. Fry, *et al.* (2014) propose that teachers should: design instructional programs; work in the best interest of the learners; plan learning activities for all learners; educate, supervise and facilitate learning; maintain the current status of learner assessments and learning profiles; and report to the parents of learners, both informally and formally in writing. As outlined by Fry, *et al.* (2014), these specific teacher roles and responsibilities from a British educational perspective are very similar to the duties that South African novice teachers must fulfill regardless of their knowledge or experience in these areas. According to South Africa's Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (2015, p.62), the basic competencies or minimum requirements of beginner teachers include:

- having sound subject knowledge;
- to be able to accommodate learners and their individual learning needs;
- effectively communicating with learners and parents;
- successfully managing a classroom;
- to be able to assess learners according to the curriculum; and
- designing suitable learning programmes.

The South African Council of Educators (SACE) (2017, p. 3) further lists the expectations of teachers as having to:

- acknowledge the noble calling of your profession to educate and train the learners of our country;
- acknowledge that one's attitude, dedication, self-discipline, ideals, training and conduct of those in the teaching profession determine the quality of education in this country;
- acknowledge, uphold and promote basic human rights, as embodied in the Constitution of South Africa;
- commit to do all within your power in the exercising of your professional duties and to act in accordance with the ideals of your profession, as expressed in the SACE Code of Professional Ethics; and
- act in a proper and becoming way, such that your behaviour does not bring the teaching profession into disrepute.

From a global and local perspective, the above-mentioned teacher expectations adequately sum up teacher roles and responsibilities, which are similarly required of South African novice teachers and is the focus of this study.

Local universities provide adequate training in the above-mentioned areas for education students (Manqele, 2017); yet, the majority of challenges faced by novice teachers are contextually based according to the school environment in which they find themselves working (Killeavy, 2006). It is thus vital to take into account how each individual perceives and experiences their environment differently from the next, resulting in a very individual experience of one's emotional and social reactions within that environment (Vygotsky, 1978).

This study was inspired by the teaching challenges I experienced as a novice teacher; and informed the reasoning and rationale as well as its purpose to explore other novice teachers' challenges, specifically those in the Foundation Phase. These experiences are discussed below.

1.1.2 My first teaching position – Year 1

As a novice Foundation Phase teacher, I found myself entering the working world and feeling ill-prepared to fully take on the roles and responsibilities of the teaching profession. My expectations were vastly different from the reality of teaching. As a student teacher, I was accustomed to teaching lessons based on the subject content prescribed by the school curriculum. The school I was stationed at, which was a private school and very well resourced, and the responsibilities I was given left me with no exposure to the after-hour work involved in teaching; such as lesson preparation and administrative duties involving continuous assessments; creating and compiling teaching resources; report writing; and logging classroom incidences and any parental correspondence. Furthermore, my tertiary education experience comprised mostly of the theoretical aspects of teaching.

At Nelson Mandela University the Student-Based-Learning Programme (SBL) provides an opportunity for students to experience their work environment through a structured program involving teaching and observing lessons at different schools in the Nelson Mandela Metropole. In the first, second and third year of studying to be a teacher, the SBL programme varies from spending a few weeks observing a mentor teacher to spending a school term (about three months) observing and teaching lessons at different schools. During my fourth and final year of student teaching, I felt I had gained sufficient and valuable teaching experience, as the university's SBL programme required student teachers to spend four days a week at a school for an entire school year in order to gain practical experience.

The teaching experience gained during this SBL programme provided insight into the daily practices of teaching but failed to address other vital aspects of the job that took place beyond the lessons given and after school hours, as mentioned earlier.

After completing a four-year teaching degree, I experienced a shortfall in my expectations and found it challenging to connect the university coursework with the school context of teaching in a classroom. My first teaching experience was a harsh reality shock in that it left me feeling ill-prepared and inadequate to undertake the role of

a teacher. I received very little support from my colleagues and often compared my professional progress and teaching outcomes with that of the other teachers. As a result, this made me feel incompetent and ill-suited for the profession, which led to me isolating myself from my colleagues and subsequently learning how to cope with work-related challenges on my own. After a year of teaching, accompanied by profuse introspection and convincing myself to persevere instead of quitting my job, I decided to look for other employment opportunities.

1.1.3 My second teaching position – Year 2

I started a new teaching job at a small private school in Port Elizabeth. Having spent a full year trying to adapt to the world of teaching, I found myself starting all over again with more challenges than before. Having received no guidance from my new colleagues or the school principal, I was expected to create a planning and assessment file with little background information of the school or its assessment protocols. This was a vastly different workplace context compared to my previous place of employment in which all teachers received a teaching plan (planning file) for the school year, providing the teacher with a clear set of guidelines and suggestions for the different subject learning areas.

According to Brock and Grady (1998), if the way things are done in a new school differ from a novice teacher's previous school, this may often result in a source of great discomfort to the beginner teacher. It felt as if I had leapt from one bad teaching experience into the next, which was far worse. Entering a new work environment and receiving no administrative templates led me to make use of my personal copy of The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), a document prescribed by the Department of Education outlining the national curriculum that South African schools started implementing in 2012 and which I had used during my SBL programme at university.

From the information provided by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (Department of Basic Education, 2011), I needed to prepare my own teaching file that included daily planning, weekly planning, termly and yearly planning; an assessment

schedule; a parent-meeting log; and copies of all teaching resources used. Above overseeing extra-mural sports after school teaching hours, I was overwhelmed by the administrative workload that needed to be completed.

Without any guidance or support from other staff members, these newfound teacher roles and responsibilities led to further feelings of unpreparedness and inadequacy as a novice teacher, which drove me to investigate what the challenges of novice Foundation Phase teachers are, and how they adapt from being a student to becoming a working professional.

1.1.4 The need for adaptation

As a novice teacher, I faced several challenges during my first and second year of teaching. To successfully navigate my way through each school year and the school challenges I experienced, I had to learn to adapt to my environment by adopting a positive mindset, embracing the school ethos and carrying out its code of conduct. As Killeavy (2006, p.168) aptly stated: novice teachers have to “sink or swim” upon entering the world of teaching and I stubbornly refused to sink. This decision to persevere within the profession instead of succumbing to the challenges and giving up was a challenge in itself; and made me question the necessity of being able to adapt both physically and mentally within the teaching profession.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study looks at the challenges experienced by novice Foundation Phase teachers and whether they are able to adapt and adopt successful strategies within their classrooms to survive their first year(s) of teaching. By exploring these experiences and challenges faced by novice teachers, it is hoped that future novice teachers may use the findings from this study as a set of guidelines to give further insight into the life of a novice teacher and overcome any challenges they might experience.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) (2017) recognizes that novice teachers face numerous challenges upon entering the school environment and have categorized these encounters as part of a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) requirement. WIL acknowledges the importance of “learning-in-practice” and workplace-based experience in becoming a proficient teacher (DHET, 2015, p.13). Notably, the first year of a teacher’s career is predictive of how successful the remainder of their career will be (DBE, 2017), yet most of this first-year experience is left to chance based on the efficacy of the school work environment and the support provided to these novice teachers.

South African teachers find the transition from university into the teaching profession particularly daunting (Petersen, 2017), and as a result between 18 000 and 22 000 teachers end up leaving the profession after their first year of teaching (Maphalala & Mpofo, 2019). If new teachers receive the necessary support during their initial year of employment, it is far less likely that they will leave the profession (DBE, 2017). The question remains whether novice teachers across the board are receiving equal and meaningful support during this period or whether they rely solely on workplace-based experiences to guide them through the system?

In reality, many parts of the schooling system cannot provide adequate support to newly appointed teachers due to the already overloaded timetables of teachers. Even though there are veteran teachers who could provide mentoring, there a lack of financing for the necessary support training and resources for novice teachers (DBE, 2017). Subsequently, Maphalala and Mpofo (2019) argue that the South African education system and its schools need to create working conditions that support and ensure teacher retention. Hence the need to explore the challenges faced by novice teachers and how they adapt to these challenges. In so doing factors were identified that could improve this experience to ensure novice teachers remain in the profession.

1.4 MAIN AND SUB-RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Below are the research questions that guided the study.

1.4.1 Main research question

The main research question is: What are the adaptation challenges that novice Foundation Phase teachers experience upon entering the professional work environment?

1.4.2 Sub-research questions

The sub-research questions for this study are:

- What are novice teachers' expectations of schooling when commencing with their teaching careers at schools within the Nelson Mandela Metropole?
- How do novice teachers' tertiary education knowledge and the social setting of the school environment aid them in adapting to the role of teacher?
- What knowledge is gained from these early teaching challenges, and how did it contribute to their adaptation into the workplace?

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

The aim and objectives of this study are mentioned below.

1.5.1 Aim

This study aims to explore the challenges novice Foundation Phase teachers face within their teaching and learning context and how they manage to adapt to these challenges.

1.5.2 Objectives

The following objectives were formulated to achieve the aim of this study:

- Examine the adaptation challenges faced by novice Foundation Phase teachers;

- Explore novice teachers' expectations of schooling when commencing with their teaching careers at schools in the Nelson Mandela Metropole;
- Identify the knowledge that novice teachers gain as a result of these early teaching challenges; and
- Formulate guidelines to help support student and novice teachers adapt to the professional work environment.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Grossman's (1990) Teacher Knowledge Theory is used to frame this study. This theory highlights the importance of teachers' knowledge playing a vital role in their experiences and perceptions. Teacher knowledge is an appropriate concept to use as a framework for this study, as the study seeks to explore the adaptation challenges of novice teachers upon entering schools and, in doing so, trying to understand the types of knowledge that these novice teachers have gained during their tertiary education training and early teaching experience. If teachers find themselves lacking in knowledge, and their school environment is unable to offer supportive structures and induction programmes, this can potentially have a negative effect on their outlook on the education sector as a whole (Persky & Robinson, 2017).

Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist Theory is also incorporated into this study, as Vygotsky believed an individual's language and culture are to be viewed as social phenomena that shape individual knowledge construction. He further maintains that an individual's environment and the social interactions they experience within this environment help shape the way they perceive their reality (Vygotsky, 1978). It is understandable then if there is little to no social interaction or collegial support for novice teachers upon entering a new work environment that there will be a negative outcome or range of emotions directed toward their teaching approach. These theories that underpin the study are further discussed in Chapter two.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The nature of this study seeks to explore the challenges of novice Foundation Phase teachers and to discuss their adaptation challenges within their place of work. Qualitative research methods were used in the data collection, data analysis and data generation of this study.

1.7.1 Qualitative research approach

For the purpose of this research, a qualitative research approach was chosen. According to Strauss (2010), qualitative studies are known for creating an understanding of a phenomenon. This study explores the challenges faced by novice Foundation Phase teachers within their context of teaching and learning. Therefore, the phenomenon of this study is the challenges experienced by novice teachers in their adaptation from students to teachers. The participants' educational background, physical environment, social context within their place of work, as well as the feelings, thoughts and ideas of these novice teachers are incorporated in this research study.

1.7.2 Paradigm: Interpretivism

The paradigm of research that guides the study, in terms of assumptions made by the researcher regarding the research, the selection of tools, participants and methods used is interpretivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The interpretivist paradigm aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) constructivist approach as it upholds the notion that reality is constructed in the individual's mind. This allows the researcher to interpret the participants' feedback at face value, allowing for meaningful social interactions, where an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon is created.

1.7.3 Population and sampling

Purposeful sampling was used in selecting participants for this study. The sample consisted of five novice Foundation Phase teachers who had obtained a teaching degree from a national university. The criteria for selection required that all participants be registered with the SACE, and have between one and four years teaching experience in different urban schools in the Nelson Mandela Metropole.

1.7.4 Data collection methods

In order to achieve the aim and objectives of this study, a basic interpretive qualitative study was used to explore the challenges faced by novice teachers (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative methods such as individual semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion were implemented in order to obtain data from the participants of this study. These interviews and focus group discussion were conducted online due to the COVID-19 outbreak of 2020.

1.7.5 Data analysis and interpretation

Colaizzi's (1978) seven steps for gathering and interpreting data were applied to identify common themes and similarities gathered in the participants' interview responses and focus group discussion. Significant statements or key-words taken from the individual interviews were used as prompts for the focus group discussion. From the participants' verbal recounts, themes were clustered and integrated into a rounded description of the phenomenon of this study.

1.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Establishing trustworthiness ensures that the findings of this study are both reliable and credible. A level of trustworthiness with the participants was established by applying Guba's (1981) principles of dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability. These are further discussed in Chapter 3.

1.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research conducted in this study prioritized the inclusion of ethics principles, namely: obtaining ethical clearance for the conducting of research of this nature; gaining consent for the involvement of participants; inviting participation, but not coercing it; providing the participants with full knowledge regarding the nature of the research; and treating all participants fairly, with consideration and respect (Mukherji & Albon, 2018).

Therefore, all participants and all information were handled in an honest, fair and respectful manner.

1.10 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

A conceptual analysis allows the reader to form their own impressions and perceptions of the study and allow for similarities to be identified and related to the larger framework of educational knowledge (Dube, 2008). A clarification of concepts section has been included in this chapter to explain certain concepts of the study further and aid the reader in their interpretation of this research paper.

1.10.1 Definition of concepts used in this study

- **Novice:** A novice is a person who is new to a field or activity. In essence, it is a beginner who is just starting to learn or do something (Dube, 2008). Terms such as novice teacher, newly qualified and beginner teacher are used interchangeably. The underlying assumptions of this study are that novice teachers are those who have recently qualified to practice as teachers and who have between one and four years of experience (Feiman-Nemser, 2003).
- **Teacher:** A teacher, also known as an educator, refers to a person who helps others to learn by teaching them. In this context, the term 'teacher' is used to refer to a person who facilitates learning, specifically in primary schools (Dube, 2008).
- **Adaptation:** According to Hutcheon (2012), the term 'adaptation' could refer to many things, such as the change in structures, functions or behaviours by which an individual is able to improve their chances of survival in a specific environment; or simply adapting something old to take on a fresh perspective, yet still keeping the original thought or theory. The adaptation concept of this study considers the transition period of leaving behind the role of student teacher to become a qualified working professional, and focuses on the challenges these novice teachers face in adapting to this new role and work environment.

- **Induction:** According to Kelley (2004, p.438), induction is seen as “providing meaningful assimilation into the profession” whilst Olebe (2005, p.159) says that induction is characterized as “a professional education and development tailored for teachers in their first and second years of teaching.” For the purpose of this study, induction refers to the support and professional development of all new teachers at their place of work.

1.11 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

In this section, the division of chapters and a summary of each chapter is presented.

Chapter one

This chapter serves as an introductory chapter. It describes the research problem, research methodology, as well as the context of the study. The theoretical framework of this study, trustworthiness and ethical considerations are also identified. Clarifications of certain concepts used are described.

Chapter two

In chapter two, literature regarding the numerous challenges faced by novice teachers, as well as the value in the induction programme is explored. These provide a theoretical basis for further research and give context to the study and its need for successful implementation of adaptation strategies, establishing a supportive foundation for this research. The theoretical framework that underpins this study is also presented.

Chapter three

In this chapter, the methodology used in the research study is discussed. It furthermore delineates how an interpretive qualitative study presents participants’ perceived experiences; focusing on the description of the challenges of being a novice teacher. The chapter also explains the research design and the data collection methods,

examining their affordances and limitations. Trustworthiness and ethical considerations are also discussed in detail.

Chapter four

Chapter four provides a detailed analysis of the data that emerged from the interviews and focus group discussion. This data is used to present the themes for the study.

Chapter five

This chapter presents the findings and the limitations of the study. It provides a summary of the data and uses it to answer the research question and sub-questions.

Chapter six

The conclusions and implications of this study are discussed in chapter six. From these findings, recommendations for further research surrounding the topic of this study are provided.

1.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter highlights the need to further explore the adaptation challenges of novice Foundation Phase teachers to better understand the support structures, or lack thereof, within primary schools in the Nelson Mandela Metropole. This chapter introduced the study by providing the background and rationale for the study. After that, the study's main problem and aim were presented, followed by the research design, methodology, and theoretical framework to answer the proposed research questions. Lastly, a breakdown of each of the chapters was provided.

In the next chapter, literature surrounding this study's topic is reviewed and a theoretical framework that underpins the study is presented.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Ryan (1986, p.18) calls teaching: “a deceiving occupation [where] being on the teacher’s side of the desk is an entirely new and different experience than being a student watching teachers. Often, what looked easy turns out to be beyond the beginning teacher’s capacities”.

The above statement continues to ring true almost forty years later in today’s world of teaching and learning due to tertiary education institutions not providing adequate training for student teachers when it comes to the behind-the-scenes duties and roles of a teacher. These teacher duties often occur after the lesson has ended and range from administrative tasks, such as lesson preparation, planning and assessing of learners to dealing with learner behaviour, and communicating with parents. Often, what a student-teacher sees in a day when observing a teacher in the classroom is only a fraction of the input that went into the preparation for that school day. This aspect is further elaborated in this chapter.

In this chapter, literature documenting the numerous challenges experienced by novice teachers, as well as teacher induction programmes is presented. Local literature focusing on South African education and novice teachers and key issues and debates surrounding this topic are highlighted. This chapter also discusses the theoretical framework of the study.

2.2 CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY NOVICE TEACHERS

Novice teachers play a vital role in providing and maintaining quality education and bringing about educational reform (Dube, 2008). However, it is a documented fact that there is a recognized need for support for novice teachers (DBE, 2017; Dishena &

Mokoena, 2016). Discussed below are a few of the challenges that novice teachers are faced with upon entering the school environment as newly qualified teachers. Although described separately, it should be understood that these challenges often occur in a combination with each other.

2.2.1 Teacher readiness

Novice or beginner teachers enter the working world with only their previous experiences of being observers, tutors, assistants and student teachers (Dube, 2008). The adjustment from university or a college into the life of a working professional is a challenge in itself (Botha & Rens, 2018).

The term “teacher readiness” can be described as a teacher’s preparedness in terms of training received to complete a certain task – the task of educating and instilling specific subject knowledge into the minds of learners (Asrofi, 2013, p.9). However, literature indicates that teacher readiness entails more than just adequate training to educate learners in a classroom context.

There is global concern about the readiness of newly appointed teachers and how they cope with the realities of teaching in the modern classroom (Esau, 2017). According to Raja and Nagasubramani (2018), the 21st century is regarded as the era of technology. With the advances in technology, the modern day learner is exposed to so much digital stimulation in the form of online games, educational and recreational children’s television programs and the internet in its entirety, it becomes challenging for the teacher to both educate and stimulate when teaching from a curriculum that was not designed to accommodate this technological era (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018). The readiness and preparedness of teachers are affected by the level of training and support they receive within the school environment and the type of learners they find themselves educating (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018).

An important finding based on studies concerning the readiness of beginner teachers was that most induction systems seem to focus solely on “surviving the first year” (Esau, 2017, p. 22), when it should concentrate its efforts in effectively preparing these novices for their roles and responsibilities as teachers.

Arends and Phurutse (2015) researched the school readiness, skills and knowledge of beginner teachers in South Africa and confirmed the importance of collegial support in assisting novice teachers to adapt and acclimatize to their new role as a teacher. They further found that a lack of collegial support causes novice teachers' perceptions about their level of preparedness and readiness to teach to decline dismally, resulting in a higher likelihood of them not remaining in the profession for any length of time, if at all (Esau, 2017).

2.2.1.1 Different responses to teacher readiness

The unique experiences of novice teachers all over the world have been well documented. Curry, Webb and Latham (2016) reinforced the importance of Moir's (1999) observations on the distinct patterns of how novice teachers mentally perceive and respond to their readiness toward the first year of teaching. These patterns were organized into five different phases, namely: the anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation and reflection phases (Curry, *et al.*, 2016, p.45).

The anticipation phase is the initial phase in which novice teachers attempt to adapt to the daily routine of being a teacher; this phase usually occurs during the beginning weeks of the school year (Moir, 1999).

The survival phase is where novice teachers spend long hours understanding and interpreting the curriculum and planning lessons accordingly. In this phase, they begin to feel overwhelmed by the demands of their workload and struggle to find a balance between their work and personal life (Moir, 1999).

The disillusionment phase causes novice teachers' efficacy and confidence to drop as they experience an increase in stress due to parental interactions and school administrators and usually occurs toward the middle of the school year when mid-year examinations are held (Moir, 1999).

The rejuvenation phase generally occurs after the mid-year break. According to Curry, *et al.* (2016), the teacher has had six months of teaching experience and slowly adjusts to their work environment and adapts accordingly. In addition, this phase sees the

novice teacher growing in confidence as they become more assured of their capabilities (Curry, *et al.*, 2016).

The final phase, reflection, integrates a personal assessment of the year's challenges, where the novice teacher can reflect on strengths, challenges faced, and their accomplishments thus far (Moir, 1999). During this final phase, novice teachers assess whether they would like to remain in the profession and make the necessary changes to improve their students' and their own success (Curry, *et al.*, 2016). The novice then transitions from hoping and assuming their readiness and preparedness to teach are sufficient to acknowledging their capabilities within the profession.

According to Botha and Rens (2018), novice teachers assume they will successfully transition from a theory-orientated student teacher to a well-rounded teacher within the first few years of employment. However, reality sets in quickly as these beginner teachers find themselves harshly experiencing the expansive gap between theory and practice (Botha & Rens, 2018; Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Veeman (1984, p.143) defines this 'reality shock' as the "collapse of the missionary ideas formed during teacher training by the harsh and rude realities of everyday classroom life." The aptness of this statement refers, again, to the modern-day learner and the continuous advances in technology when it comes to education. An example of the harsh reality of what occurs in the classroom, for which the novice teacher is not prepared, is poor learner behaviour as a result of advanced maturity and exposure to age-inappropriate material, such as violent video games (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018). No tertiary education training or mentor teacher can prepare one for these current and modern-day classroom challenges.

Novice teachers are often cited as experiencing isolation and loneliness during their first year of teaching, and therefore find themselves disappointed upon learning the realities of being a teacher and lacking in readiness for what the profession entails (Dube, 2008). In addition, Botha and Rens (2018) state that novice teachers conceptualize and respond to practical situations based on how they as student teachers observed other teachers deal with certain occurrences; therefore playing an essential role in how these

novices reconstruct their beliefs and identities as a teacher. Their readiness and preparedness to take on the role of teacher are built on their perceptions of what they have observed and imagine teaching to be like (Botha & Rens, 2018). The unsupported belief of readiness, or levels of preparedness to teach, can negatively impact novice teachers' first-year experiences and their perceptions of the world of teaching (Botha & Rens, 2018).

2.2.2 Personal and professional challenges

The initial and central challenges that novice teachers face often have little to do with teaching, yet are critical to the beginning of their career (Dube, 2008). According to Liu (2014), some of the perceived problems of teachers in their first year of practice resulted from a lack of readiness in coping with individual learner discrepancies, which lead to negative shifts in personal attitudes and behaviour.

Upon entering the work environment, novice teachers are expected to know what to teach and how to teach it (Ryan, 1986). As a result, a deep sense of personal failure is experienced when these beginner teachers realize they cannot meet these expectations (Ryan, 1986). An occurrence called “the curve of disenchantment” highlights the change in attitude experienced by novices, resulting from a troubled first year of teaching (Ryan, 1986, p.8). This curve revealed a positive peak in attitude during the first few weeks of the initial year of teaching, followed by a dramatic fall throughout the first four or five months, and lastly, seeing a gradual rise in attitude toward the end of the academic school year, but never to become as positive as it once was (Ryan, 1986). The disenchantment or disappointment during this occurrence creates instability in the teaching profession as it causes novice teachers to doubt themselves both personally and professionally, resulting in them searching for ways to “escape” the school environment (Ryan, 1986, p.8) and making it a challenge for schools to retain these teachers.

According to Heyns (2000, pp.161-162) the needs of beginner teachers can be classified into “personal needs and organizational needs” which, if not met and appropriately addressed, might result in teachers resigning from the profession entirely.

2.2.2.1 Personal needs of teachers

Heyns (2000) states that the reality for most student teachers is being financially dependent on parents or caregivers for personal needs such as living expenses, transport and healthcare. Now that these beginner teachers no longer find themselves as students, but instead working professionals, they face the challenge of making the right financial decisions without the support structure of parents they were once used to (Heyns, 2000).

Another personal challenge that novice teachers face is that they may have been offered a teaching post in an unfamiliar place far away from their home (Dube, 2008). The stress of a new environment not only causes loneliness and longing towards friends and family members, but novice teachers may also be stressed out as a result of the socio-economic backgrounds of the students or learners they now find themselves teaching (Brock & Grady, 1997). In some instances, novice teachers have limited opportunities to observe their colleagues due to classrooms being isolated from one another, or in smaller schools, being the only teacher per grade (Dube, 2008). Subsequently, these beginner teachers lose confidence in their capabilities and experience intense feelings of inadequacy, resulting in self-doubt and questioning their feelings towards the school and teaching as a career (Dube, 2008).

2.2.2.2 Professional needs of teachers

The second need of novice teachers, namely “organizational needs” (Heyns, 2000, pp.161-162), can be classified as a professional need. Niebrandt, Horn and Holmes (1992) identified eight common problems faced by novice teachers: classroom discipline, student motivation, response to individual differences, relationships with parents, assessment of students’ work, organization of classwork, problems with individual students, and insufficient or inadequate teaching supplies and resources. These problems, commonly faced by novice teachers, can be categorized as professional challenges within the workplace.

One of the most common complaints from novice teachers is that their tertiary education did not prepare them adequately for actual teaching; and that their experience and

training was too theoretical and irrelevant to school situations (Steyn, 2004). However, all school settings are different (Dube, 2008) making it difficult for tertiary education institutions to prepare student teachers to teach in specific school settings and classroom contexts when these can be so different. According to Nowlan and Steyn (1990), a further challenge is that beginner teachers are purposely assigned the most difficult classes. They assert that novice teachers are often assigned classes of low academic ability, where attention deficit disorders (ADD), behaviour problems and learning disabilities are prevalent (Nowlan & Steyn, 1990).

This display of poor professional etiquette presents itself as another challenge novices are faced with in the teaching profession. These roles and responsibilities that are cast on novice teachers result in feelings of disillusionment, failure, and physical and emotional stress (Dube, 2008). As a result, these two challenges experienced by novices, both personal and professional challenges, play a significant role in whether these novices remain in the teaching profession or not.

2.2.3 Administrative challenges

Poor attitudes toward teaching, such as a lack of enthusiasm and haphazard professional performance, are habits that are tough to break and are as a result of personal and professional challenges experienced during the first years of teaching (Ryan, 1986). Nevertheless, schools welcome new teachers into the classroom each year only to experience their permanent departure at the end of the year due to the administrative workload (Burkman, 2012; Fry, 2009).

Novice teachers find themselves very “frustrated” by the overwhelming amount of administrative work during their first year of teaching (Fry, 2009, p.105). Research has shown that there is a lack of guidance and support provided in schools for novice teachers during their first year of teaching (Burkman, 2012; Kaufmann, Johnson, Kardos, Liu & Peske, 2002), which is arguably the most challenging and equally rewarding year in the profession, should one survive it. According to Quinn (2005), nearly 50% of novice teachers leave the profession after their first year of teaching. Feiman-Nemser (2003) contends that no matter how well prepared a teacher may be,

some aspects of teaching can only be learned on the job, yet many novice teachers fail to stay in the profession long enough to experience success.

Novice teachers are left to work independently in terms of their administrative workload which involves preparing teaching and learning content and materials, resulting in negative implications in terms of learner achievement and teacher retention (Kaufmann, *et al.*, 2002). In addition, Botha and Rens (2018) state that a significant administrative challenge faced by novice teachers is the struggle to integrate the pedagogy learnt at university with their lived experience of the realities of teaching. Dependent on the novice teachers' disposition, administrative requirements are either severely problematic and challenging or seen as another job requirement (Botha & Rens, 2018).

2.2.3.1 Time management

Time management is considered an administrative challenge that most novice teachers experience. According to Britt (1997), when teachers cannot deal with personal and professional tasks within an allocated amount of time, it can result in stress. Due to the large amounts of required paperwork, many novice teachers feel incredibly stressed and overwhelmed (Britt, 1997). Most novice teachers cannot complete the required paperwork during the school day and have to take most of it home to complete after hours (Burkman, 2012). According to an interview conducted with a primary school novice teacher, "behaviour problems eat up much time, and paperwork eats up the rest" (Britt, 1997, p.4), a statement that remains consistent with each new decade of teaching. In support of this, Burkman (2012) suggests that administrative support on a school level be provided for all novice teachers, as it is so overwhelming and time-consuming.

2.2.3.2 Collegial bullying

It is a known fact that administrative support promotes teacher retention (Fry, 2009; Steyn, 2004). Whitelaw, De Beer and Henning (2008, p.26) discuss an occurrence called "institutionalized bullying", which refers to novice teachers being 'bullied' by their colleagues by being given extra and often unnecessary work. This administrative challenge can be classified as a form of punishment and is usually seen as a "rite of

passage” that all novice teachers are expected to experience. Novice teachers often experience overloaded timetables, complex learners being put into their classes, the addition of multiple extra-mural activities, as well as a heavy administrative load (Whitelaw *et al.*, 2008, pp.26-30). As a result, these novice teachers tend to avoid visiting the staff room and revert to isolating themselves in their classrooms, where they adopt an “out-of-sight, out-of-mind” attitude (Whitelaw *et al.*, 2008, p.33).

Steyn (2004) reports that novice teachers enter the working world already lacking in confidence and find it challenging to complete teacher administrative duties, such as lesson planning, curriculum delivery, keeping up with paper-work, and classroom administration, necessitating good time management skills. The addition of collegial bullying makes these tasks even more so of a challenge. According to Dube (2008), an excessive amount of administrative assignments given to novice teachers contribute significantly to the failure of beginner teachers. Subsequently, research shows that administrative duties should be kept to a minimum for beginner teachers (Burkman, 2012; Dube, 2008; Steyn, 2004; Flores, 2001).

2.2.4 Disciplinary challenges

“Any action by a learner that interrupts or detracts from the process of teaching and learning is commonly regarded as a disciplinary problem” (Naicker, 2014, p.31). Novice teachers see poor learner discipline as a challenge, as the amount of time that teachers spend disciplining learners is valuable time that is taken away from teaching.

Disciplinary challenges vary according to learner age, classroom management and disciplinary styles of the teacher. Learner disciplinary issues include disruptive behaviour in class, such as shouting out or distracting other learners and the teacher with noises or movements; and inappropriate behaviour such as rudeness, blatant disregard for the school rules, as well as acts of an aggressive or violent nature towards other learners or the teacher (Naicker, 2014).

Naicker (2014) places Emotional Intelligence (EI) at the core of teaching and claims that learner discipline remains an ongoing challenge for teachers worldwide, regardless of whether the teachers are new or experienced or the age group of learners they teach.

Naicker (2014) states that when teachers encounter disciplinary problems in their classrooms, they have the choice to either react or to respond. For teachers to *react*, it means their decision was undertaken in the spur of the moment, without any thought of the consequences (Naicker, 2014). These consequences, such as a disciplinary hearing or warning, often have a detrimental effect on the teacher's professional status and psychological well-being (Naicker, 2014).

A teacher who responds has assessed the situation, recognized the evoked emotions, and evaluated the consequences of the proposed action(s) before the proposed action is undertaken (Naicker, 2014). Therefore, teachers prone to respond rather than react may be regarded as emotionally intelligent and are more likely to experience improved psychological well-being (Naicker, 2014). However, novice teachers who have limited experience teaching and dealing with learner discipline may find themselves reacting toward disciplinary problems more than they find themselves responding, thus causing learner discipline as a whole to be seen as a teacher challenge (Naicker, 2014).

The underlying cause of learner discipline is a lack of respect (Naicker, 2014). Learners in schools across the globe appear to be disrespectful of school rules and the school system's general structure and show disrespect towards teachers and parents (Naicker, 2014). This type of ill-behaviour that interrupts the process of learning and teaching can be categorised into three categories, namely: disruption of teaching, defiance and disrespect towards teaching, and teacher targeted bullying (Naicker, 2014).

Firstly, the disruption of teaching refers to interruptive behaviours acted out by learners within the classroom setting, with the sole purpose of disrupting other learners and the teacher. These behaviours range from walking around the classroom or school without permission to making improper noises during lessons, irritating or disturbing peers by teasing, as well as physical violence and verbal abuse (Naicker, 2014).

Secondly, defiance and disrespect towards teaching defines the majority of behavioural issues that teachers deal with in today's classrooms (Naicker, 2014). This behaviour is categorised as "learners who often display defiance and disrespect in respect of the school system's rules, authority and structures" (Naicker, 2014, p.33). These learners

often react defiantly and disrespectfully when the teacher reprimands them by displaying behaviours such as storming out of the classroom, talking loudly whilst the teacher is speaking, and refusal to follow instructions on request (Naicker, 2014).

Lastly, teacher-targeted bullying refers to learners who engage in bullying to undermine the teacher's confidence (Naicker, 2014). These types of behaviours include swearing at or mocking the teacher and persistent, intentional abuse towards the teacher in the form of threats and even sexual harassment (Naicker, 2014).

2.2.4.1 Identifying the root of learner behaviour using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological and Bio-ecological theory of human development

Learner behaviour is affected by a combination of physical, psychological and physiological environments. The cause for these learner disciplinary problems emanate from many different yet interrelated factors. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological and Bio-ecological theory of human development can be used to explain how poor discipline in learners can stem from the direct and indirect influences on that child's life by referring to the many layers of the environment or contexts that impact a child's development and behaviour. The environment or social contexts include the micro-system, the meso-system, the exo-system and the macro-system. These systems interact with a fifth system, called the chrono-system, which represents the time-frames or steadiness over time, in which the interactions between all other systems intersect and influence the developing child (Swart & Pettipher, 2011).

In order to gain a better understanding of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Bio-ecological Model and its relevance to learner discipline and behaviour, one must first explain the different systems. According to Beaty (2006), specific emotional and social traits are brought out of a child when they interact in any context. These specific traits influence the child's interaction with their immediate environment due to the interrelatedness between the individual and the context they perceive. According to Phillips and Cameron (2012), the micro-system encompasses the developing child's face-to-face social and interpersonal experiences, whilst the meso-system includes the connectivity of two or more micro-systems, such as the home and the school. The exo-system also consists of two or

more systems, but is inclusive of one system that is not directly inhabited by the child but may indirectly impact them, for instance the parent's work environment (Swart & Pettipher, 2011). Lastly, the macro-system refers to the culture or sub-culture within which the child lives and incorporates: beliefs, cultural customs, opportunities and life course options (Phillips & Cameron, 2012).

The defining feature of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Bio-ecological Model emphasises how the individual reacts within themselves due to personal characteristics, how the individual reacts or interacts with different contexts, and their reaction between the context and themselves (Naicker, 2014). The physical, psychological and physiological environment of an individual affects their behaviour. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Bio-ecological Model provides a holistic understanding of learner discipline problems in the classroom and identifies behavioural patterns shaped by multiple integrated social contexts and the biological factors of the child (Naicker, 2014).

2.2.4.2 Classroom management

According to Mokhele (2006), classroom management is how a teacher can either encourage learning and good learner behaviour or promote a disruptive learning environment in which learners display poor discipline. Naicker (2014) states that each school's discipline policy is outlined in their Code of Conduct, and it is the teacher's responsibility to implement this policy within his or her classroom.

According to Cullinan (2007, p.210), most novice teachers lack the skill and experience to effectively manage and discipline their classes. In addition, novices' inability to "read the class" results in adapting a "one size fits all" disciplinary approach which often proves to be unsuccessful (Cullinan, 2007). Cullinan (2007) further stated that teachers are sometimes unknowingly guilty of inciting emotional and behavioural problems in learners. He states that teachers are not always aware of the individuality of their learners; the low achievement expectations that teachers have of their students become self-fulfilling prophecies of failure; and that teachers struggle to manage both individual and group behaviour simultaneously and competently (Cullinan, 2007).

Naicker (2014) suggests that poor planning from teachers is a major contributing factor to disciplinary problems within the classroom as teachers need to have a clear knowledge of how to manage their learners, as well as the requirements of the curriculum and what instructional methods are or are not suitable before they enter the classroom setting.

An essential component of classroom management begins with a set of classroom rules that guide acceptable standards of behaviour for both the teacher and learners and must therefore be compiled in consultation with both parties (Mokhele, 2006). Rules are only effective if the need for the rule is understood and if the consequences for breaking it are both clearly understood and respected (Naicker, 2014).

2.2.4.3 *Teacher attitudes toward the profession*

Learner disciplinary challenges may also be directly linked to novice teachers' attitudes towards the profession and the learners in their class (Oosthuizen & Coetzer, 2010). There are several types of behavioural and attitudinal patterns of teachers that have been categorized below (Oosthuizen & Coetzer, 2010, p.7) and which are linked to disciplinary styles used within the classroom:

- *Spectator teachers*: These teachers are unaware of their surroundings and are usually labeled as absent-minded or pre-occupied. They lack confidence in themselves and are often known to pick on passive or inattentive learners in class.
- *Untouchable teachers*: This type of teacher is seen as a strong, authoritative individual who views their learners as subordinates who are expected to blindly follow instructions. This behaviour pattern in teachers often leads to increased levels of anxiety and conflict within the classroom environment.
- *Perfectionist teachers*: Such teachers always feel the need to be right and often expose weaknesses in their learners, proceeding to then compare it to their own successes in those endeavours.
- *Approval-seeking teachers*: These teachers usually have low self-esteem, are fearful of rejection and constantly seek approval from others. They display

inconsistent disciplinary approaches, thereby creating opportunities for learner misbehaviour.

- *Routinist teachers*: Routine teachers adhere strictly to procedures and guidelines, and expect learner answers to be correct and complete at all times. This rigid type of behaviour creates tension in the class environment as it suppresses the learners' freedom of speech and expression.
- *Teachers with unreasonable expectations*: This type of teacher offers little assistance to learners, as they expect the learners to solve problems independently. These teachers are also known to show little empathy towards learners who are shy or withdrawn in the classroom.

The above-mentioned teacher personality traits play a substantial role in learner discipline within the classroom, as the teachers' influence and level of control over the class directly affect the professional relationship and boundaries established at the beginning of the school year (Oosthuizen & Coetzer, 2010). Literature also reveals that learners behave poorly when rules are inconsistently applied by the teacher (Thompson, 2009; Strauss, 2006). Teachers may also be accused of "favouritism" when they overlook behaviours from some whom they favour but rigidly apply the rules to others (Naicker, 2014, p.44). Learners also feel victimized and retaliate or behave poorly in class when they feel the teacher is singling them out for no particular reason (Thompson, 2009).

Another cause for poor learner discipline could be teachers who regularly raise their voices in class for minor misbehaviours (Oosthuizen & Coetzer, 2010). According to Naicker (2014, p.44): "The teacher's tone of voice and volume is an invaluable skill in maintaining discipline in the classroom", a skill that most novice teachers have yet to master.

2.2.4.4 Lack of teacher training as a cause for learner misbehaviour

Studies show that problems related to learner behaviour issues are not covered during teacher training or induction sessions (Naicker, 2014). Upon being appointed as a first-time teacher, novices lack adequate skills and knowledge in dealing with disciplinary

issues, hence it being such a significant challenge experienced by teachers. As a result of not being adequately trained to handle these behaviour challenges at school, novice teachers may unintentionally participate in learner misbehaviour (Oosthuizen & Coetzer, 2010; Strauss, 2006).

2.3 THE EXPECTATIONS OF TEACHERS

Expectations in the classroom do exist, and they can positively or negatively influence teacher and learner performance and achievement (Rubie-Davies, Hattie & Hamilton, 2006). Research states that teachers use information based on individual learners in the formation of their expectations of them (Rubie-Davies, *et al.*, 2006). Subsequently, these expectations form part of a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby an individual's expectation for the behaviour or actions of another person or group serves to bring about the expected behaviour (Brophy, 1983).

While teachers generally have expectations of the learners they teach, Sander, Stevenson, King & Coates (2000) state student teachers often create expectations of their future careers as teachers based on their tertiary education experiences (Sander, *et al.*, 2000). These expectations stem from information received from lecturers, peers, mentor teachers and physical teaching experiences that take place in a classroom setting whilst observing or teaching lessons. Often, these expectations are unmatched when it comes to the reality of the experience, resulting in euphoria if it exceeds ones' expectations or disillusionment or disappointment if it falls short (Sander, *et al.*, 2000).

Student teachers and novice teachers have been recorded as having certain and several expectations with regards to the teaching profession. These expectations have often fallen short, resulting in negative feelings towards teaching (Sanders, *et al.*, 2000). The most common expectations that teachers have of teaching is that the work day ends when the school day ends and that most of the time at school is spent teaching learners and touching lives (Sanders, *et al.*, 2000). Regrettably, this is false.

Literature shows that novice teachers experience several challenges upon entering the workplace. These challenges are often a result of a shortfall in ones' expectations which causes an overall negative perception of the profession (Sanders, *et al.*, 2000; Brophy, 1983). For example, if a novice teacher expects to complete their workday at the end of the school day and finds a large administrative load to complete, which they have to take home with them, their attitude towards administration becomes negative.

Unknowingly, our expectations play a large role in how we perceive and perform within the workplace; it affects our attitudes and our decision to stay and persevere or leave the profession altogether (Sanders, *et al.*, 2000).

2.4 LOCAL PERSPECTIVES REGARDING NOVICE TEACHER CHALLENGES

“Novice teachers transition from being students who have only just mastered taking responsibility for their own learning, to becoming responsible for the education of all learners within their class” (Petersen, 2017, p.1). This transition period from student to teacher is a time of immense adaptation and adjustment for novice teachers and considered “a rite of passage” within the teaching profession (Petersen, 2017, p.2).

According to Petersen (2017), one of the most significant challenges for first-time teachers in South Africa is their classroom perceptions of the school learners. Petersen (2017, p.2) elaborates that “teachers’ first shock comes when they encounter large numbers of young children in a typical South African first-grade classroom, for whom they have sole responsibility – most of whom have very little idea of how to function in a formal school environment.” The three main findings that predominated in Petersen’s (2017) study on novice teacher’s descriptions of their transition from university into the teaching profession were: blaming higher education institutions for the difficulty in transitioning from university to the school environment; the lack of induction and support programmes from schools; and the administrative workload concerning the tracking and reporting on children’s learning. Gravett and Ramsaroop (2015) reiterate South Africa’s practice-theory divide as one of the most prominent critiques against university teacher education.

The gaps between policy and the practice of teaching remain steadfast in this country, as the ideals of practice are often decontextualized and unable to meet social development goals (Bantwini, 2010; Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008). Since South Africa's democracy in 1994, several changes have been made to the educational system, all of which were intended to redress past educational injustices (Bantwini, 2010). The DBE (2000, p.5) recommended that the curriculum be "strengthened" by restructuring its design features, aligning curriculum and assessment, simplifying its language of instruction, improving teacher orientation and training, and fully resourcing learner support materials.

Bantwini (2010) states that the Eastern Cape province remains one of the largest and poorest provinces in the country; characterized by low educational standards in most schools, a lack of infrastructure to support teaching and learning, overcrowded classrooms, and teachers who lack support and training and do not have adequate subject knowledge. These are but a few challenges faced by novice teachers on a daily basis.

Additionally, Botha and Rens (2018) state that teachers, particularly those teaching in Government schools, are exposed to extreme cases of learner poverty, abuse and illnesses, such as HIV/AIDS. The harsh reality faced by these teachers is one they might not have been adequately prepared for, resulting in a clash in their perceived expectations of the reality of a typical South African classroom environment (Botha & Rens, 2018).

These challenges mentioned above, combined with a lack of support and guidance from mentors and colleagues, have been identified as critical challenges South African teachers face in their early teaching experiences (Botha & Rens, 2018). Hence, it remains evident that beginner teachers in South Africa need sufficient guidance upon entering schools and that such guidance would be better achieved if there were structures in the school that support teacher education and training in dealing with local classroom contexts (Esau, 2017).

2.5 INDUCTION PROGRAMMES

Beginner teachers need support in order to effectively perform their duties (Killeavy, 2006; Steyn, 2004; Ingersoll & Smith, 2004; Kitchen, 2003; Brock & Grady, 1998), and induction programmes need to be implemented and tailored specifically for novice teachers in a way that is relevant and meaningful (Dube, 2008).

Induction is a process of support and guidance in the form of orientation programmes, specifically to aid novice teachers during the transition into their first teaching jobs (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). It links pre-service education and classroom practice, bridging the gap between a student of teaching and a teacher of students (Brock & Grady, 1998).

Wong (2004) highlights the value of induction programmes for newly hired teachers. According to Wong (2004), it is vital that support is provided to novice teachers via a sustainable development programme to ensure a high standard of teaching and learning takes place within the school. Wong (2004) states that where there is an induction programme, novice teachers will effectively manage their class and produce better achievement regardless of which curriculum materials or pedagogical approach is selected (Wong, 2004).

In many schools, one-on-one mentoring is a common strategy for supporting new teachers; however, the needs of novice teachers are so varied and immediate that the appropriate combination of expertise, experience and cultural background is unlikely to be provided by one of the assigned mentors who are available when needed. As mentioned earlier, there is substantial bias in assuming that teachers will experience challenges within their classrooms similar to those of their colleagues (Wong, 2004). Each teacher has a unique teaching philosophy, as do each of the learners in his/her classroom concerning their style of learning. A colleague and mentor with years of teaching experience can provide more insight when dealing with context-related challenges than a set of very broad and basic survival tips ever could (Wong, 2004).

Quinn (2005) suggests that providing support to novice teachers assists with teacher retention and assists beginner teachers in becoming effective practitioners. Burkman

suggested in 2012 that mentoring is essential for novice teachers. According to Burkman (2012), mentoring is only as strong as the mentors provided, resulting in about half of the United States sanctioning mentoring and induction programmes.

Characteristics of a successful induction programme include a professional development support system tailored to teachers' needs, years of service and teaching experience, and considering novice teachers' responsibilities or extra-curricula activities (Burkman, 2012). The Department of Basic Education (2017) recommends that the first year of a novice teacher's employment should be regarded as an induction period, during which time he or she should receive as much assistance as possible in dealing with all aspects of the job.

2.5.1 Induction in South Africa

In 2012, the South African Department of Education introduced The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), outlining the national school curriculum through which the teacher was responsible for effectively implementing within his or her classroom. According to Deysel (2016, p. 85), it is often "very challenging" for teachers to reinforce and revise certain learning concepts as work needs to be taught at a certain pace according to the prescribed teaching schedules that are indicated in the CAPS documents.

According to the Department of Basic Education (2017, p.12), one of the topics to be covered during novice teacher induction programmes is that of "classroom management issues". According to the Department of Basic Education's New Teacher Induction: Guidelines for the orientation programme (2017), novice teachers need to be informed on how to uphold discipline in their classrooms on the basis of the school code of conduct and its guidelines and procedures. However, should novice teachers enter the work environment with little to no support in an induction programme, upholding such discipline in their classrooms will be a significant challenge. Furthermore, how novice teachers are received at schools determines their perceptions of the teaching profession and their motivation levels and how they feel about a future in teaching (Department of Education, 2017).

2.5.1.1 *Teacher challenges that stem from lack of induction and mentoring*

Bantwini (2010) interviewed a group of primary school teachers from rural, urban and township schools to understand the different types of challenges they were confronted with concerning teaching and learning within their schools. According to Bantwini (2010), one of the challenges, which remain relevant in the current school context, is teachers having to independently develop proper lesson plans and maintain files reflecting their daily classroom activities. Bantwini (2010) states that teachers viewed this administrative requirement as overwhelming, as most of them had little context to the correct format of the administrative requirements and had to seek out assistance from colleagues.

In the interviews conducted by Bantwini (2010), teachers admitted to copying their lesson plans from colleagues in other schools due to the pressure they experienced to meet these requirements. In addition, these teachers admitted to taking short-cuts where they could and did so without carefully considering their situations and school contexts.

Bantwini (2010, p.86) suggests that reasons for taking these short-cuts resulted from teachers being “bombarded with administrative work” and given little to no time to complete it. He further states that one of the main perceptions teachers had regarding their school experiences was the lack of in-service professional development. Bantwini (2010, p.88) highlights the following result of the lack of support and professional development programmes:

Feelings of uncertainty and lack of profound understanding resulting from this, was aggravated by the absence of ongoing professional development that would ensure that teachers understood what was required of them. Teachers complained about their infrequent meetings with the Subject Advisors responsible for their professional development. According to the teachers, they typically met with them for orientation on the curriculum reforms and hardly saw them afterwards. Added to this lack of support was that teachers did not have time to meet with their colleagues, discuss critical classroom issues, and devise ways to ensure the implementation of the newly given workload. This was due to the surplus of requirements given in the learning areas they were teaching as well as the other responsibilities assigned to them.

As mentioned above, it is evident that novice teachers are not receiving the support they need personally and professionally. When new teachers are provided with all the necessary information, know what is expected of them, and are prepared and confident to teach on the first day of school, they positively impact learner outcomes (DBE, 2017). Hence the need for professional induction programmes that provide teachers with the knowledge, skills and necessary tools to successfully implement adaptation strategies to overcome these novice teacher challenges.

2.6 CONCLUSION OF THE REVIEWED LITERATURE

There are many debates surrounding the topic of education and teachers as a whole. In this section, the literature review highlighted key issues based on the challenges that novice teachers' face and the value in implementing induction programmes to support novice teachers in their adaptation from being a university student to a working professional.

Petersen (2017) states that it is normal for novice teachers to blame their higher education training and their university lecturers in this transitional period from student to teacher. This reaction has been reported on in both South African (Gravett, Henning & Eiselen, 2011) and international literature (Bromfield, Burnett & Deane, 2003). The "reality shock" of stepping into teaching is understandable, given that graduates have to learn to implement simultaneously and in an integrated fashion what they have learned over their years of study at university (Feiman-Nemser, 2003, p.25).

Petersen (2017) and Bantwini (2010) both highlight the challenges faced by South African novice teachers and the pressure placed on them to perform their duties irrespective of their lack of support and teaching experience. These challenges faced by first-year teachers cause varying levels of stress, anxiety and low self-confidence which negatively affect their teaching and student learning (Kaufmann, *et al.*, 2002).

According to Wong (2004), a structured and sustained professional development programme that allows teachers to be observed by colleagues and be part of a network

that promotes collaboration and mutual respect for all involved is the key to keeping first-year teachers in the teaching profession.

Furthermore, literature shows that students of education feel the need for more professional support in terms of induction programmes, mentoring and collegial support. Subsequently, these novices find themselves learning more from on-the-job experience than they do at university (Salzman, 1995). It is evident that novice teachers face multiple challenges during this transition period (Petersen, 2017; Burkman, 2012; Bantwini, 2010; Feiman-Nemser, 2003), yet literature is lacking in the knowledge *gained* by novice teachers from experiencing these early teaching challenges. Hence, asking the research question: What knowledge do novice teachers gain from these early teaching challenges, and how did it contribute to their adaptation into the workplace?

2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Henning, Van Rensburg and Smith (2004) identify a theoretical framework in research to be a continuous process of reflection and the foundation for the entire research study. In essence, it is the point of departure from which the researcher begins engaging in the research study (Henning, *et al.*, 2004).

The theoretical framework that informs this study is underpinned by Grossman's (1990) Teacher Knowledge Theory and elements from Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist Theory. These two theories support each other and this study, as they both take into account the background and current context of the individual and the knowledge that is constructed. Vygotsky (1978) believed an individual's language and culture are viewed as social phenomena that shape individual knowledge construction. This outlook relays the value and importance of Grossman's Teacher Knowledge Theory (1990) and how teachers' experiences and the challenges they face allow them to construct their learning and development socially.

2.7.1 Grossman's Teacher Knowledge Theory

In the context of teacher education, it is important to note what skills a teacher needs to know in order to teach, for instance their knowledge base (Fernandez, 2014). There is also a vast difference between content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge. The former relates to knowing facts and information about a certain topic, whereas pedagogical content knowledge refers to the knowledge about the teaching and learning of a specific topic (Fernandez, 2014).

Grossman (1990, p.5) conceptualized pedagogical content knowledge as vital to a teacher's knowledge base and created a "teacher knowledge theory" that highlights the importance of teachers' knowledge and the role it plays in developing their experiences and perceptions about teaching. Teacher knowledge is an appropriate concept to use as a framework for this study as the study seeks to explore the challenges of novice teachers; and in doing so, trying to understand the types of knowledge that these novice teachers say they have gained during their years of university training and early teaching experience.

Grossman (1990, p.9) refers to this knowledge of the context as:

"[...] Knowledge of the districts in which teachers work, including the opportunities, expectations, and constraints posed by the districts: knowledge of the school setting, including the school 'culture', departmental guidelines, and other contextual factors at the school level that affect instruction; and knowledge of specific students and communities, and the students' backgrounds, families, particularly strengths, weaknesses, and interests."

Grossman, Smagorinsky and Valencia (1999) identify the source of concern for lack of teacher knowledge as being ill-prepared due to inconsistent teaching approaches advocated by education faculties at tertiary education institutes, and those typically practiced in schools. According to Grossman, *et al.* (1999, p. 3), "teachers feel that their education course work is too theoretical and that their student teaching provides them with their greatest learning", hence the importance of practical experience in building knowledge within the context of teaching and learning.

Grossman, *et al.*, (1999) propose using activity theory as a theoretical framework for studying teachers' early experiences and their career development. This theory forms part of Grossman's (1990) earlier work that focuses on the importance of teacher knowledge and its value within teaching and learning. Grossman, *et al.* (1999, p. 4) identify activity theory as "being capable of unifying diverse research findings because of its emphasis on the social setting in which conceptions of teaching are developed." They further state that implementing this activity theory within a research framework can illuminate how teachers' work environment contexts can positively or negatively impact their teaching and learning beliefs and classroom practices. Activity theory can help account for changes in teachers' thinking and practice, even when those changes differ from case to case (Grossman, *et al.*, 1999).

The knowledge acquired during the initial year of teaching is considered a major struggle for novice teachers, as it is "the struggle to master their chosen profession" (Ryan, 1986, p.7). During their tertiary education experience, students studying education gain mostly theoretical knowledge on how to become a teacher. However, after graduating and entering the working world, this knowledge gained at a university or college level does not equate with the realities of teaching and the immense value of knowledge gained from practical classroom experience. The pedagogical content knowledge one attains through practical experience as a qualified teacher is invaluable when compared to the content knowledge gained whilst being a student-teacher (Fernandez, 2014; Grossman, *et.al.*, 1999; Grossman 1990).

Concepts of activity theory (Grossman, *et al.*, 1999) are also used in the framework of this study. This framework is appropriate as it recognizes the importance of teacher knowledge, the social setting and its impact on teachers' perceptions and practices within the classroom context. For example, if teachers lack knowledge and their school environment cannot offer support structures and induction programmes, this can negatively affect their outlook on education (Persky & Robinson, 2017).

2.7.2 Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory

Vygotsky (1978) maintains that learning is socially influenced, focusing on the importance of dialogue and the role of language as a mediator and primary tool for thinking.

The Social Constructivist Theory explains the value in forming meaningful social relationships, affirming that learning is a social process in which the individual constructs knowledge within the environment and that in the process, both the individual and the environment are changed (Vygotsky, 1978). This knowledge construction and its impact on teaching and learning accompanies Grossman's (1990) Teacher Knowledge Theory, yet places emphasis on the social aspect of teaching and working in a school environment. Furthermore, Vygotsky (1978) maintains that an individual's environment and the social interactions they experience within this environment help shape the way they perceive their reality. Hence, if there is little to no social interaction or collegial support for novice teachers upon entering a new work environment, there could be a negative outcome or range of emotions directed toward their teaching approach.

Vygotsky's comprehensive study into the psyche of the human mind in context is often overlooked, referencing only his belief that all learning is social and that teachers should promote small group discussions within their classrooms as it supports learning (Smagorinsky, 2007). According to Smagorinsky (2007), Vygotsky begins his effort to understand the process and the structures of thinking by first trying to understand the context of thinking itself, looking at the essence or upbringing of the individual and how their mind is structured in a way that is unique to them.

Smagorinsky (2007) further mentions that Vygotsky tries to understand people and the things they create, such as their ways of structuring their world through speech, their routines and everything else through which they bring order to their surroundings, to help shape the ways in which they and others view the world. In essence, he considers their living and lived experiences and sees it as an integral part of a person's perceptions of the world around them. It is a two-way process in which people's thinking

shapes their physical and symbolic worlds and their engagement with those worlds tend to shape how they and others think (Smagorinsky, 2007).

Creswell (2009) defines qualitative research as being interpretive in nature, and rooted in the humanities and social sciences. Hence, the title of this qualitative study seeks to *explore* the adaptation challenges faced by novice teachers. This research takes into account how each individual perceives and experiences their environment differently from the next, causing ones' emotional and social reactions or interactions within that environment to be unique to them (Vygotsky, 1978).

2.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, literature surrounding teacher challenges and the value of induction programmes were reviewed. The need to explore the adaptation strategies used in overcoming novice teacher challenges was mentioned. Global and South African teaching contexts were discussed, highlighting the need for more support when it comes to novice teachers and their integration into schools as working professionals. Lastly, this chapter also presented the theoretical framework that underpins this study.

Chapter three will take a look at the methodology used in this study as well as explain the qualitative nature of research conducted. The chapter also explains the research design and the data collection methods, examining their affordances and limitations. Trustworthiness and ethical considerations are also discussed in detail.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the methodology used within this qualitative, interpretivist study is discussed. Research methodology can be defined as the specific procedures or techniques that are used to identify, select, process and evaluate information based on a specific topic (Mouton, 2011).

The methodology involved in this research required not only strategy and planning but also freedom and fluidity when it came to asking un-prescribed questions based on the topic to gain further insight into this study. The questions that needed to be asked could therefore not elicit 'yes or no' responses; they had to be meaningful, personal and exploratory. Due to the qualitative nature of this study and the social and emotional compartments experienced when working with people, aspects such as participant confidentiality were considered before embarking on this research journey.

In this chapter, I discuss the research design, paradigm and data analysis method. The population and sampling for this study is described, and the use of semi-structured individual interviews and a focus group discussion as the selected strategies for data generation is delineated. The measures taken to ensure trustworthiness are also explained, alongside the ethical considerations and procedures.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design constitutes a blueprint for collecting, measuring and analysing data (Kumar, 2008). The nature of this study seeks to bring novice teachers from different educational backgrounds together to discuss the experiences and challenges they face within their place of work. In order to achieve the aim and objectives of this study, a basic interpretivist qualitative research design was implemented (Merriam, 2002).

A qualitative research approach is used to discover and understand a participant's involvements regarding the phenomenon experienced (Creswell, 2009). As mentioned in chapter one, this study explores the adaptation challenges experienced by novice teachers in their transition from student teachers toward becoming working professionals. In his earlier work, Creswell (1998, pp.17-18) says that "the researcher's role in qualitative research is that of an active learner rather than an expert who can pass judgment on participants." While qualitative research is more concerned with "observing and understanding than measuring and explaining" (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2003., p. 79), qualitative research methods allow the researcher to gain a deeper understanding, describe and even explain the phenomena. Thus, this study does not seek to critically examine evidence using statistics, but rather is interprets the experiences and viewpoints of the study's participants, novice Foundation Phase teachers, and mapping their transition from students to teachers

A basic interpretive research design was deemed the best approach for this study as its central characteristics are that individuals construct their own reality while interacting with the world around them (Ibeziako, 2018). Qualitative studies aim to find meaning in participants' lived experiences, resulting in the researcher being the "primary instrument for data collection and analysis" (Merriam, 2002, p.5). By using semi-structured interviews, an aspect of fluidity in the asking of questions is acquired, allowing for an accurate and authentic interpretation of each participant's challenges experienced as a novice teacher.

In essence, the interpretivist approach strives toward understanding people's experiences from the individual's viewpoint, hence making its main aim to gather meaningful insight into the experiences of individual's everyday lives, as opposed to quantitative facts and figures (Deysel, 2016).

3.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The sample for this study consists of five novice Foundation Phase teachers and the selection was that participants should have obtained a Bachelor of Education degree from a national university, be registered by the SACE, and have between one and four years of teaching experience in different urban schools.

Purposeful sampling was deemed the best option for this study and participants were selected for their specific teaching experience and relevance to the study (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Creswell (2009) defines qualitative research as being interpretive in nature; and rooted in the humanities and social sciences. Participants are selected only if they have lived the experience of being a novice Foundation Phase teacher; therefore, the sampling is purposive and prescribed from the start. The main instrument of data collection was the interview (Goulding, 2005). A small sample group is adequate when implementing purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2009), as it speaks to the characteristics of qualitative research and the nature of this study. By including a sample solely from urban schools within the Nelson Mandela Metropole, it is apparent that these selections of participants for the study are a form of exclusion; however, one could argue that this form of exclusion is a result of inclusion (Baumgartner, 2006). This means that by including only participants from Port Elizabeth urban schools, a detailed and in-depth exploration is permitted to create an understanding of novice teachers' experiences from different quintile schools. By using this specific sample of participants, the research conducted, and the data gathered are pertinent to the topic of this study.

As stipulated by the DBE (2000), South Africa's schools are divided into five categories or quintiles, according to their poverty ranking. The "poorest schools" are categorized and placed into the first and lowest quintile and the "least poor in quintile 5" (Hall & Giese, 2020, p.37). The quintile ranking determines the amount of money a school receives from the Department of Education, funded by the South African Government (International Budget Partnership South Africa, 2017). According to Hall and Giese (2020), poorer schools receive more significant per-learner budget allocations, based on

the assumption that schools in wealthier communities can raise funds for their learners and thus require less support from the government.

The contexts of the schools from which participants are taken include teachers from different quintile schools within the Nelson Mandela Metropole. Thus, giving different perspectives of what one could classify as highly resourced, averagely resourced and poorly resourced school environments (Hall & Giese, 2020).

3.3.1 Biographical details of the participants

Five Foundation Phase teachers who met the criteria for the study were approached to partake in this research. As mentioned earlier, the criteria for this study required that the participants have between one and four years of teaching experience to be still considered a novice within the profession. These novice teachers have a variety of educational and teaching backgrounds. Their qualifications also vary, ranging from four-year teaching degrees to degrees that have been achieved by completing a three-year qualification undergraduate degree and after that obtained a post-graduate certificate in education (PGCE). Two of the participants have an Honours degree in education.

The participants of this study also vary in age, with the youngest being twenty-four years old and the oldest being thirty years old. Their years of teaching experience also vary due to their length of studies and choices to attend university immediately after graduating high school. All of the participants speak fluent English; two of the five participants have Afrikaans as their home language and can, therefore, converse fluently with both English and Afrikaans learners in their class, the parents of these learners, and their school colleagues. The Foundation Phase (Grades R – 3) of teaching is a female-dominated field, hence all of the participants are female. It is an infrequent occurrence in South Africa that male teachers choose to teach in this phase or age group (Mashiya, 2014).

Below is a table of information indicating the biographical details of each participant in this study. Names and surnames and the names of the schools have been excluded from this table in order to protect the identity of all participants and uphold the integrity of the schools.

Table 3.1: Biographical details of the participants

Pseudonym for participants:	Gender:	Age:	University Degree obtained from:	Qualification:	Years of teaching experience:
Participant A	Female	27	Nelson Mandela University	BEd (FP)	3
Participant B	Female	24	UNISA	BEd (FP)	2
Participant C	Female	30	Rhodes University	BA General; Post Graduate Certificate in Education (Foundation Phase); BEd Honours	4
Participant D	Female	26	Stellenbosch University	BEd (FP); BEd Honours in Education	2
Participant E	Female	28	UNISA	BA English and Philosophy; Post Graduate Certificate in Education (Foundation Phase)	4

3.4 DATA GENERATION STRATEGIES

In order to obtain data from the participants of this study, to explore and understand what their experiences as novice teachers are, several data collection or data-capturing methods were implemented. Qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews and a focus group discussion were employed as data generation strategies to draw specific responses regarding the participants' lived experiences (Mukherji & Albon, 2018).

Data was collected via the online platform of Zoom and Whatsapp. No costs were involved and no face-to-face interactions took place to abide by COVID-19 safety

regulations. The anonymity of participants was protected during these online interviews and the focus group discussion through the use of pseudonyms and using the 'no-camera' option. Digital etiquette, such as refraining from using profane and derogatory language during interviews and the focus group discussion, was discussed before any data collection and was adhered to by all participants and researcher throughout the process.

3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

The first stage of data collection began with one set of individual semi-structured interviews done via the online platform Whatsapp, using voice notes. This is because our current state of lockdown due to the outbreak of COVID-19 preventing personal interaction with others unless deemed necessary. In these individual interviews, a basic level of trust and familiarity were established. According to Given (2008), the semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection strategy in which the researcher asks the participants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions. Given (2008) states that this particular strategy provides structure and a more precise focus when discussing the research topic instead of informal and unstructured interviews.

A semi-structured interview has questions formulated by the interviewer, who may also modify these questions during the interview process (Ary, Jacobs & Sorenson, 2006). In a basic interpretive qualitative study, the researcher is interested in how the participants and people make meaning of and interpret their experiences (Merriam, 2002). The purpose of the semi-structured interview is for the researcher and participant to become better acquainted and encourage the verbal sharing of any challenges they experienced as novice teachers and the knowledge gained during these experiences. This one-on-one interaction between researcher and participant is specifically chosen to create a comfortable and non-threatening setting for the participant to communicate freely.

These interviews provide the participants with the opportunity to tell stories of their early transition into the teaching profession, the struggles they faced or are currently facing, and how they coped (or not) during this period (Petersen, 2017). As mentioned earlier, participants for this study were only selected if they met the criteria of being a novice

teacher; therefore the sampling was purposive and prescribed from the start, with the main data collection instrument being a semi-structured interview (Goulding, 2005).

Questions asked during the individual semi-structured interviews:

1. What were your expectations of teaching before you entered the working environment?
2. Describe your tertiary education: where did you obtain your teaching degree?
3. How did your tertiary education prepare you for teaching in a classroom?
4. What challenges, if any, did you face in your first year of teaching?
5. How did your first-year teaching experiences differ from your expectations that you had of teaching?
6. What professional development or support mechanisms, if any, were in place?
7. What type of support would you have liked to receive from the Head of Department (HoD), colleagues, the Principal, and others?
8. Would you say that the challenges you faced have made you a better teacher? Have they made you confident that this is the profession you are meant to be in? If not, how so?
9. How did you adapt to and overcome these challenges?

This semi-structured interview approach falls in line with similar qualitative studies in this area, in which participants describe their experiences in their own words (Patton, 2014). The research design and semi-structured interview format focused on asking one central question, followed by prompts and probing questions that allowed for openness among the researcher and participant in exploring the personal and professional challenges experienced by the novice teachers. Prompts included questions relating to the nature of the participants' socialization into the school community and the level of support offered to them at a school level.

Individual interviews were transcribed by the interviewer. The question that directed the research was: What challenges, if any, did you face in your first year of teaching? After that, an analysis of each interview was analyzed using a form of open coding to identify smaller units of text that could meaningfully stand on their own in line with procedures

associated with qualitative content analysis (Merriam, 1998). Any common elements that made themselves apparent across the participants' interviews were clustered into provisional categories or themes that were then compared to each other for similarities and differences, which were linked to conceptually form the outcomes of the research. After these individual interviews, a focus group discussion took place.

3.4.2 Focus group discussion

Focus groups are a recognized way to generate data in qualitative research. A focus group discussion involves gathering people from similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss a specific topic (Baral, Uprety & Lamichhane, 2016). It is a form of qualitative research where questions are asked about participants' experiences, perceptions, opinions or ideas (Baral, *et al.*, 2016). In focus group discussions, participants are given the freedom to talk with other group members. Unlike other research methods, these discussions with other participants are encouraged and are sometimes led by a moderator (interviewer) in a loosely structured discussion of various topics of interest (Baral, *et al.*, 2016). As a result of the recent COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictions, the focus group discussion was conducted online via the Zoom platform using the multiple user or group chat option. The identity of each participant was kept anonymous by requesting that screen usernames be changed, and the video camera switched off. The purpose of a focus group discussion and the semi-structured interviews was to consolidate any themes of information that were identified during the individual interviews and gain multiple insights from the participants (Petersen, 2017; Baral, *et al.*, 2016). A focus group discussion was included as part of the data generation tools as it allowed the participants to discuss their challenges and share teaching experiences with other novice teachers. The focus group created a platform for participants to freely voice their opinions and feelings on being a novice teacher, and it allowed the participants to share their knowledge and strategies used in adapting to the teaching challenges they experienced.

According to McLafferty (2004), the main advantage of a focus group discussion is to generate data using purposeful interaction. Carey and Smith (1994) define focus group discussions as using a semi-structured group session moderated by a group facilitator

and held in an informal setting with the purpose of data collection based on a designated topic.

Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook (2007) maintain that focus groups consist of four key elements. Firstly, they are focused by nature, gathering information from participants specific to a situation. Secondly, a focus group requires interactions between the group's participants, allowing for discussion, agreements and disagreements, and to generate information. The knowledge that is generated within a focus group is seen to be in-depth and goes beyond simply gathering surface information. It is able to "elicit the emotions, associations, and motivations that influence particular behaviours" (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007, p. 11). Lastly, focus groups are classified as humanistic, comprising of the participants' interactions and providing a space for openness, empathy and active listening (Stewart, *et al.*, 2007). According to Taylor, Bogdan and de Vault (2016), focus groups use "group dynamics to yield insights that might not be accessible without this kind of interaction" (Taylor, Bogdan & de Vault, 2016, p.132). They also suggest that the purpose of focus groups is not to reach a consensus but to explore different perspectives. Focus groups also allow people to feel empowered and supported by the group, making the participants more likely to share information (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delpont, 2011).

As this study was centered on exploring the adaptation challenges faced by novice teachers, sharing their experiences in a focus group was an appropriate practice to include in this qualitative study. Krueger and Casey (2014) suggest that focus groups work well when participants feel comfortable with each other and do not fear being judged. Therefore, it is incumbent on the researcher, the focus group facilitator, to create an encouraging and supportive atmosphere in which all contributions are welcomed. I achieved this by initiating and facilitating the discussion during our Zoom focus group meeting, and through light-hearted banter when sharing my own teaching challenges and my reasoning behind this study to create a more relaxed and informal setting for sharing. Krueger and Casey (2014) support the elements as suggested by Stewart, *et al.* (2007) and summarise focus groups as having particular characteristics,

namely that they are comprised of small groups of people who hold certain attributes, who together in focused discussions help to understand the topic being researched.

The following questions were used as prompts in the focus group discussion:

1. Could you each share one account of the challenges you faced in your first year of teaching?
2. What do you know now that you wish you were told in your first year of teaching?
3. How did you feel during those initial stages of your teaching career?
4. What strategies did you implement in your classroom to adapt or cope?
5. Did you seek alternative assistance or guidance during this period? If so, from who or where?

The focus group discussion played a crucial role in the collection of data for this study. This focus group created a space for informal conversation, initially guided by questions and thinking around first-year novice teacher challenges. Then, as the researcher, I recorded and transcribed the verbal discussion; which allowed me to familiarize myself with the data.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Data generated from the individual interviews and focus group discussion were collected, transcribed and interpreted through thematic analysis (Mouton, 2011). According to Mouton (2011, p.108), the aim of analysis is:

“[...] to understand the various constitutive elements of one’s data through an inspection of the relationships between concepts, constructs or variables, and to see whether there are any patterns or trends that can be identified or isolated, or to establish themes in the data.”

Through transcription and coding, themes were identified to show emerging or recurring patterns (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The measures for interpreting and analyzing

data for this study is outlined by Colaizzi (1978, pp.48-71), who suggests a series of seven steps for gathering and interpreting data using a qualitative research strategy:

1. To understand the participants' ideas, the researcher's first task is to read the participants' narratives.
2. The next step, extracting significant statements, requires the researcher to identify keywords and sentences relating to the phenomenon under study.
3. The researcher then attempts to formulate meaning for each of these significant statements.
4. This process is repeated across participants' stories and recurrent meaningful themes are clustered. These may be validated by returning to the informants to check interpretation.
5. After this, the researcher should be able to integrate the resulting themes into a rich description of the phenomenon under study.
6. The next step is to reduce these themes to an essential structure that offers an explanation of the behaviour.
7. Finally, the researcher may return to the participants to conduct further interviews or elicit their opinions on the analysis in order to cross check interpretation.

Colaizzi's (1978) seven steps for gathering and interpreting data were applied to analyze and interpret data collected for this study. According to Morrow, Rodriguez and King (2015), the end result is a concise, yet all-encompassing description of the phenomenon under study in using these seven steps.

The literature reviewed shows that novice teachers face several challenges upon entering the working world. Following the semi-structured individual interviews, I took note of the participants' verbatim transcriptions to acquire a deeper understanding of their experiences. I then extracted significant statements or keywords and sentences relating to the phenomenon (Colaizzi, 1978) and used them as prompts for the focus group discussion. From the participants' verbal recounts, themes were clustered and integrated into a rounded description of the study's phenomenon of novice teacher challenges and their adaptation (Colaizzi, 1978), allowing the researcher and reader

more insight into the data collected for this study. These themes and transcript results are discussed in further detail in Chapter four.

3.6 REFLECTIVE PROCESS

Reflection was integral to this study as I had to ensure that my own teaching challenges experienced as a novice did not interfere with the interpretation of data captured from the interviews and focus group discussion. I continuously reflected on my own experiences to ensure I remained objective and unbiased whilst discussing the participants' teaching challenges. To understand the experiences and perspectives of others, it is necessary to ask multiple questions to further one's understanding of the topic (Agee, 2009). These questions should be relevant to the topic at hand and should be fluid, becoming more refined as the research unfolds (Agee, 2009).

Creswell (2007) poses that questions are meant to change throughout a research study, as it reflects a growing understanding of the phenomenon. Thus, questions that were asked were to gain a deeper, more precise understanding of the phenomenon of what it is to be a novice teacher amidst a field of professionals, as well as the adaptation challenges these novice Foundation Phase teachers face.

Reflection after the individual interviews and focus group discussion became a navigational tool for this research journey, as it allowed me to reflect on the relevance of data collection methods in alignment with the research topic and to change course where necessary. Furthermore, this reflective process, and being aware of the necessity of reflection in research, enabled me to see the participants through the eyes of a researcher informed by literature, and not just as a novice teacher wanting to feel validated in her thoughts and emotions. The motivation that led toward this research paper was as a result of my own personal feelings of inadequacy and un-preparedness to teach upon entering the working world as a qualified Foundation Phase teacher. However, as much as I had hoped to find validation and comfort in the knowledge that other novice teachers experienced several challenges whilst teaching for the first time, this study remains objective in its purpose to explore the challenges of novice teachers

and how they were able to adapt and overcome those challenges in order to survive their first year of teaching.

3.7 MEASURE OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

This section relates to trustworthiness of the research findings and also discusses the concepts of credibility and dependability, focusing on how they were applied in this study.

Creswell and Miller (2000) state that throughout the process of data collection and analysis, researchers need to ensure that their findings and interpretations are accurate to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. Furthermore, the concepts of reliability remain steadfast in promoting trustworthy research as it allows the researcher to describe the nature of the study accurately and purposefully.

Reliability refers to a high level of quality research that is conducted for the sole purpose of explaining phenomena as it occurs in the real-life context (Stenbacka, 2001). To conduct this research in a reliable manner that is honest and justifiable, a level of integrity and professionalism must be maintained at all times (Gibson & Brown, 2009).

To ensure the trustworthiness of inquiry, Guba's (1981) principles of dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability in measuring trustworthiness are applied. Both credibility and confirmability are linked to dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability refers to the repetition of the process, in which the same results would be achieved if similar data collection methods and similar participants were to be used. Consistency suggests dependable research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is ensured through persistent observation, peer debriefing and negative case analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility is the intention to follow through with the research as initially planned.

Transferability is the extent to which the findings from one study are comprehensive enough so that the study's findings can be applied, or transferred, to another (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985). Lastly, confirmability is the final stage in ensuring trustworthiness, as it focuses on collecting data from the participants and their experiences as opposed to the characteristics and preferences of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this study, any uncertainties or misunderstandings from the participants were removed in the initial stages of data collection. This was achieved by asking clear and concise questions throughout the focus group discussion to gain in-depth insight and understanding into their experiences. Furthermore, findings emanating from the semi-structured interviews could be corroborated in the focus group discussion, lending a further layer of dependability. Any uncertain information was clarified through a process of rephrasing the participants' answers and confirming that the interpretations of information were correct by an acknowledgement from the participant themselves. Only information that had been acknowledged as accurate was used to substantiate any inconsistencies in this study.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics refers to the moral principles underpinning the study and regulating research practice (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). According to Struwig and Stead (2001, p. 66), "research ethics provide researchers with a code of moral guidelines on how to conduct research in a morally acceptable way". The principles of ethics include: gaining consent for the involvement, in this case, of the educators; inviting participation but not coercing it; providing the participants with full knowledge regarding the nature of the research; and treating all participants fairly, with consideration and respect (Mukherji & Albon, 2018). Written consent was acquired from all participants, stating that they have voluntarily agreed to participate in this research study. Each of the participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Identities of participants remained secure and anonymous to all, but the researcher. Pseudonyms were used in place of the participants' real names concerning the transcriptions of individual interviews and focus group discussion. During its developmental stages, only the researcher had access to

the study participants' data. All data was stored safely on the researcher's personal work computer and in a private Google Drive account as a backup.

Before conducting this research, ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee at Nelson Mandela University. All participants were treated equally and respectfully to safeguard them from any harm or embarrassment during the online interviews and focus group discussion. This was done by asking questions specific to the research topic. A psychologist was available throughout the study if any participants felt the need for counselling after our focus group discussion. This ensured that the emotional well-being of the participant was well looked after and considered a priority.

3.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, qualitative research was discussed as a suitable methodology and semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion were described as adequate and appropriate methods of data collection. The use of purposeful sampling and the analysis of data was also mentioned. Lastly, it was detailed how the data was collected to show the reliability and trustworthiness of the data collected.

In Chapter four, the data results and findings from the various data collection methods are presented and analyzed.

CHAPTER 4

THEMES FOR THE STUDY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the themes of this study based on the data generated from exploring the adaptation challenges of novice Foundation Phase teachers in the Nelson Mandela Metropole. Data was collected using semi-structured individual interviews and a focus group discussion with five novice Foundation Phase teachers who met the inclusion criteria of having obtained a teaching degree from a national university to answer the primary research question successfully, “What are the adaptation challenges that novice Foundation Phase teachers’ experience upon entering the professional work environment?”

This chapter presents the themes generated from the semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussion.

4.2 INDIVIDUAL SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Chapter Three explained the data generation strategies for this study. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic all interviews took place via the online social platform of Whatsapp. After gaining consent from the participants of this study, the data collection process was explained and it was agreed that Whatsapp’s voice recording option would replace the face-to-face interview. This made it easier to replay the interviews and transcribe the participants’ responses verbatim.

A series of prepared questions were on hand for the researcher to ask each of the participants. This was done to help generate relevant and meaningful data to this study’s research questions, aim, and objectives. Due to the qualitative nature of this research, the individual interviews were semi-structured as opposed to structured, to cater for follow-up questions to gain a clearer understanding of the participants’

responses. Several themes were identified from these semi-structured individual interviews. These themes are discussed towards the end of this chapter.

Below is a table highlighting the main questions asked during these individual interviews and each participant’s summarized responses. The names of the participants have not been included in the table to protect their identity. Each participant’s interview was transcribed verbatim and can be found in Appendix H.

4.2.1 Summary of the semi-structured individual interviews

Table 4.1: Summary of the semi-structured individual interviews

Questions asked during individual interviews:	Summarized responses from participants:	Most common response:
What were your expectations of teaching before you entered the work environment?	<p>Participant A: “A little romanticized... I honestly expected a lot more than I received.”</p> <p>Participant B: Expected teaching to be less stressful and more focused on teaching than administrative work.</p> <p>Participant C: “I didn’t think I would be taking almost 80% of my work home with me.”</p> <p>Participant D: Expected less judgment from colleagues and for the focus to be more on the learners than administration.</p> <p>Participant E: “I expected teaching to be quite fun... in reality it’s more about disciplining and teaching all the assessment content”</p>	All participants’ expectations of teaching were different to the reality of the work environment. The majority of participants expected less administrative work involved.
How would you describe your tertiary education experience in terms of preparing you for teaching in a classroom?	<p>Participant A: Bulk of teaching experience gained only in final year of studies.</p> <p>Participant B: Mostly theoretical and irrelevant.</p> <p>Participant C: Very limited – learnt more from practical experience.</p>	Most of the participants benefitted more from practical teaching experience than attending university classes.

Questions asked during individual interviews:	Summarized responses from participants:	Most common response:
	<p>Participant D: Beneficial due to the “community of practice we built together as a year of students.”</p> <p>Participant E: “I wouldn’t say my studies prepared me that well.”</p>	
<p>What challenges, if any, did you face in your first year of teaching?</p>	<p>Participant A: Administrative workload.</p> <p>Participant B: Learner discipline.</p> <p>Participant C: Learner discipline and parental correspondence.</p> <p>Participant D: Lack of communication and collaboration between staff.</p> <p>Participant E: Learner discipline and the administrative load.</p>	<p>Learner discipline.</p>
<p>Was any professional development/induction programmes or even support mechanisms in place?</p>	<p>Participant A: No, only emotional support from colleagues.</p> <p>Participant B: No induction programmes, just bi-weekly planning meetings with colleagues.</p> <p>Participant C: No, it “felt like I was thrown in the deep end and left to my own devices.”</p> <p>Participant D: Yes, administrative support and guidance received from bi-weekly staff meetings.</p> <p>Participant E: Yes, support was received from colleagues and school principal.</p>	<p>No. Those that answered ‘yes’ received mostly emotional support and guidance.</p>
<p>What type of support would you have liked to receive?</p>	<p>Participant A: Guidance from colleagues or grade head regarding admin.</p>	<p>Majority of participants would have liked more support with the administrative workload.</p>

Questions asked during individual interviews:	Summarized responses from participants:	Most common response:
	<p>Participant B: Navigating the administrative system and dealing with learner discipline.</p> <p>Participant C: General support in navigating the school's system of operations and disciplinary procedures.</p> <p>Participant D: An assigned mentor with teaching experience.</p> <p>Participant E: The opportunity to go on professional training courses.</p>	
<p>Would you say that the challenges you faced made you a better teacher? Or even strengthened your reasoning to continue being a teacher?</p>	<p>Participant A: Yes and No. Experience builds confidence, making teaching easier.</p> <p>Participant B: Yes, you have to be passionate about teaching to stay in profession.</p> <p>Participant C: Indecisive. "Teaching is a thankless job".</p> <p>Participant D: Yes, only due to the positive relationship with learners and passion for teaching.</p> <p>Participant E: "To spend your entire day disciplining rude children is no fun."</p>	<p>Most of the participants said that the challenges they faced did make them better teachers and that they would continue in the profession, as they were very passionate about teaching.</p>
<p>How did you adapt to and overcome these challenges?</p>	<p>Participant A: Adapted by breaking down the administrative load into manageable chunks.</p> <p>Participant B: Learned from mistakes by "seeing the failures as a lesson to be learned."</p> <p>Participant C: Adapted by standing up for herself and not allowing learners' parents</p>	<p>Each participant adapted to their challenges in a way that was unique to them.</p> <p>The strategies used to overcome these challenges were relevant and suited to the challenges experienced by each participant.</p>

Questions asked during individual interviews:	Summarized responses from participants:	Most common response:
	<p>to “dictate how things should be done in my classroom.”</p> <p>Participant D: Accepted that she wasn’t going to receive assistance from colleagues. Overcame challenges by learning to become self-sufficient.</p> <p>Participant E: Adapted by implementing disciplinary structures in class such as a reward chart that reinforced positive behaviour.</p>	

The findings from these individual interviews are discussed in Chapter five.

4.3 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

In this section, data from the focus group discussion is presented and related directly to the themes and data drawn from the individual interviews conducted. This focus group discussion took place online and in the comfort of each participant’s home. The online platform, Zoom was used to conduct the focus group discussion. Prior to the meeting, each participant was asked to change their on-screen username to their participant pseudonym of Participant A, B, C and so forth and turn off their on-screen camera. At first, the conversation was a little awkward and subdued as a result of the impersonal addition of looking at blank screens. A lot of prompting was required from my side to get the conversation flowing.

As mentioned in chapter three of this study, Guba’s (1981) principles of dependability: credibility, transferability and confirmability in measuring trustworthiness were applied. Similar to the individual interviews that were conducted, I established a level of trustworthiness with the participants by assuring them about the purpose of this study and how it is purely for research purposes, as well as the importance of maintaining their anonymity and the value that each of them would contribute to this study as a

result of their participation. My role was to listen to each participant and gain insight and further understanding into their experiences regarding the challenges they face as novice Foundation Phase teachers. When necessary, I prompted the participants and steered the discussion to gain a deeper understanding of the gathered information. I made sure that each participant had an equal chance to share their experiences and to be heard.

4.3.1 Summary of the focus group discussion

According to Bloor and Wood (2006) the recording of focus group discussions is of great value and importance, as it helps simplify the process of data production. It was thus necessary to transcribe these discussions verbatim, and these transcriptions can be found in Appendix I.

In chapter three an example of the questions used to prompt group conversation is given. Below are extracts of the focus group discussion:

Table 4.2: Adapted summary of focus group discussion

Questions asked to prompt focus group discussion:	Summarized responses from participants:	Themes identified from participants' responses:
Could we each share one account of the challenges faced in the first year of teaching?	<p>Participant A: Battled with administrative workload.</p> <p>Participant B: Also struggled with admin, but found learner discipline more challenging.</p> <p>Participant C: Experienced lack of collegial support.</p> <p>Participant D: Found lack of support and lack of communication to be challenging. Felt very isolated.</p> <p>Participant E: Struggled with learner discipline.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative workload • Learner discipline • Lack of support
How did you feel during	Participant A: Felt very unsure of	The majority of novice

Questions asked to prompt focus group discussion:	Summarized responses from participants:	Themes identified from participants' responses:
those initial stages of your teaching career?	<p>herself and her teaching capabilities. Had different expectations of teaching.</p> <p>Participant B: Grateful for prior teaching experience done during online university studies.</p> <p>Participant C: Felt exhausted and overwhelmed. Experienced teacher burnout.</p> <p>Participant D: Felt insecure and taken advantage of by fellow colleagues.</p> <p>Participant E: Felt “cheated” because the reality of teaching did not match her expectations.</p>	<p>teachers felt disappointed or cheated, as the realities of teaching were very different from their expectations and what they had been exposed to as student teachers.</p>
What strategies did you implement in your classroom as a means to adapt or cope?	<p>Participant A: Implemented a “brain-break” for learners to do between each period so she could prepare for next subject to teach.</p> <p>Participant B: Used a specific code when marking learner books to cut down on the administration load.</p> <p>Participant C: Adopted the mind-set of “you are not like the other teachers, so you don’t have to do exactly what they do with their class”.</p> <p>Participant D: “I would spend my breaks catching up on</p>	<p>Each participant implemented a strategy that best suited their challenges.</p> <p>These adaptation strategies included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consulting online sources. • Using codes to lessen the administrative load. • Adopting a positive mindset. • Working during breaks/down-time. • Leaving the classroom instead of losing one’s temper in front of

Questions asked to prompt focus group discussion:	Summarized responses from participants:	Themes identified from participants' responses:
	<p>my marking and prepping for the second half of the school day.”</p> <p>Participant E: Refused to shout at ill-behaved learners. Would instead walk out the classroom and walk back in waiting for learners to be quiet.</p>	<p>learners.</p>

After reviewing the transcripts from both the individual interviews and the focus group discussion, data was analyzed and categorized by collating the data into themes and sub-themes as guided by this study’s research questions. Before doing so, I had to ensure that my own experiences and biases did not affect the weighting of these themes. Guba’s (1981) principle of confirmability was implemented in this final stage of ensuring trustworthiness, as it focuses on collecting data from the participants and their experiences, as opposed to the characteristics and preferences of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4.4 THEMES THAT EMERGED FROM DATA ANALYSIS

Three main themes emerged from the data collection process. In conjunction with the focus group discussion, the individual interviews generated these emerging themes, which in turn created other sub-themes.

In alignment with the research topic, the main themes that emerged from exploring the adaptation challenges faced by novice Foundation Phase teachers were: learner discipline; the administrative workload; and lack of professional support.

4.4.1 Learner discipline

The first and most prominent theme is that of learner discipline or lack thereof. From the interviews and focus group discussion, the study participants reported that their main challenge as novice teachers was dealing with ill-behaved learners. In addition, these novice teachers reported that most of their school days were spent trying to discipline learners who lack respect toward female teachers.

According to Naicker (2014), disrespectful learner behaviour has become more prevalent in school classrooms. Chapter two discussed the disciplinary challenges faced by teachers in which Naicker (2014) characterized three different types of disruptive learner behaviours in the classroom: disruption to teaching, defiance and disrespect towards teaching, and teacher-targeted bullying.

Data gathered from the individual interviews and focus group discussion show that the classroom participants who were challenged with poor learner discipline referred to the defiant and disrespectful type of disruptive learner behaviour. While all the participants noted this type of disruptive learner behaviour, other teachers might experience disruptive learner behaviour in the form of teacher-targeted bullying. Wong (2004) concurs, stating that there is a substantial bias in assuming that each teacher will experience challenges within their classroom like their colleagues. However, the sample of participants that populated this study expressed their learner disciplinary challenges as disrespectful and disruptive. For example, one participant in the focus group discussion said: *“[Learners] don’t care about having manners or showing respect around the female teachers. My colleague, who is a male, has no problems with discipline in his class because the kids are scared of him.”*

Another participant relayed her challenge with discipline, linking it to environmental factors: *“These learners come from the townships (poor informal settlements), and they see so much crime and violence, I think they know already what their lives are going to look like. It’s heartbreaking. And no matter how many times you tell them that a good education can help them to break that cycle, they still don’t care.”* The reality of teaching is that most novices experience disciplinary issues amongst the learners in their

classrooms, yet teachers are not adequately equipped to deal with these behavioural challenges (Naicker, 2014). According to Wong (2004, p. 44), the needs of novice teachers and the challenges they face are “so varied and immediate” that the appropriate combination of “expertise, experience and cultural background” is unlikely to be provided by one-on-one mentoring. As a result, novice teachers have been provided with a set of basic and very broad “survival teaching tips” (Wong, 2004, p.44), which in itself prove to be a challenge for the teacher, as each action requires a diverse and applicable reaction.

The former statement can be linked to learner discipline, as novice teachers experience degrees of poor learner behaviour within the classroom; they require unique disciplinary strategies to deal with these types of disruptive behaviours.

Naicker (2014) highlights the challenge of dealing with learner discipline as one of the contributing factors toward novice teachers leaving the profession. As a result of these issues not being covered during beginner teacher training or induction sessions, managing learner discipline remains a challenge in schools throughout the country (Naicker, 2014; Strauss, 2006). Subsequently, these disruptive behaviours infringe on both the teacher and the learner’s rights to safety (Naicker, 2014), thus leading into the sub-themes that were identified, namely: (a) Teacher knowledge in managing classroom discipline, and (b) Teacher and learner expectations.

4.4.1.1 Teacher knowledge in managing classroom discipline

As mentioned in chapter two, Grossman’s (1990) Teacher Knowledge Theory speaks about the importance of the knowledge of teachers playing a role in their experiences within the classroom context and their perceptions of teaching. In this study’s data collection process of the focus group discussion, the participants were asked what strategies were implemented in their classrooms to cope with the challenges they experienced. On the topic of learner discipline, one participant admitted to assuming all learners had a base-level of discipline or good manners and that all teachers knew how to maintain good classroom discipline. She states: *“I’m not sure if it was a language or*

cultural thing.... the teachers I assisted were Afrikaans speaking [and] they had good discipline over their classes.”

The above statement from this study’s participant highlights the unique and varied challenges faced by novice teachers. As a researcher, after transcribing that particular statement, I deliberated whether those learners in that classroom were inherently well-behaved, or if the class teacher had used their knowledge that comes from years of teaching experience to build mutual respect with her learners and to implement effective discipline strategies within the classroom. Bantwini (2010) highlights that novice teachers cannot be expected to jump straight into the world of teaching with the same knowledge and expertise as their colleagues who have the advantage of years of work experience. Persky (2017) substantiates how a level of expertise in ones’ chosen career path can only be achieved and developed through years of experience, but that necessary support structures need to be put in place to achieve these levels of expertise and success. It would appear that these support structures are not available to novice Foundation Phase teachers in the Nelson Mandela Metropole, according to the analysis of data obtained from this study’s interviews and focus group discussion.

According to Fernandez (2014), the ideal knowledge held by teachers is that of pedagogical content knowledge, referring to the knowledge of *how* to teach in order for learners to learn a specific topic. A teacher’s knowledge base is built over time and occurs after obtaining practical teaching experience in multiple classroom and school contexts (Fernandez, 2014; Grossman, 1990). Therefore, it can be expected that novice teachers would experience learner discipline as a challenge, as their novice status implies they are still new to the profession and new to acquiring the necessary and relevant knowledge on how to teach learners and maintain good classroom discipline effectively.

4.4.1.2 Teacher and learner expectations

The second sub-theme ‘Teacher and learner expectations’, refers to Grossman’s (1990) Teacher Knowledge Theory and the importance of teacher knowledge in managing classroom discipline. This sub-theme also answers the research question: What are

novice teachers' expectations of schooling when commencing with their teaching careers at schools within the Nelson Mandela Metropole?

The data gathered from the participants of this study during their interviews show that most novice teachers have certain perceptions and expectations about what teaching entails.

These perceptions and expectations are developed during the student-teacher phase when university students studying towards a teaching degree are expected to go out in the field and complete practical teaching tasks at different schools. The context of the classroom experienced by the student-teacher, alongside the theoretical aspects learnt at university, contribute towards 'teacher knowledge', and this knowledge of teachers inevitably holds certain expectations of what the teaching profession entails. If teachers' lack of knowledge and their school environment is unable to offer support structures and induction programmes, this can potentially harm their outlook on education.

The DBE (2017, p.1) recognizes one of the most significant challenges experienced by novice teachers being "the disparity between teachers' idealistic expectations and the classroom reality." For example, one participant reflected on how her expectations of teaching were "*a little romanticized*" when in reality, the learners in her class had "*zero discipline and [no] respect for female authority.*"

Furthermore, Johnson (2018) explains that expectations are often met with disappointment, especially if they are unrealistic. Hence the importance of acknowledging that individuals, both teachers and learners, have expectations and that when those expectations are not met, a certain reaction or emotion is evoked (Johnson, 2018). In teachers, that emotion or feeling is disappointment and failure (Dube, 2008; Ryan 1986), and in learners, that reaction translates into poor discipline and disruptive behaviour (Naicker, 2014).

4.4.2 The administrative workload

The second theme identified was the administrative workload required of teachers, which most of the participants in this study found to be a challenge. During the

interviews and focus group discussion, most of this study's participants vocalized their contempt regarding the amount of administrative work that was expected of them upon becoming a working professional. One participant shared that she wished someone would have warned her about all the behind-the-scenes administrative work teachers have to do, before she chose this career path. Another participant said that she had to resort to bringing work home with her because it was simply too much to try and complete whilst at school.

The administrative duties of a teacher include, but are not limited to: marking workbooks; grading tests and assignments; creating and compiling daily, weekly and quarterly planning; creating and adapting learner assessments; logging behavioural, academic concerns; taking minutes of any meetings with parents; and compiling individualized report card comments per subject per learner (Burkman, 2012). The alarming part is that not all student and novice teachers are aware of these administrative responsibilities, nor do they realize these tasks cannot be completed during the school day. Thus, the emerging sub-themes of: (a) Misguided perceptions of the job, (b) Tertiary education and preparation for the administrative load, and (c) Individual aversion to administration were identified.

The reasoning behind these sub-themes is that they all contribute toward negative feelings surrounding the topic of workplace administration.

4.4.2.1 Misguided perceptions of the job

The first question posed to the participants of this study during the individual interview process was: What were your expectations of teaching before you entered the working environment? Most novice teachers admitted to having unrealistic perceptions and expectations about teaching as a whole and shared that the administrative load was a challenge for them. Most participants reported that the reality of teaching was vastly different to what they experienced and perceived it to be whilst teaching as student teachers. One participant mentioned her shock at discovering the amount of after-hour work that teachers are expected to do, whereas another participant said that she used

to mark school work during her break times instead of connecting with her colleagues and forming work relationships.

Furthermore, another participant mentioned: *“I expected to spend more of my time with my learners than doing all the paperwork and marking books”*.

These misguided perceptions of teaching became more evident during the interview process, when the fourth participant spoke about the reality of teaching and how different it was to her perceived ideas of the job, saying: *“In reality though, it’s more about... making sure you teach all the assessment content in time for exams.”*

The administrative demands of teaching can be presented as a challenge faced by novice teachers upon entering schools. These administrative challenges also pressurize teachers to meet departmental and curricula standards, having received little to no prior practical training or teaching experience in dealing with the reality of school administration (Liu, 2014). There seems to be a clear need for the implementation of a mentor programme aided by in-service teachers, to help minimize the gap between what student teachers have experienced whilst at university and how to assist their adaptation into the working world, preventing these misguided perceptions of the profession and fully preparing these them for their professional role as a teacher (Liu, 2014).

4.4.2.2 Tertiary education and preparation for the administrative load

The second sub-theme, ‘Tertiary education and preparation for the administrative load’, is also linked to negative feelings toward workplace administration. As one participant mentioned earlier about wishing she was fore-warned of the administration involved, the majority of the participants in this study relayed that their tertiary education experience did not fully prepare them for the reality of the working world as a Foundation Phase teacher.

In their interviews and focus group discussion, these novice teachers communicated that their tertiary education experience was more theory-based than practical and that they learnt more about the practicality of teaching once in a classroom environment. It

was also noted that the theoretical aspects that were learnt at university made no mention of the administrative duties of teachers beyond the preparation of a lesson plan. According to Pennington (2018), human nature is hardwired to resist change, hence experiencing a negative attitude, and finding it challenging to adapt to these changes or alterations in ones' preconceived ideas and perceptions.

According to Liu (2004), poor teacher training and a lack of school support programmes have resulted in exceedingly high feelings of unpreparedness and inadequacy amongst novice teachers. These negative feelings, paired with an overwhelming amount of administrative work, may lead to teachers leaving the profession for good (Quinn, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2003). In her interview, one participant said: “...*there were plenty of days when I thought teaching was not for me.*”

Teachers enter the profession to engage with and to teach learners, not to spend long hours grading exam papers, marking textbooks, or compiling planning files and report card comments. It would be a great loss to the world of education to have teachers leave the profession due to large amounts of administrative work and little support received to accomplish it.

4.4.2.3 Individual aversion to administration

Lastly, the sub-theme of ‘Individual aversion to administration’ relates directly to the individual’s personality type in question. Some adults enjoy doing administrative work as it might be a strength of theirs, whilst other individuals find workplace administration to be rather challenging, resulting in their dislike for it. These factors were all considered upon collecting and analyzing data based on the individual interviews and focus group discussion.

This study’s participants relayed that their tertiary education, albeit more theoretical than practical, did not prepare them or make them aware of the volume of administrative workload involved in being a teacher. For example, one participant assumed that there would be administrative duties to fulfill, as is required in any job, but mentioned she was blown away by the amount of work, stating: “*I had no clue there was so much planning*

involved in teaching, and not just lesson planning, I mean the marking and the feedback and coming up with report card comments and all that stuff. It was super stressful.”

When a student teacher enters a school environment, their main goal should be to engage with the learners and follow suit of the class teacher in learning how to conduct themselves professionally and teach content on the different academic subjects suitable for that grade of learners (Mokoena, 2017). It is evident from the data that there is little time or emphasis placed on the administrative workload that occurs behind the scenes in the daily life of a teacher. The reason for this is that student teachers do not get an opportunity to see class teachers complete administrative tasks, as these are done mostly after school hours, according to the study participants. Student teachers are often tasked with coaching or assisting school sport after the academic school day – a time in which some class teachers go home to catch up on administration from the day.

Consequently, when student teachers graduate and become qualified novice teachers, the harsh reality of the non-teaching aspects of their chosen profession can be seen as incredibly challenging and overwhelming to an individual who does not necessarily enjoy administrative tasks.

4.4.3 Lack of professional support

The third theme identified by participants, is a lack of professional support. These novice Foundation Phase teachers noted that they found it quite challenging entering the school environment as a newly qualified professional and receiving little to no support or guidance within the workplace. The transition from student to novice teacher is often harsh, with many labeling it as a “reality shock” (Botha & Rens, 2018; Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; McCormack & Thomas, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 2003). The study participants recorded that they had the expectation of being assigned a mentor teacher who would provide support and clarity when it came to navigating the school systems yet were left to deal with these challenges alone.

One participant mentioned that she received no support or guidance at all and was too ashamed to ask for assistance for fear of being judged and ridiculed by her colleagues since the expectation of being a competent, knowledgeable working professional, after

studying toward a degree for four years, is a realistic one. No professional place of work will employ an individual who has not obtained a diploma or degree to do the work of a skilled diploma or degree holder in that field. For teachers to be employed at schools, they must obtain a teaching qualification, and whilst years of teaching experience may be highly advantageous, experience without qualification is not compliant (DBE, 2011). All teachers working in schools, therefore, need to be qualified and registered by the South African of Educators (SACE), which teachers cannot obtain if they have not received a recognized teaching qualification from a tertiary education institute. After studying for several years and obtaining a recognized teaching qualification, it is expected that sufficient knowledge has been obtained during that study period, which will allow novices to integrate into the workplace competently (Botha & Rens, 2018).

However, with no understanding of basic administrative protocols and no prior support or induction programmes, it is a given that these novice teachers are unfamiliar and overwhelmed with their new list of responsibilities.

Following on from this theme, are the sub-themes of: (a) Feelings of inadequacy and isolation, and (b) Lack of social connectivity with colleagues. These sub-themes are interlinked as result of the social aspect that underpins this study, namely that of Vygotsky's (1978) Theory of Social Constructivism.

4.4.3.1 Feelings of inadequacy and isolation

It is a known fact that teachers encounter difficulties during their first year of teaching (Dishena & Mokoena, 2016). This sub-theme was identified when one of the participants mentioned that she felt isolated and inadequate during her first year of teaching due to a lack of professional support. On the other hand, another participant mentioned that she was fortunate to have received emotional support from a colleague during her first year of teaching, for which she was incredibly grateful.

According to Dishena and Mokoena (2016, p. 337), some novice teachers become “demoralized, ill, depressed, or face teacher burnout” during their first year of teaching; resulting in them “deciding to abandon teaching as a profession.” This highlights the need for professional and emotional support for all novice teachers to avoid feeling

demoralized, depressed, isolated or inadequate. This study demonstrates that participants who were able to experience teaching in a classroom for prolonged periods practically, and those who were able to form meaningful and professional relationships with their colleagues, had a more positive outlook on their first teaching experiences as qualified professionals.

One participant, who obtained her degree through the University of South Africa (Unisa), was able to study part-time and work as an employed apprentice or student teacher at a school. This additional teaching experience and time spent at a school enabled her to build confidence, improve her teaching skills, form social connections with her colleagues, and familiarize herself with the school's administrative protocols and procedures. She said in her interview, "*It was really tough... I was basically working full-time hours [at school] and studying in the evening*". As a result of her hard work, she was able to gain a holistic view and understanding of the world of teaching and said: "*If I wasn't a full-time student teacher, I would have battled just coming onto the scene as a newly graduated teacher. My experience working as an intern really opened my eyes to the world of education and all the behind-the-scenes stuff that you never really thought of when you were in school.*"

It remains evident that support for novice teachers is lacking (Dishena & Mokoena, 2016; Curry, *et al.*, 2016; Liu, 2004). These novices felt as if they needed more than professional support in induction programmes upon entering the work environment. All teachers need not feel inadequate or like outcasts when they first start teaching, as their tertiary education experience should have equipped them with the necessary skills and training to teach. What is not considered is the uniqueness of different schools and how they operate, the different types of learners, and the personalities and willingness to help from colleagues.

4.4.3.2 Lack of social connectivity with colleagues

Teaching is a very social profession; it requires constant communication and understanding to build knowledge and develop skills. A social element is involved in every aspect of teaching, as your primary instrument used in relaying and receiving

information comes from individuals (Mutluer & Yuksel, 2019). One could argue that teaching is a continuous conversation between the teacher and the learners.

This type of verbal communication is a source of social connection between teachers as colleagues, and which takes place when reflecting on teaching methods and connecting with colleagues to plan, discuss or effectively communicate future roles and expectations within the profession (Mutluer & Yuksel, 2019). The relationships that teachers build with their learners, their colleagues and management personnel is a social connection that forms an integral part of the teaching profession (Mutluer & Yuksel, 2019).

Vygotsky (1978) maintains that learning is socially influenced. Therefore, if novice teachers are experiencing a lack of professional support, there is a lack of social interaction and connectivity between staff members and management roles. Furthermore, Vygotsky (1978) maintains that an individual's environment and the social interactions they experience within this environment helps shape the way they perceive their reality, hence if there is little to no social interaction or support for these novice teachers upon entering a new work environment, there will be a negative outcome or range of emotions.

Literature confirms the importance of collegial support in assisting novice teachers to adapt and acclimatize to their new role as a teacher (Arends & Phurutse, 2015). Additionally, the participants of this study expressed that they would like to receive support upon entering the work environment, as they felt this would have made the transition easier from being seen as a student teacher to now being a qualified teacher and work colleague amidst the school staff. One participant said she *"would have liked to see more support in terms of mentoring or at least a bit of guidance when it came to all the admin."* Another participant voiced her disappointment in the school, saying: *"I would love to tell you that there were so many programmes in place and that we were nurtured and warmly welcomed, but there was no support. I honestly think the principal adopts the strategy of 'out of sight, out of mind'. There is no sense of camaraderie or any collaboration between the teachers."*

Support for novice teachers needs to include aspects of social and emotional support as well as professional support. Due to the social aspect of teaching, the profession deals with emotional beings with feelings and social needs. Therefore, a lack of support in terms of social connectivity with one’s peers or colleagues causes novice teachers’ perceptions about their level of preparedness and readiness to teach to decline; resulting in them not remaining in the profession for any length of time (Esau, 2017).

4.4.4 Overview of themes and sub-themes from data collection methods

Several themes and sub-themes were identified and generated from the data analysis, which was gathered from the participants of this study during their individual interviews and focus group discussion. Demonstrated below is a table displaying the breakdown of themes and sub-themes as outlined earlier in this chapter.

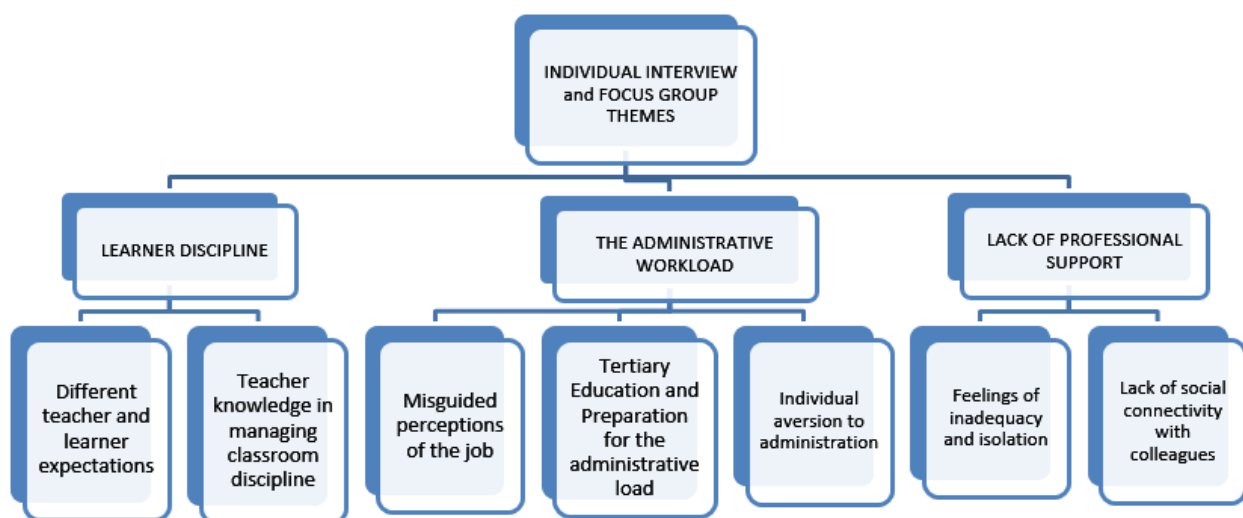


Figure 4.1: Themes and sub-themes from data collection methods

The challenges of learner discipline, the administrative workload and a lack of professional support were identified and experienced by the novice Foundation Phase teachers. In addition, the expectations and perceptions of teaching held by the study participants and the context of their school environments and the learners they teach, individual attributes, such as personality types that aid in developing social relationships, positive attitudes toward teaching as a whole, and an aversion to administrative work were also considered whilst compiling the themes and sub-themes.

In summary, it must be noted that everyone who participated in this study teaches at a different school and is exposed to different learners, different environmental and social settings, and had different tertiary education experiences. Much like novice teachers worldwide, their experiences and the challenges they face are unique to them, but common themes can be identified, and recommendations made to assist in alleviating these challenges. These recommendations are discussed in the fifth chapter of this study.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the themes that emerged from the analysis of data gathered from novice Foundation Phase teachers and the challenges they face. Themes and sub-themes were identified and presented. Data generated through semi-structured individual interviews and a focus group discussion was also described.

Chapter five looks at the findings of the study and answer the research question and sub-questions.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, an in-depth description of the data collected during individual interviews and the focus group discussion was presented as the themes for the study.

The purpose of this study was to explore the adaptation challenges faced by novice Foundation Phase teachers in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropole. I used a qualitative research approach to understand novice teachers' thoughts, feelings and experiences regarding this phenomenon. Purposeful sampling was used in this study to gather information from novice teachers within the Nelson Mandela Metropole.

Semi-structured individual interviews and a focus group discussion were employed to generate data, which was analyzed and clustered into themes using Colaizzi's (1978) seven steps for gathering and interpreting data. Three main themes were identified, followed by several sub-themes relative to this study. The findings of this research study answered the main research question:

What are the challenges that novice Foundation Phase teachers' experience upon entering the professional work environment?

The findings from the study also answered the sub-questions:

- How do novice teachers' tertiary education knowledge and the social setting of the school environment aid them in adapting to the role of a teacher?
- What are novice teachers' expectations of schooling when commencing with their teaching careers at schools within the Nelson Mandela Metropole?
- What knowledge do novice teachers gain because of these early teaching challenges and how does this knowledge impact on their perceptions and practices within the context of the classroom?

These are answered at the end of this chapter.

5.2 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Data gathered from the individual interviews shows that the expectations of teaching, as described by the participants, were very different to the reality of entering the teaching profession as a qualified Foundation Phase teacher. For example, during the interview process, most of the participants mentioned that their teaching expectations were “a little romanticized”. They expected to spend more time with the learners in their class than doing administrative work, such as marking workbooks and logging grades, and compiling report card comments. In addition, when asked about their initial teaching experiences, one participant said that she was very disappointed to find that almost 80% of her workload had to be taken home in order to be completed on time, while another said that her “*first year of teaching was a total nightmare.*” The full responses from the interview questions, which can be found in Appendix H, show the discrepancy between a student teachers’ perceptions of teaching and their expectations of the job versus the harsh reality faced upon entering the professional working world.

All participants chosen for this study had to meet certain criteria. They were required to have a Foundation Phase teaching degree from a national university, be registered by the South African Council of Educators (SACE), and have between one and four years of teaching experience in an urban school within the Nelson Mandela Metropole. Most participants reported that their tertiary education experiences offered some value but were more theoretically based than providing the practical skillset required for the teaching profession. One participant mentioned that in the four years of her tertiary studies toward becoming a teacher, she gained the bulk of her knowledge in the final year, during her practical experience spent in schools as a student-teacher. One of the participants felt that it was her work as an intern (employed student-teacher) whilst completing her degree studies online that prepared her best. This practical experience

obtained from being in a classroom offered more insight into the teaching world than the assignments that she had to complete at university.

Novice teachers experience several challenges when coping with their new role as professionals, often labelling this transitional period as a reality shock (Caspersen & Raaen, 2014; McCormack & Thomas, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Botha & Rens, 2018). The participants of this study shared some of the many challenges they faced upon entering the teaching profession, with the majority identifying learner discipline as a primary challenge and being unaware of the overwhelming amount of behind-the-scenes administrative work.

One participant's experience regarding discipline: *"I really struggled with the learners' behaviour during class. It felt like no matter what I did – and I tried everything – I just couldn't get through to those kids. How do you make a child want to learn? I can't force anyone to do something if they don't want to. The whole school struggles with it."* The participant also mentioned that most learners have no respect for female authority and that they are better behaved with male teachers. Another participant shared that when she became a teacher, she *"battled to get the kids to listen. It was like they just didn't care and they had no respect."*

The data generated from the interviews showed that not only do school learners show disrespect towards novice teachers, but parents also disrespected them. For example, one participant said she struggled to correspond with parents regarding a disciplinary issue involving their child. She reported that the parents verbally attacked her and her proficiency to teach due to her inexperience in the field. She also reported no support from her school principal in defending the matter; *"I felt really alone and useless"*, she said in her interview.

It is evident from the interviews conducted that novice teachers experience a vast array of emotions. One participant highlighted feeling inadequate as a teacher and alone in her struggles: *"I felt like I couldn't complain about my students to the other teachers because just now they thought I was a useless teacher."* The type of work environment

these novice teachers found themselves in, also play a vital role in the construction of a meaningful teaching and learning environment (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory explains the value in forming meaningful social relationships, affirming that learning is a social process in which the individual constructs knowledge in transaction with the environment and that in the process, both the individual and the environment are changed. Hence, when novice teachers experience little to no support upon entering the profession, they are faced with emotional challenges such as feelings of isolation and inadequacy.

Each of the participants in this study were asked whether they received any support upon entering the workplace as a novice teacher, in terms of professional development or induction programmes. Most of these teachers said no. Olebe (2005, p.159) says that induction is characterized as "a professional education and development tailored for teachers in their first and second years of teaching." Most participants reported not receiving meaningful support in preparing them for the roles and responsibilities of a teacher. One participant shared their disappointment in the lack of professional support received, saying, "*I just felt that they [the school] didn't have time for me.*"

The general response to asking the participants what support they would have liked to receive upon entering the work environment centered around mentorship from more experienced colleagues who would assist with the administrative workload. One novice teacher said she would have liked to receive a simple "*Hey, how are you doing? Are you coping?*" from her colleagues recognizing the weight of the task.

The outcomes of the challenges faced by novice teachers often have long-lasting negative effects, resulting in them deciding to abandon teaching as a profession (Dishena & Mokoena, 2016). However, when asked if the challenges they faced as novices made them better teachers and whether they would choose to stay in the teaching profession, almost all the participants of this study said yes. The data collected from these interviews show that most participants felt that the challenges they faced were part of the experience of becoming a teacher. Whilst most said they felt ill-prepared and poorly supported, one participant summed it up beautifully, saying: "*I love*

what I do, and I love working with children. I think if you're not 110% passionate about teaching, then it will definitely start to feel like a chore. It's very easy to feel despondent when it comes to all the paperwork and report marks and stuff, but you need to find something good in every day and hold onto it."

5.2.1 Summary of the themes that were identified

From the data analysis, three main themes were identified. These three themes correlate with the literature reviewed, highlighting some of the main challenges experienced by novice teachers. A summary of these themes, as well as the sub-themes, are presented below.

5.2.1.1 Learner discipline

The most prevalent challenge faced by the novice Foundation Phase teachers in this study was poor learner discipline in the classroom. The types of poor discipline referred to were disruptive behaviour and a lack of respect for female authority. The participants reported that much of their teaching time was spent disciplining poor-mannered and disrespectful learners. The participants felt that the reasons for this poor display of discipline by the learners in the class related to numerous factors. One participant said she felt that environmental factors played a large role in her ill-behaved learners, saying that the community and background they come from and go to school in, is an impoverished one, where there seem to be few success stories.

Another participant said she felt that the learners took advantage of her friendliness and teaching inexperience and displayed outright disrespect towards her as a teacher and an adult. The issue of learners' language and cultural background was also mentioned and taken into consideration when it came to their school behaviour. The third factor linked to poor learner discipline was a lack of respect toward female teachers, but not toward male teachers in the same school.

The sub-themes of 'Teacher knowledge in managing classroom discipline', and 'Teacher and learner expectations' look at teachers' knowledge and how they use this knowledge in understanding learner contexts and the stem of poor learner behaviour to

implement classroom discipline strategies, as well as the expectations teachers have of learners and the disparity between these expectations and the classroom reality. The latter sub-theme aided in answering the research question: What are novice teachers' expectations of schooling when commencing with their teaching careers at schools within the Nelson Mandela Metropole?

In summary, poor learner discipline in classrooms stems from numerous factors. These factors include the level of inexperience of these novice teachers and their lack of knowledge in efficiently managing classroom discipline. Environmental factors such as the socio-economic status of learners and a lack of respect for female authority are also factors that contribute to poor learner discipline in schools.

5.2.1.2 *The administrative workload*

This theme relates to the underlying and overwhelming administrative load that is expected of teachers. The challenge of this theme was that the novice Foundation Phase teachers in this study, upon entering the school environment as newly qualified teachers, were unaware of the expected volume of administrative work. They claim that their tertiary education, as well as their practical teaching experience at schools, did not prepare them or make them aware of the administrative duties that occur beyond teaching in the classroom.

Another challenge experienced by the participants of this study was in trying to navigate the administrative load and school protocols that were unknown to them at the time. For example, creating a planning file for the year and ensuring its completion in time to be checked by the school head of department at the beginning of each school term came as a surprise. The participants reported feeling very overwhelmed, lost, and exhausted from having to take work home after an already long school day. Lastly, each teacher's personality was considered, considering that some individuals struggle with administration and therefore would have an aversion to it. These misguided perceptions of the job, the lack of preparation by tertiary education institutes and fore warning from mentor teachers, as well as individual dislike for administration formed the sub-themes for this topic.

5.2.1.3 Lack of professional support

The third and final theme that was generated from the interviews and focus group discussion centered on the topic of support for novice teachers. The participants of this study experienced a lack of professional support upon entering the workplace. This proved to be a challenge as it created feelings of disappointment in the school itself for not assigning a mentor or offering any support, as well as feelings of inadequacy within themselves for not being able to successfully and seamlessly navigate their way through teaching and the challenges that come with being a novice.

The sub-themes of this topic were: Feelings of inadequacy and isolation; and Lack of social connectivity with colleagues. A lack of professional support in the workplace resulted in the participants of this study to feel inadequate, isolated in their struggles, and even cause doubt as to whether they should remain in the teaching profession. Collegial support was linked to Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist Theory, which maintains that learning is socially influenced. The novice Foundation Phase teachers who participated in this study experienced the challenge of not being able to socially connect with their colleagues or feel as if they could ask for support, resulting in overall negative experiences and attitudes toward teaching.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As with all research, the reader must keep in mind that there may be limitations to the findings discussed (Curry, *et al.*, 2016). Within the scope of the study, the data produced was solely on the experiences and self-report of novice Foundation Phase teachers from urban schools. Therefore, this data set is limited as it does not represent any administrative perspectives or that of colleagues, learners, parents, or school community members. The data also represents the novice teachers' perceptions at one particular point in time during the beginning of July, 2021. In light of COVID-19, the timing and influence of this global pandemic could have had an effect on the participants' responses.

None of the information contained in this paper is meant to be generalized to larger populations, though the findings may be transferrable. As all the participants are unique and different, the findings of this research may be specific to the population participating in this study as well as the context in which this study takes place, Nelson Mandela Bay Metropole.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The implications for practice remain relevant and essential for schools and principals to consider when hiring novice teachers, regardless of this study's limitations. The participants of this study emphasized the value and importance of induction programmes, mentorship, and collegial support. According to Curry, *et al.* (2016), assisting new teachers through induction programmes and assigning a mentor is crucial to their professional and personal development. In terms of collegiality, the promotion of collaboration, supporting new colleagues and building a positive and accepting school environment appears to be an ongoing challenge (Curry, *et al.*, 2016).

Research shows that the first year of teaching proves to be the most challenging for novice teachers (Robinson, 2015). These novices often feel apprehensive about mastering the content knowledge required to teach all the subjects in the curriculum (Robinson, 2015). The implications of minimizing the challenges experienced by novice teachers require an education system that is supportive of these new teachers for them to become confident in themselves and competent to teach whilst maintaining their passion and enthusiasm for the profession (Robinson, 2015).

5.5 ANSWERING THIS STUDY'S RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore what the adaptation challenges of novice Foundation Phase teachers in the Nelson Mandela Metropole are. By conducting individual interviews and a focus group discussion with the participants of this study, the main research question: "What are the challenges, if any, that novice Foundation Phase

teachers' experience upon entering the professional work environment?" was answered. This study also answered the sub-questions:

5.5.1 Research question

How do novice teachers' tertiary education knowledge and the social setting of the school environment aid them in adapting to the role of teacher?

The participants of this study spoke about their tertiary education experiences and the knowledge and skills that were developed during their time spent as student teachers. Each participant's experience was unique to them, but the majority of these novice Foundation Phase teachers mentioned that they felt their tertiary education was more theoretical than practical, and that the bulk of their learning towards becoming a teacher was experienced during their student teaching practical in their final year of studies. However, for some of the participants, the schools they taught at for their student teaching experience, differed from the schools they were employed at. The change of both a physical and social setting that they had become accustomed to as student teachers led to a shortfall in their teaching expectations, as they had perceived the profession to be a certain way only to find that the reality of teaching was different. The participants with less teaching experience and knowledge of school systems and protocols found it more challenging to adapt to the role of teacher. In contrast, the participant who was able to study part-time whilst completing a teaching internship felt she had the upper hand when entering the school environment as a qualified professional. This finding could lead to implications for future teacher training.

5.5.2 Research question 2

What are novice teachers' expectations of schooling when commencing with their teaching careers at schools within the Nelson Mandela Metropole?

This question was raised during the individual interviews conducted with the participants of this study. Each of these novice Foundation Phase teachers shared their expectations, as well as the harsh reality when a shortfall in these expectations occurred. Most of the participants expected teaching to be less strenuous in terms of administration. They also expected more support from colleagues in dealing with the

everyday challenges of teaching, such as learner discipline, lesson planning, assessments, and working with parents. The full interview transcripts can be found in Appendix H.

5.5.3 Research question 3

What knowledge do novice teachers gain because of these early teaching challenges, and how does this knowledge impact on their perceptions and practices within the context of the classroom?

Grossman's (1990) Knowledge Base of Teacher's theory was applied when seeking to answer this research question. The result was that everyone's experience of the environment around them, gained knowledge and knowingly or unknowingly applied it to their everyday lives. The novice Foundation Phase teachers that took part in this study revealed that their negative experiences and the challenges they faced resulted in them feeling overwhelmed and inadequate to teach. One participant doubted her choice of wanting to become a teacher, whilst another participant said she was able to find the positive aspects of teaching and move forward in her career. The knowledge gained and the impact of this knowledge on ones' perceptions and classroom practices are specific and relevant to the context of the individual experiencing these circumstances.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the findings of the study and summarized the themes that emerged from the analysis of data. The limitations of the study and the implications for practice were also presented.

The sixth and final chapter looks at recommendations based on the findings of the study and draws conclusions and makes recommendations based on this research study.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore the adaptation challenges of novice Foundation Phase teachers. By using a qualitative research approach, insight into the participants' lived experiences regarding this phenomenon was gained. Purposeful sampling was used in this study as it related strongly to the overall research goal as specific data needed to be collected. In order to present the findings as trustworthy, Colaizzi's (1978) seven steps for gathering and interpreting data was used to identify common themes and similarities gathered in the participants' interview responses and the focus group discussion. Three main themes were identified from the data and were used to present the findings of the study.

In this chapter, the research study is concluded by providing a summary of the study and recommendations for further research.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

According to literature, novice teachers face numerous challenges upon entering the workplace (Botha & Rens, 2018; Dishena & Mokoena, 2016; Burkman, 2012). The literature reviewed in this study discussed four known challenges of novice teachers: teacher readiness; personal and professional challenges; administrative challenges; and disciplinary challenges. In addition, the value of induction programmes in the workplace to assist novice teachers in their transitional role of becoming working professionals was also discussed.

Five participants voluntarily took part in this research study; all of whom are qualified novice Foundation Phase teachers with a recognized teaching degree from a national university. The participants are all registered with the South Africa Council of Educators

(SACE) have between one and four years of teaching experience in schools in the Nelson Mandela Metropole.

Each participant voluntarily agreed to conduct a semi-structured individual interview with me. This was done online via Whatsapp. After finalizing the interview process and transcribing verbatim what the participants had said in their individual interview, common themes were identified and questions formulated for the focus group discussion. The questions that were asked were open-ended and required the participants to elaborate their response so that a clear and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of this study could be understood. The focus group discussion included all the participants and was conducted online using Zoom. The identity of each of the participants remained anonymous, and this focus group discussion allowed each participant to share their challenges, experiences, and thoughts and emotions regarding the phenomenon of this study. After that, an analysis of the data was made, and three main themes were identified. These three themes correlate with the literature reviewed, highlighting some of the main challenges experienced by novice teachers.

The findings from the interviews and focus group discussion answered this study's research questions, providing a foundation for further research on the adaptation challenges experienced by novice teachers and the exploration of strategies implemented by these novices to overcome their challenges.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This small-scale qualitative study focused on the adaptation challenges of novice Foundation Phase teachers in the Nelson Mandela Metropole. A recommendation for further research is that the adaptation challenges of novice Foundation Phase teachers be explored on a larger scale, possibly within the different provinces of South Africa and the country. Research on how Foundation Phase teachers and Intermediate Phase teachers experience challenges within schools can also be conducted to provide a comparison.

Further research into tertiary education programmes and school support programmes for novice teachers can be done. In addition, research on how a lack of collegial support can influence the performance outcomes of novice teachers can also be investigated.

6.4 GUIDELINES TO SUPPORT NOVICE TEACHERS

The findings from this study were used to formulate guidelines to help support novice teachers in their adaptation from university to the professional work environment. Support strategies from existing literature are also provided.

6.4.1 Adaptation strategies and guidelines for novice teachers

This study aims to explore the adaptation challenges faced by novice Foundation Phase teachers in the Nelson Mandela Metropole. The participants in this study were forthcoming about the challenges they experienced upon entering the professional work environment. In their semi-structured interview and focus group discussion, these participants gave valuable insight as to how they adapted to and overcame the challenges they experienced. This experience guided this study in recording these strategies towards offering support to other novice teachers experiencing similar challenges in their workplace.

The themes identified from the data analysis were three main challenges experienced by the participants of this study. Guidelines and adaptation strategies to overcome these challenges, as provided by the participants of this study, are offered below.

6.4.1.1 *Adaptation strategy for the administrative load*

According to one of the participants in this study, a useful adaptation strategy for managing the often overwhelming administrative load is to break down it down into manageable sized chunks; she said she looked at the teaching or curriculum requirements for each week and worked by planning one week at a time. She also created a planning file that suited her needs and worked best for her, which she said helped tremendously. However, the challenge comes when teachers are expected to hand in their teaching preparation and planning files at the beginning of the school year

and the start of each new school term. These timeframes and deadlines are the cause of additional stress and anxiety surrounding the administrative workload.

A recommendation to avoid this becoming a challenge, is for final year education students to work meticulously through the CAPS document, which prescribes the teaching and learning outcomes per grade for South African schools, to gain an in-depth understanding of the administrative workload that is expected of them once they start teaching. From there onwards, education students can start preparing a teaching plan or work schedule that best suits them and adapt it accordingly to their workplace requirements once they find themselves employed as novice teachers at schools.

6.4.1.2 *Adaptation strategy for learner discipline*

A challenge faced by the participants of this study was that of poor learner behaviour in the classroom. In her interview, one novice teacher said she was able to overcome her challenge of poor learner discipline by adapting her teaching methods. She said with her class of learners she would always shout or raise her voice to gain their attention or to discipline them. Instead, she changed her disciplining strategy to lowering her voice or speaking softly when she wanted the attention of her learners.

The implementation of a disciplinary chart within the classroom was also useful in maintaining good learner discipline. The participant said she used the disciplinary chart to reinforce and reward positive behaviour instead of highlighting and punishing negative learner behaviour. She said she found this idea on a teaching website and that it has helped her to overcome this challenge.

6.4.1.3 *Adaptation strategy for lack of professional support*

A lack of professional support was identified as one of the challenges experienced by the study participants. One participant said she received no support from her colleagues and felt too ashamed to ask for assistance for fear of being ridiculed. The topic of collegial bullying was also identified as a sub-theme of this study. In her interview, the participant said she overcame this challenge by simply *accepting* the notion that she was not going to receive any help or support from her colleagues. As a result, she said she learned to become self-sufficient by consulting sources that she knew would offer

insight and assistance, such as online teaching websites and advice from her mom, who is a teacher.

Another participant said she attempted to overcome the challenge of feeling isolated and inadequate as a result of the lack of support she received, by seeing her failures as learning opportunities and to build knowledge from these experiences to avoid them in future. Another participant of this study said that she wished she had received emotional support in the form of a “*hello, how are you doing?*” from her colleagues. This need was met when she was able to form a friendship with a colleague at her school.

One of the participants of this study had a particularly challenging experience in which she received no support from her principal in dealing with difficult parents of one of the learners in her class. However, she could adapt and overcome this challenge by learning to dissociate workplace challenges from personal criticisms. She also learnt to stand up for herself professionally by not allowing parents to “*dictate how things should be done in [her] classroom*”.

6.4.2 Guidelines for schools and novice teachers

The challenges of novice teachers are not insolvable, as research has shown that there are things that can be done to reduce the entry trauma of the new teacher (Ryan, 1986).

Survival guides offering sage advice for new teachers are plentiful, yet none of them consider the context of the school that novice teachers find themselves teaching at and the individual needs and challenges experienced by these novice teachers. Ryan (1986, pp.31-33) put together a ‘survival list’ comprising of a few suggestions to help novice teachers better prepare themselves and survive their first year of teaching. Whilst it may not be an accurate solution to eliminate the challenges experienced by novice teachers successfully, it has merit in helping new teachers obtain the right mind-set before making career ending decisions. Additionally, it offers recognizable but useful tips for novice teachers that are often overlooked.

According to Ryan (1986, pp.31-33), a few stand-out pointers are:

- *Before you begin the first year of teaching, decide to teach a second year.* This statement refers to the unique (sometimes nightmarish) first year of teaching and encourages teachers to not be too hasty in making life-changing career decisions based on such inadequate data of one year's experience.
- *If you are not organized, get organized.* Acknowledging that the amount of paperwork for teachers is astounding, Ryan (1986) encourages new teachers to master the administrative details and keep on top of them so as not to be overwhelmed at a later stage.
- *Do not look for love in the classroom, look for respect.* Often novice teachers are so eager to please and be liked or accepted by their students, that it may cause disciplinary issues with regards to learners showing disrespect toward their new teacher.
- *Become an active member of the staff.* This statement implies that as a new teacher, one needs to make a conscious effort in getting to know your colleagues as opposed to alienating yourself in your classroom all day.
- *Pay your body its dues.* Alongside professional and emotional challenges, the stress of being a first-year teacher also takes a physical toll on the body. Novice teachers should form good, healthy habits, such as setting boundaries between work and personal life, exercising and maintaining a healthy diet, and having a positive mindset.
- *Find a mentor.* It is encouraged that novices find a more experienced colleague who is willing to share their knowledge and help guide them through the first year of teaching. However, great care should be taken in choosing a mentor, as having a poor mentor is almost worse than having no mentor at all.

These 'survival tips' remain effective and relevant to today's teaching world and should be viewed as a guideline to help novice teachers adapt to their new school environment. Schools should also acknowledge that novice teachers face numerous challenges upon entering the work environment and should offer emotional and professional support to these novices in the form of induction programmes, mentoring and collegial support.

6.4.3 Support strategies confirmed by literature

The findings of this study formulated guidelines and support strategies for novice teachers. According to Robinson (2015), a possible intervention strategy or solution to the challenges experienced by novice teachers is one where novice teachers are recipients of structured mentoring programmes and are supported by more experienced teachers. This form of induction should last for the first year or two of the novice teachers working at a specific school (Robinson, 2015).

Administrators, such as the school principal or head of teaching department need to support the induction of novice teachers and those who mentor these novices to foster productive dialogue between the two (Curry, *et al.*, 2016). Ways to accomplish this is by providing novice teachers with less demanding teaching assignments and challenging learners in their classes, as well as offering additional help and support by including seminars or workshops, making time for collaborative staff planning sessions, and the added support of a teacher's aide or assistant (Curry, *et al.*, 2016).

There are several key factors contributing to effective induction, and they are: trained mentors who can provide novices with useful feedback; opportunities to peer-review teaching in order to analyze good classroom practice; a reduced workload for beginner teachers; collaborative planning and sharing of teaching resources; and supporting seminars or courses that might assist these novice teachers on how to deal with poor learner behaviour or how to work with parents (Robinson, 2015). Additionally, this type of induction should extend beyond the general orientation to school rules and policies provided to novice teachers, this type of induction requires far more time and commitment – which is often not available during the busy school year (Robinson, 2015).

6.5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the experiences and the challenges faced by the novice Foundation Phase teachers who participated in this study have shown that most novices face

numerous challenges upon entering the working world. These challenges vary according to the individual and the context of the school and teaching environment.

Research has shown a need for supporting these novice teachers via means of assigning mentors or through the implementation of induction programmes (Robinson, 2015; Burkman, 2012; Liu, 2004). Subsequently, time, money, and training are required to provide school-based induction programmes instead of standardized guidelines currently offered in some schools for novice teachers (Robinson, 2015). The value of providing support to novice teachers remains uncontested. What still needs much discussion is the nature of this support and how to implement it best.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER TO PARTICIPANT

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NELSON MANDELA
UNIVERSITY

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12 November 2020

Ref: H21-EDU-ERE-001

Contact person: Michelle Grimbeek

Dear participant

You are being asked to participate in a research study. We will provide you with the necessary information to assist you to understand the study and explain what would be expected of you (participant). These guidelines would include the risks, benefits, and your rights as a study subject. Please feel free to ask the researcher to clarify anything that is not clear to you.

To participate, it will be required of you to provide a written consent to being interviewed and voice-recorded over the digital platform of Zoom. Your consent to this will include your signature, date and initials to verify that you understand and agree to the conditions.

You have the right to query concerns regarding the study at any time. Immediately report any new problems during the study, to the researcher. Telephone numbers of the researcher are provided. Please feel free to call these numbers.

Furthermore, it is important that you are aware of the fact that the ethical integrity of the study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee (Human) of the university. The REC-H consists of a group of independent experts that has the responsibility to ensure that the rights and welfare of participants in research are protected and that studies are conducted in an ethical manner. Studies cannot be conducted without REC-H's approval. Queries with regard to your rights as a research subject can be directed to the Research Ethics Committee (Human), Department of Research Capacity Development, PO Box 77000, Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, 6031.

If no one could assist you, you may write to: The Chairperson of the Research, Technology and Innovation Committee, PO Box 77000, Nelson Mandela University, Port Elizabeth, 6031.

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You are not obliged to take part in any research. If you do partake, you have the right to withdraw at any given time, during the study without penalty or loss of benefits.

The study may be terminated at any time by the researcher, the sponsor or the Research Ethics Committee (Human).

Although your identity will at all times remain confidential, the results of the research study may be presented at scientific conferences or in specialist publications.

This informed consent statement has been prepared in compliance with current statutory guidelines.

Yours sincerely,

Michelle Grimbeek
RESEARCHER

APPENDIX B: ORAL AND WRITTEN INFORMATION TO BE GIVEN TO PARTICIPANTS

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EXPLORING THE ADAPTATION CHALLENGES FACED BY NOVICE FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THE NELSON MANDELA METROPOLE

Project Information Statement/Letter of Invitation to Participants

My name is Michelle Grimbeek, and I am a Masters student of Education at the Nelson Mandela University. I am conducting research on the experiences of novice Foundation Phase teachers under the supervision of Dr. Morar and Mrs. Deysel from Nelson Mandela University. The Provincial Department of Education has given approval to approach schools for my research. A copy of their approval is contained with this letter. I invite you to consider taking part in this research. This study will meet the requirements of the Research Ethics Committee (Human) of the Nelson Mandela University.

AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The research aims to:

Explore how novice Foundation Phase teachers' knowledge and the social setting of the school environment impact on their perceptions and practices within the context of the classroom.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The research is significant in three ways:

1. Identify the knowledge that novice teachers gain as a result of early teaching challenges.
2. It will provide information about what the challenges in schools are for novice teachers.
3. It will provide schools, teachers and other researchers with contextual knowledge from both literature and first-hand local experiences.

BENEFITS OF THE RESEARCH TO SCHOOLS AND PARTICIPANTS

1. Dissemination of results to schools and the Eastern Cape Department of Education.
2. The results will inform schools and tertiary education institutions on areas in the schooling system that novice teachers find challenging.
3. The insight gained from this study can lead to transforming the way that schools and the general public perceive teachers, and will contribute toward the growing body of knowledge surrounding the challenges of novice teachers.
4. This study advocates that emphasis be placed on the school/ work environment and that necessary support be made available to novice Foundation Phase teachers to ensure their retention (Maphalala & Mpofu, 2019).

RESEARCH PLAN AND METHOD

Data will be collected through individual semi-structured interviews and followed by focus group discussion. The researcher, Michelle Grimbeek, will administer the interviews and focus group discussion. Data production will be administered in two sessions, one for the individual interviews and the second session, the focus group discussion. One session should not proceed for longer than two hours. All information collected will be treated in strictest confidence and the school, nor its teachers, will not be identifiable in any reports that are written. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time.

Further information

Attached for your information are copies of the Participant Information Statement and Consent Form.

Invitation to Participate

If you would like to participate in this research, please complete and return the attached form.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Michelle Grimbeek
Researcher
NMU

Dr. Morar
Supervisor
NMU

Mrs. Deysel
Co-supervisor
NMU

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANTS' CONSENT FORM

• PO Box 77000 • Nelson Mandela University
• Port Elizabeth • 6031 • South Africa • www.mandela.ac.za
• South Africa • www.nmmu.ac.za



EXPLORING THE ADAPTATION CHALLENGES FACED BY NOVICE FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THE NELSON MANDELA METROPOLE

Participants Consent Form

I have read the Project Information Statement explaining the purpose of the research project and understand that:

- My role is voluntary
- I may decide to withdraw at any time without penalty
- All information obtained will be treated in strictest confidence.
- The school, nor my identity, shall not be identifiable in any written reports about the study.
- A report of the findings will be made available to all participants.
- I may seek further information on the project from Michelle Grimbeek on 084 401 4411.

Participant

Signature

Date

Please return to: Michelle Grimbeek
Faculty of Education
NMU
Port Elizabeth

APPENDIX D: ORAL AND WRITTEN INFORMATION

- PO Box 77000 • Nelson Mandela University
- Port Elizabeth • 6031 • South Africa • www.mandela.ac.za
- South Africa • www.nmmu.ac.za



The aim of the study is to explore the adaptation challenges faced by novice Foundation Phase teachers within the Nelson Mandela Metropole. This information will inform schools and tertiary education institutions on areas in the schooling system that novice teachers find challenging; give insight into the perspectives of local teachers, as well as contribute local findings toward the growing body of knowledge surrounding this topic.

As the study will be exploratory in nature, teachers will be asked to divulge their experiences, opinions and viewpoints regarding the challenges they faced in their first year of teaching. I will therefore not aim to gather facts, but rather insight into the experiences of the individual teachers, as I will follow the interpretivist paradigm.

No names or personal detail of any participant will be made available, as pseudonyms will be used throughout the study.

Data will be collected using the following tools: semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussion. The participants will be asked a series of questions, first individually, and then they will be asked to give their input/ share their experiences in a group discussion. The purpose of the focus group discussion will be to identify clear common themes surrounding the data that was gathered from the individual interviews. These themes will be clustered and integrated into a rounded description of the phenomenon of the study.

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Questions that will be asked during the individual semi-structured interviews are:

1. What were your expectations of teaching before you entered the working environment?
2. Describe your tertiary education: where did you obtain your teaching degree from?
3. How did your tertiary education prepare you for teaching in a classroom?
4. What challenges, if any, did you face in your first year of teaching?
5. How did your first year teaching experiences differ from your expectations that you had of teaching?
6. What professional development or support mechanisms, if any, were in place?
7. What type of support would you have liked to receive? From the Head of Department (HoD), colleagues, the Principal, etc.?
8. Would you say that the challenges you faced have made you a better teacher? Or have made you confident that this is the profession you are meant to be in? In other words, could you adapt and overcome these challenges? If not, how so?

The following questions can be used as prompts in the focus group discussion:

1. Please share your account of the challenges you faced in your first year of teaching.
2. What do you know now, that you wish you were told in your first year of teaching?
3. How did you feel during those initial stages of your teaching career?
4. If you could do something different, going back to the same situation, what would you do?
5. What strategies did you implement in your classroom as a means to cope?
6. Did you seek alternative assistance or guidance during this period? From Who? Where?
7. Did any of you experience similar problems in your class? Please explain.

APPENDIX F: INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

NELSON MANDELA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCHER'S DETAILS	
Title of the research project	EXPLORING THE ADAPTATION CHALLENGES FACED BY NOVICE FOUNDATION PHASE TEACHERS IN THE NELSON MANDELA METROPOLE
Reference number	H21-EDU-ERE-001
Principal investigator	MICHELLE GRIMBEEK
Address	65 SEINE STREET, WOODLANDS. PORT ELIZABETH
Postal Code	6070
Contact telephone number (private numbers not advisable)	084 401 4411

A. <u>DECLARATION BY OR ON BEHALF OF PARTICIPANT</u>		<u>Initial</u>
I, the participant and the undersigned		
ID number		
<u>OR</u>		
I, in my capacity as	(parent or guardian)	
of the participant	(full names)	
ID number		
Address (of participant)		

A.1 <u>HEREBY CONFIRM AS FOLLOWS:</u>		<u>Initial</u>
I, the participant, was invited to participate in the above-mentioned research project		
that is being undertaken by	MICHELLE GRIMBEEK	
from	THE EDUCATION FACULTY	
of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.		

THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS HAVE BEEN EXPLAINED TO ME, THE PARTICIPANT:				Initial	
2.1	Aim:	The investigator will explore the challenges faced by novice Foundation Phase teachers in the Nelson Mandela Metropole. The information will be used to gain a deeper insight into the challenges experienced by teachers, as well as to formulate guidelines to support these Foundation Phase teachers in their first years of teaching.			
2.2	Procedures:	I understand that data will be collected using individual semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion. These interviews and group discussion will be recorded once permission from participants is granted.			
2.3	Risks:	I understand that I might be emotionally affected by my own experiences as a novice Foundation Phase teacher and I may project my challenges onto the participants.			
2.4	Possible benefits:	As a result of my participation in this study, it can lead to transforming the way that schools and the general public perceive teachers. It is hoped that this study will give insight into the perspectives of local teachers and contribute authentically to the body of research already existing around this topic.			
2.5	Confidentiality:	My identity will not be revealed in any discussion, description or scientific publications by the investigators. Pseudonyms will be used at all times and identifiers will be removed from the study.			
2.6	Access to findings:	Any new information or benefit that develops during the course of the study will be shared as follows: I will be given a chance to read through it and confirm whether it will be used. All participants will be able to view the finished product once the research is complete.			
2.6	Voluntary participation / refusal / discontinuation:	My participation is voluntary	YES	NO	
		My decision whether or not to participate will in no way affect my present or future care / employment / lifestyle	TRUE	FALSE	

3. THE INFORMATION ABOVE WAS EXPLAINED TO ME/THE PARTICIPANT BY:								Initial
MICHELLE GRIMBEEK								
in	Afrikaans		English	✓	Xhosa		Other	
and I am in command of this language, or it was satisfactorily translated to me by								
(name of translator)								
I was given the opportunity to ask questions and all these questions were answered satisfactorily.								

4.	No pressure was exerted on me to consent to participation and I understand that I may withdraw at any stage without penalisation.	
----	---	--

5.	Participation in this study will not result in any additional cost to myself.	
----	---	--

A.2 I HEREBY VOLUNTARILY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ABOVE-MENTIONED PROJECT:		
Signed/confirmed at	on	20
Signature or right thumb print of participant	Signature of witness:	
	Full name of witness:	

B. STATEMENT BY OR ON BEHALF OF INVESTIGATOR(S)										
I,	MICHELLE GRIMBEEK	declare that:								
1.	I have explained the information given in this document to	(name of patient/participant)								
	and / or his / her representative	(name of representative)								
2.	He / she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions;									
3.	This conversation was conducted in	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Afrikaans</td> <td></td> <td>English</td> <td>✓</td> <td>Xhosa</td> <td></td> <td>Other</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Afrikaans		English	✓	Xhosa		Other	
	Afrikaans		English	✓	Xhosa		Other			
	And no translator was used <u>OR</u> this conversation was translated into									
(language)	by	(name of translator)								
4.	I have detached Section D and handed it to the participant	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>YES</td> <td>NO</td> </tr> </table>	YES	NO						
YES	NO									
Signed/confirmed at										
on										
20										
Signature of interviewer	Signature of witness:									
	Full name of witness:									

C. DECLARATION BY TRANSLATOR (WHEN APPLICABLE)		
I,	(full names)	
ID number		
Qualifications and/or		
Current employment		
confirm that I:		
1.	Translated the contents of this document from English into	(language)
2.	Also translated questions posed by	(name of participant) as well as the answers given by the investigator/representative;
3.	Conveyed a factually correct version of what was related to me.	
Signed/confirmed at		
on		
20		
I hereby declare that all information acquired by me for the purposes of this study will be kept confidential.		

Signature of translator	Signature of witness:
	Full name of witness:

D. IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO PATIENT/REPRESENTATIVE OF PARTICIPANT

Dear participant/representative of the participant

Thank you for your/the participant's participation in this study. Should, at any time during the study:

- an emergency arise as a result of the research, or
- you require any further information with regard to the study, or
- the following occur

(indicate any circumstances which should be reported to the investigator)

Kindly contact	
at telephone number	

APPENDIX G: APPROVAL FROM NMU ETHICS COMMITTEE

• PO Box 77000 • Nelson Mandela University
• Port Elizabeth • 6031 • South Africa • www.mandela.ac.za
• South Africa • www.nmmu.ac.za



Faculty Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee
Eileen.scheckle@mandela.ac.za or Jackie.hay@mandela.ac.za
NHREC registration nr: **REC-042508-025**

Ref: [H21-EDU-ERE-001] / Approval]

15 April 2021

Dr T Morar [PRP]
Faculty: Education

Dear Dr Morar

Exploring the challenges faced by novice Foundation Phase Teachers in the Nelson Mandela Metropole

PRP: Dr Morar
PI: Ms M Grimbeek

Your above-entitled application served at the REC-H Committee (*2 March 2021*) for approval. The study is classified as a negligible/low risk study. The ethics clearance reference number is **H21-EDU-ERE-001** and approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. The immediate completion and return of the attached acknowledgement to **[Jackie Hay on Jackie.hay@mandela.ac.za]**, the date of receipt of such returned acknowledgement determining the final date of approval for the study where after data collection may commence.
2. Approval for data collection is for 1 calendar year from date of receipt of above mentioned acknowledgement.

3. The submission of an annual progress report by the PRP on the data collection activities of the study (form RECH-004 available on Research Ethics Committee (Human) portal) by 15 November this year for studies approved/extended in the period October of the previous year up to and including September of this year, or 15 November next year for studies approved/extended after September this year.

4. In the event of a requirement to extend the period of data collection (i.e. for a period in excess of 1 calendar year from date of approval), completion of an extension request is required (form RECH-005 available on Research Ethics Committee (Human) portal).

5. In the event of any changes made to the study (excluding extension of the study), RECH will have to approve such amendments and completion of an amendments form is required PRIOR to implementation (form RECH-006 available on Research Ethics Committee (Human) portal)

6. Immediate submission (and possible discontinuation of the study in the case of serious events) of the relevant report to RECH (form RECH-007 available on Research Ethics Committee (Human) portal) in the event of any unanticipated problems, serious incidents or adverse events observed during the course of the study.

7. Immediate submission of a Study Termination Report to RECH (form RECH-008 available on Research Ethics Committee (Human) portal) upon expected or unexpected closure/termination of study.

8. Immediate submission of a Study Exception Report of RECH (form RECH-009 to be made available shortly on Research Ethics Committee (Human) portal) in the event of any study deviations, violations and/or exceptions.

9. Acknowledgement that the study could be subjected to passive and/or active monitoring without prior notice at the discretion of Research Ethics Committee (Human).

Please quote the ethics clearance reference number in all correspondence and enquiries related to the study. For speedy processing of email queries (to be directed to **[Jackie Hay on**

Jackie.hay@mandela.ac.za), it is recommended that the ethics clearance reference number together with an indication of the query appear in the subject line of the email.

We wish you well with the study.

Yours sincerely

Prof Pillay

Chairperson: Faculty Postgraduate Studies Committee

Cc: Department of Research Development

Appendix 1: Acknowledgement of conditions for ethical approval

APPENDIX H: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONDITIONS FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

I, **Dr Morar (PRP)** of the study entitled **[H21-EDU-ERE-001] Exploring the challenges faced by novice Foundation Phase Teachers in the Nelson Mandela Metropole**, do hereby agree to the following approval conditions:

1. The submission of an annual progress report by myself on the data collection activities of the study by 15 November this year for studies approved in the period October of the previous year up to and including September of this year, or 15 November next year for studies approved after September this year. It is noted that there will be no call for the submission thereof. The onus for submission of the annual report by the stipulated date rests on myself.
2. Submission of the relevant request to RECH in the event of any amendments to the study for approval by RECH prior to any partial or full implementation thereof.
3. Submission of the relevant request to RECH in the event of any extension to the study for approval by RECH prior to the implementation thereof.
4. Immediate submission of the relevant report to RECH in the event of any unanticipated problems, serious incidents or adverse events.
5. Immediate discontinuation of the study in the event of any serious unanticipated problems, serious incidents or serious adverse events.
6. Immediate submission of the relevant report to RECH in the event of the expected or unexpected closure/discontinuation of the study (for example, de-registration of the PI).
7. Immediate submission of the relevant report to RECH in the event of study deviations, violations and/or exceptions.
8. Acknowledgement that the study could be subjected to passive and/or active monitoring without prior notice at the discretion of RECH.

Signed: _____ Date: 29 April 2021 _____

APPENDIX I: SEMI-STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH PARTICIPANTS

Participant A's interview

Interviewer: Hi, thank you so much for your participation in this study, I really appreciate it. I'm going to ask you a few questions, so feel free to answer or respond in a voice-note, as this makes it easier for me to transcribe at a later stage. Okay, the first question I would like to ask you is, "What were your expectations of teaching before you entered the working environment?"

Participant A: Hi Michelle, it's no problem at all. I'm happy to help in anyway. Ooh okay, my expectations of teaching were a little romanticized at first, if I'm honest. I feel like everyone had hyped it up to make it seem like this rewarding profession. I honestly expected a lot more than I received – especially those first few months of teaching...

Interviewer: Could you describe, as best you can, what your initial teaching experiences were?

Participant A: Well, it was plain awful to be honest. I walked into a classroom with no resources, no stationery, no planning file from the previous teacher. The students were also incredibly rude – they had zero discipline and respect for female authority. I mean, these were Grade Two's and they just didn't care. Their (the learners) background education was just nowhere, I felt like I had to teach Grade 1 work to the class just to make sure they had a basis of knowledge to build on. My colleagues weren't much help either. I didn't know any staff members and I suppose everyone is just trying to get through their own work. It was tough. Nothing like when we were student teaching.

Interviewer: That first year of teaching is certainly a challenging one. Could you please describe your tertiary education: where did you obtain your teaching degree from?

Participant A: Sure, I studied here in PE at Nelson Mandela University. It was a four year degree and it was nice. I do feel though, that I got the bulk of my teaching experience in my last year, my fourth year of studies. That's when I really decided I want to become a teacher.

Interviewer: What would you say those deciding factors were, if I may ask? And how would you describe your tertiary education experience in terms of preparing you for teaching in a classroom?

Participant A: The deciding factor for me was the actual school I was based at for my teaching prac. It was so lovely and well-resourced. The staff were all friendly and super helpful and the learners were all so polite. I just had a really good experience – in all Foundation Phase grades, because we had to get exposure in all the different classes. In terms of university preparing me for teaching... I'd say it was a bit of a let-down. A lot of our modules were theory-based. There was more studying than teaching, it felt like. I only got real exposure to teaching in my fourth year because that was a year-long practical, not like the other times we did pracs when it was only for a week or two at a school, or perhaps a term.

Interviewer: What challenges, if any, did you face in your first year of teaching?

Participant A: For me, the biggest challenge was the admin. I had no clue there was so much planning involved in teaching, and not just lesson planning, I mean the marking and the feedback and coming up with report card comments and all that SA-SAMS stuff. It was super stressful. I also had no help from my colleagues. I had to go and ask the HoD so many times what to do and when things were due... she didn't even make the time to run through how things work with me. It was not fun, but luckily one of the other teachers eventually showed me her planning file and how to log marks into SA-SAMS and all that stuff.

Interviewer: So, from what I'm hearing, you were left to deal with many issues all by yourself in the initial stages of teaching? Were there any professional development or induction programmes or even support mechanisms, in place? If so, could you elaborate?

Participant A: No, unfortunately there were none. I know at other schools they give new teachers, like, a mentor or a booklet or something. I just felt that they (the school) didn't have time for me. Thank goodness some of my colleagues, who I'm now friends with, were actually nice enough to help and provide emotional support. I did have to ask for help though, it was never offered. Which is sad.

Interviewer: That is sad, I'm sorry. What type of support would you have liked to receive?

Participant A: I think I would have liked to receive just a "hey, how are you doing? Are you coping?" in the beginning. Some guidance on how to prepare a planning file would have been great... and those report logs! I felt so bad logging almost half my class as failures. I mean, I didn't know what to do. I actually got shouted at because I didn't offer intervention strategies for the students that were failing... I mean, I didn't even know we had that to offer in the first place! So ya, I think I would have liked to see more support in terms of mentoring or at least a bit of guidance when it came to all the admin.

Interviewer: Goodness. That is tough. Would you say that the challenges you faced made you a better teacher? Or even strengthened your reasoning to continue being a teacher?

Participant A: Yes and no I guess. Look, I think it definitely takes a lot of hard work – especially in the beginning. If I look back on my first year of teaching, it was hell. Now that I'm heading into my fourth year, it is definitely a lot easier. Or should I say, I feel more confident in my abilities to teach. I've also changed classes; I now teach little Grade 1's and they are very sweet. I think this school in particular, is not an easy one to integrate into, but I have learnt a lot and now it almost comes naturally. So ya, I think I'll carry on teaching for a few more years at least!

Interviewer: My last question for you and then we're done for the day, is, "How did you adapt to and overcome these challenges?"

Participant A: I think for me, being able to receive some emotional support from a colleague already helped with the challenges I was faced with. I adapted to the stress of all the admin by deciding to break the curriculum or syllabus down into manageable chunks. I took everything one week at a time and decided to work at my own pace and do things my own way. Receiving the planning file from my colleague was so kind and so helpful, but I struggled initially because I tried to almost copy how she did her planning. Her method just didn't work for me. Once I realized I could change it and use what worked best for me, it got a lot easier.

Participant B's interview

Interviewer: Hello there, thanks so much for participating in my study, I really do appreciate it. How it's going to work is, I'm going to ask you a few questions and you need to please respond to them also using the voice-note option. The first question I would like to ask you is, "What were your expectations of teaching before you entered the working environment?"

Participant B: Hi, my expectations were that teaching in general would be a lot less stressful than what it currently is. I also expected to spend more of my time with my students than doing all the paperwork and marking books and stuff.

Interviewer: Could you please describe your tertiary education? In other words, where did you obtain your teaching degree from?

Participant B: I studied through Unisa and was lucky enough to get an internship as a student teacher while I was studying. So the school I was working at, helped pay a little bit toward my degree. It was really tough working and studying at the same time. I mean, I was basically working full-time hours and studying in the evening.

Interviewer: It's not easy working and studying. Well done to you! So would you say your degree was more practical or theory-based? Did any of the course material relate to what it's like being in a classroom environment?

Participant B: Uh, I would say it was quite practical, yes. In my first year already I had to teach lessons and have them marked by someone.

Interviewer: Would you say that your tertiary education adequately prepared you for teaching in a classroom? Or would you say it was your experience as an intern, or student teacher rather, that prepared you for the role of teacher?

Participant B: Sho, umm... I think, like most degrees, there were some aspects that I could use in a classroom context and then there were some things were I just thought "huh, what does this have to do with anything?" But I can definitely say if I wasn't a full-time student teacher, I would have battled just coming onto the scene as a newly graduated teacher. My experience working as an intern really opened my eyes to the world of education and all the behind-the-scenes stuff that you never really thought of when *you* were in school.

Interviewer: Once you obtained your teaching degree and became the sole teacher of a class, did you face any challenges during that first year of teaching? And if so, what challenges did you face?

Participant B: One of the main things I struggled with was student discipline. I'm not sure if it was a language or cultural thing, but for some reason when I was a student teacher, all the teachers I assisted were Afrikaans-speaking. They had good discipline over their classes. When I became a teacher, I battled to get the kids to listen to me. It was like they just didn't care and they had no respect. Look, I understand that each year you get different learners, but I think I was really unlucky with my class at the time. I also think that I maybe tried too hard to make sure my students liked me, rather than getting down to business. I remember pinteresting all sorts of different disciplining strategies. It got a little better towards the end of my first year of teaching, but that is the one thing I really had a hard time dealing with. And it's always your class, no one else's that is problematic. I felt like I couldn't complain about my students to the other teachers because just now they thought I was a useless teacher. Then what.

Interviewer: Thank you for your response. In saying that, do you think your experiences as a first-year teacher differed from the expectations you had of what it must be like?

Participant B: A little bit. I think the reality of being a teacher is a lot harder than teachers actually make it look. I learnt a lot while I was studying and interning, but when the full responsibility lies on you, you start to feel the pressure. For me, it was tough because I felt so capable as a student teacher and I thought it would be the same when I qualified. But it was still an adjustment. I am very grateful for the exposure I did have though... it was more than I would have gotten if I didn't intern as a student teacher.

Interviewer: What professional development or support mechanisms, if any, were in place at your school once you became a teacher?

Participant B: Ahh, we didn't really have like training courses or anything. And I wasn't assigned a mentor teacher or anything like that. What we did was have a meeting every second week or so with all the teachers in the same grade, to plan and make sure everyone was doing similar work and activities with their classes.

So that was nice because I knew I could keep up with the standard of work. I also met with my HoD and the school Principal every term so they could just check-in with me and see how I'm doing. It was more awkward than helpful... I felt like I was being interviewed all over again!

Interviewer: Oh dear. It's nice to hear that there was some collaboration between you and the other teachers teaching the same grade though. Do you wish you had received any other support?

Participant B: To be honest, I don't know what more the school could have offered to make my experience a bit better. I thought they did alright. I would have maybe liked more support in terms of navigating the system, like the admin stuff, and how to deal with discipline early on. Those staff meetings really helped, because the CAPS document I was given in the beginning was a bit overwhelming. But ja, the collaboration was nice.

Interviewer: Sounds like you received more support and guidance from your school than most novice teachers out there. Would you say that the challenges you faced made you a better teacher? Or even strengthened your reasoning to continue being a teacher?

Participant B: I would say they did, yes. I love what I do and I love working with children. I think if you're not 110% passionate about teaching, then it will definitely start to feel like a chore. It's very easy to feel despondent when it comes to all the paperwork and report marks and stuff, but you need to find something good in every day and hold onto it.

Interviewer: Okay, last question. How did you adapt to and overcome these challenges?

Participant B: I overcame my challenges by learning from my mistakes, because all first year teachers make mistakes. I focused on seeing the failures as a lesson to be learned and looked at what kind of teacher I wanted to be. Once I accepted and embraced that, everything started to fall into place.

Participant C's interview

Interviewer: Hi, thank you so much for taking the time to participate in this study, I really appreciate it. I'm going to ask you some questions, so feel free to answer or respond in a voice-note, as this makes it easier for me to transcribe at a later stage. Question number one is, "What were your expectations of teaching before you entered the working environment?"

Participant C: Hey, it's really no problem at all. Good question... my expectations were short working hours – I didn't think I would be taking almost 80% of my work home with me. I also expected lovely long school holidays to myself and lots of interesting arts and crafts with my class.

Interviewer: You're currently teaching Grade R. I take it your expectations of teaching were not completely met? Could you describe, as best you can, what your initial teaching experiences were?

Participant C: The best way to describe it is that it was like riding a bicycle. Except, the bicycle was on fire and I had no clue how to ride that bicycle! Haha. My first year of teaching was a total nightmare. I don't think I'll ever forget it. My very first day of giving class, I had a child bite me on the arm and another child vomit on my carpet. Grade R is no joke.

Interviewer: Oh wow! Okay. Would you say that your tertiary education experience prepared you for teaching in a classroom?

Participant C: Hmm, I would say maybe half-half? I studied at Rhodes University and I quite enjoyed it. I actually studied BA General, but then wanted to go into teaching. So I did my PGCE in Foundation Phase Education and then proceeded with my Honours in education. I don't think I'll be doing my Master's anytime soon though! Haha. I think I learnt more about teaching and how to deal with children from being in an actual classroom environment though. The things I sometimes hear myself saying are quite unbelievable... like, the other day I had to ask a kid to please stop licking the window! University doesn't prepare you for all the things that could go wrong in a classroom. I felt like the only thing I took from my PGCE and Honours was the knowledge of how to spot children with different barriers to learning and the need for bilingual classroom labels.

Interviewer: That's very specific. So could you tell me, specifically, what challenges you faced in your first year of teaching?

Participant C: Sure. Well, I had this kid in my class who was almost impossible to deal with. He would throw tantrums and destroy my stationery and also hurt the other kids one day, and the next day he would be a completely different child. Very sweet and loving and eager to please me (his teacher). I remember calling his parents in for a meeting to discuss the possibility of taking him for a scholastic assessment and to see the school's play therapist and his parents just blew up at me. I was shouted at and called unprofessional. These parents basically said I have no life experience and know nothing about their son and that there wasn't anything wrong with him. It was horrible. I felt like an imposter, like maybe I wasn't supposed to be teaching children for a living and that maybe they were right. I also remember that my principal didn't really stand up for me. I'm not sure if it's a private-school thing or just a thing at my particular school, but the parent is always right. Eventually, the parents moved the kid out of the school, but it was the worst feeling not knowing how to deal with those parents as well as not being supported by your principal. I felt really alone and useless. Luckily, that was the only really bad case I've had.... So far. Haha.

Interviewer: Goodness that is so sad. I'm sorry you had to deal with that all by yourself. The next question I'd like to ask you is "what professional development or support mechanisms were in place for novice teachers, such as yourself, at the school?"

Participant C: I would love to tell you that there were so many programmes in place and that we were nurtured and warmly welcomed, but there was no support. I honestly think the principal adopts the strategy of "out of sight, out of mind". There is no sense of camaraderie or any collaboration between the teachers. In university we learnt the value in developing a community of practice and that was nowhere to be seen. It honestly felt like I was thrown in the deep end and left to my own devices. Luckily, Grade R isn't too hectic when it comes to teaching content, and it helps that I'm quite creative for all the artsy stuff we do in class, but it's still a major responsibility to be looking after and educating these kids on a daily basis! I get home, exhausted, and then struggle to fall asleep at night because I'm thinking about our next class activity or I'm worried about this kid who isn't able to

make friends. You know what I mean? Overall, I would have loved just a little bit of guidance on all the new things a teacher should know, like the system of operations – especially how to go about dealing with problematic learners and parents!

Interviewer: I certainly do. As a teacher, your day doesn't end when you leave the school premises. Same for holidays, half of it is spent planning and making resources for the new term. Would you say that the challenges you faced have made you a better teacher? Or have made you certain that this is the profession you are meant to be in? And if not, how so?

Participant C: Uhm, I definitely feel like I learnt a lot. I also feel that no teacher should have to go through what I went through, without support from a colleague or department head or something at least. There are days when I question whether or not this is the right profession for me. I do feel like your colleagues have a tremendous impact on how you feel about your work environment. Luckily I was able to make a few friends here. I think at the end of the day, you just want to feel appreciated and supported in what you're doing. Teaching is a thankless job, but it really is rewarding, too. I still have some kids from the older grades, who I used to teach, come say hello to me. It's really special to know that you're able to make a difference in the lives of these children, not matter how small you may think that difference is.

Interviewer: The last question I have for you is: "How did you adapt to and overcome these challenges?"

Participant C: I wouldn't say that I was able to overcome my challenges, as there will always be something you find challenging. But I adapted to my challenges by learning to not be so sensitive and stand up for myself more in the workplace, obviously while still remaining professional. I also had to remind myself almost daily that I am also learning, but at the same time, I know a whole lot more than the parents do about educating children and that I wasn't going to let them push me around or have them dictate how things should be done in my classroom. I would say I adapted by growing a bit of a thick skin. Ha ha.

Participant D's interview

Interviewer: Hello, thanks again for volunteering to participate in this study and to answer some of my questions, I really appreciate it. My first question for you is, "What were your expectations of teaching before you entered the working environment?"

Participant D: Hi, it's only a pleasure. My expectations of teaching before I entered the work environment... hmmm. I think I expected a lot less drama than there actually is. I always thought teaching would be about the mutual give and take of knowledge and information, and that it was basically just about you (the teacher) and your class, but in reality I find it's more to do with adults than teaching actual kids. Like, most of the teachers are quite cliquey and they tend to stick with their group of colleagues. The school where I was placed in my first year of teaching was one where I actually attended the school myself when I was a kid! And I don't know if it's because as a student, I maybe... what's the word... romanticized the school, or only saw what was happening in the classroom, but teaching their as an adult was quite a let-down for me because of how isolated and insignificant I felt. Especially in my first year. My colleagues, who were once my teachers, only saw me as a kid, it felt like, with no skills or knowledge to bring to the table. I think they saw me as incompetent because of how young and inexperienced I was. The teachers don't really collaborate or share ideas. I mean, at Uni we basically embraced collaboration as a curriculum. I once asked a teacher to take a look at my planning and she told me it was okay and that I'll learn how it needs to be done – basically implying that it was wrong – but then a week later I saw she did the same art activities with her class that I had written down in my planning! Cheeky hey. The way some of the teachers also spoke about their students, especially the ones with learning problems, was so heartbreaking to listen to. It's like they thought they were so much better than these kids when they were the same age and everything was just a weird kind of competition. So yeah, I think in general, I just expected teaching and the actual teacher environment to be more accepting. I don't know.

Interviewer: Thank you. You mentioned earlier that you incorporated collaborative practice at university. Could you describe your tertiary education? And where it was that you obtained your teaching degree from?

Participant D: Yes, sure. I initially started at NMU, but then switched to study at Stellenbosch. I loved it so much I also ended up doing my Honours degree there. I loved Stellies because of the community of practice we built together as a year of students. We shared everything, we worked together, we embraced each other and helped each other when needed. There was no mind-set of 'this is mine, I worked long on it and no, I won't be sharing it with you'. At Stellies I gained a lot of experience early on in my studies because we did a lot of community-based volunteering at schools. I mean, there was a pre-primary just down the road from where I stayed, so I was always there helping where I could. What I enjoyed about studying there was that I was able to develop my interpersonal and communication skills. So when I would return to PE and do my teaching practical in my home-town, I felt so confident and almost self-assured in my abilities. I actually did my final year prac at the school where I teach now and the staff all seemed to be thrilled at how I had grown up, yet, when I started working there, they all treated me like a kid again. It wasn't nice. I felt very self-conscious and basically like an intruder. Like I didn't belong there or was even welcome there. The kids in my class were honestly the only reason I continued to go back to work every day.

Interviewer: Oh no, that's terrible. You mentioned gaining plenty of knowledge and skills while you were in Stellenbosch University. How would you say your university degree prepared you for teaching in a classroom?

Participant D: Well, like I said earlier, we learnt plenty of things relevant to teaching. Practical things that helped me a lot in the classroom. So, I'm thankful for that exposure. Yes, teaching is quite hectic in your first year, but luckily I had my mom to turn to for help – she's also a Foundation Phase teacher. What I do wish university had prepared me more for, was how to work alongside different personalities in the workplace. Because, if you think about it, straight after graduating, you are the youngest person in the workplace, doesn't matter what profession you're in. Like, I really battled connecting with my colleagues, and I've read before that your colleagues can either make or break your attitude towards your place of work. So building those professional relationships is key and something I definitely wished I had learnt about at varsity.

Interviewer: Could you perhaps tell me about the challenges, if any, you experienced in your first year of teaching?

Participant D: Phew, where do I begin? Haha. I think every teacher's first year in the profession is a total nightmare. Like I said, I was fine with the teaching itself. I was put in a Grade 3 class, so the learners were quite capable and already had a good foundation of knowledge. Perhaps if I was put in a Grade 1 or 2 class I would have battled a bit more, but ya. I was very happy with my class... it really helped that I was blessed with a great bunch of students, they really crawled into my heart. My biggest challenge was the cattiness in the workplace. So, because the Foundation Phase department was separate from the older grades, we spent a lot of time in each other's company and with the majority of us being female, certain cliques developed. I was the youngest there and felt that the only thing I had in common with these teachers was our chosen profession. But every time I tried to talk about anything school-related, they seemed to have such a negative reaction toward me. Like, I get that you don't want to talk about work during break time, but there were times when I genuinely needed advice and was just brushed aside. I felt very isolated, like I was seen as more of an ignorant irritation than anything else. I also really battled with the lack of communication and collaboration when it came to work and planning and assessments and stuff.

Interviewer: What professional development or support mechanisms, if any, were in place?

Participant D: Hmm, we would have bi-weekly staff meetings to check in on the curriculum and planning... this was basically to see if you were on target with CAPS and what section of work needed to be covered during that part of the term. We also had the Deputy Principal do classroom observations, for all staff, but never received feedback on that. Ooh, one time we were asked if we'd like to partake in a first-aid course that the school would fund half of. That was about it. I wasn't assigned a mentor or anything. My department head didn't check in with me or rather, check up on me. I eventually had to adopt the mindset of 'no news is good news'.

Interviewer: What type of support would you have liked to receive?

Participant D: I would have like to receive a little more warmth and approachability from my colleagues. It would also have been nice for my department head to ask one of the more experienced teachers to just be on standby if I had any questions or of I needed help with anything. I relied on my mom more than anything else. Luckily she could help me out with all the tech stuff like how to upload exam results onto the database etc. I did receive the previous teacher's planning and resources though, so that was super helpful.

Interviewer: That is lucky. Would you say that the challenges you faced have made you a better teacher? In other words, could you adapt to the challenges you experienced? If not, how so?

Participant D: That's a good one. Uhm, I think if it weren't for the amazing class I had in my first year, I would probably have left the school and gone to teach elsewhere. I think I'll always be a teacher though. I am very passionate about what I do. The challenges I faced were more adult-based, if that makes sense. I think that whole experience of feeling insignificant just further motivated me to see it through and show my colleagues I was serious about sticking around. Eventually they warmed up to me, this was about halfway through my second year of teaching and now we all get along fairly well. Look, there will always be a few personality clashes, but at the end of the day you just have to remind yourself to keep it professional. Luckily another new teacher joined our staff towards the end of my second year and the two of us get along really well.

Interviewer: My last question for you is, "How did you adapt to and overcome these challenges?"

Participant D: Well, my challenges dealt mostly with a lack of support from colleagues. I would say this challenge was overcome when I made friends with a staff member who joined the team shortly after me, but I had to adapt by accepting that I wasn't going to receive much help from my colleagues. I also made use of the sources available to me, like my mom who is a teacher too and I spoke to my varsity friends who were teaching at different schools. I learned to become self-sufficient so that I wouldn't need to communicate as much with my colleagues. It sounds sad, but yeah, that's what I did.

Participant E's interview

Interviewer: Hey, thanks so much for participating in my study, I really do appreciate it. How it's going to work is, I'm going to ask you a few questions and you need to please respond to them also using the voice-note option. My first question I would like to ask you is, "What were your expectations of teaching before you entered the working environment?"

Participant E: Hi, it's a pleasure. I'm excited. Okay cool, my expectations of teaching were based quite a bit on my experiences as a learner. What I saw is what I thought teaching was like. Well, it was a trap. Turns out that teachers just make everything look super easy! So when I went to varsity we learnt about all the aspects behind teaching and then I realized teaching was a little bit more technical. But when I actually became a teacher it was *very* different to how I expected it to be. Ya, I expected teaching to be quite fun, almost like a daily conversation filled with learning news facts and skills. In reality though, it's more about disciplining kids and making sure you teach all the assessment content in time for exams.

Interviewer: How did your tertiary education prepare you for teaching in a classroom?

Participant E: So I initially studied Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in English and Philosophy, but what can you really do with just a BA? So I then did my Post Grad Certificate in Education – both through UNISA. I chose Foundation Phase because my sister has a child who was a toddler at that stage and I really love that age group. I wouldn't say my studies prepared me that well for teaching, maybe if I actually studied education from the start it would have been more beneficial. I remember doing a lot of assignments... some of them were interesting and useful, the others not so much.

Interviewer: What challenges, if any, did you face in your first year of teaching?

Participant E: Discipline mostly. I really struggled with the learners' behaviour during class. It felt like no matter what I did – and I tried everything – I just couldn't get through to those kids. How do you make a child *want* to learn? I can't force anyone to do

something if they don't want to. The whole school struggles with it. These learners come from the townships and they see so much crime and violence, I think they know already what their lives are going to look like. It's heartbreaking. And no matter how many times you tell them that a good education can help them to break that cycle, they still don't care. I had a learner walk out in the middle of one of my maths lessons one day and when I asked him where he's going, he said 'to go hang out with my gang' and he left the school premises, in the middle of first period. And that was a Grade 3 learner! It was crazy. The worst part was also the fact that these students have no respect for female authority, they're much better with the male teachers. Oh! And the marking! Sho, there's a lot of marking that no one warns you about.

Interviewer: Marking books is a killer! My next question for you revolves around support. What professional development or support mechanisms, if any, were in place at your school?

Participant E: I was lucky enough to know one of the teachers; she actually helped get me the job. And we teach the same grade, so she gave me everything I needed. The principal also checked up on me in the first few weeks to see how I was doing. We also have weekly meetings to discuss work for the following week, so the teachers really support each other there. I won't say there's a lot of development stuff... we don't really go on training courses or anything like that, which I think would have been beneficial, but there is definitely support for new teachers for which I am very grateful.

Interviewer: That's wonderful to hear you had support from your colleagues. Would you say that the challenges you faced, specifically that of poor discipline amongst the learners, have made you a better teacher? Or have made you certain that this is the profession you are meant to be in? In other words, could you adapt to the challenges you experienced?

Participant E: I'll be honest, I had to listen to that question twice. Haha. Look, there were plenty of days when I thought that teaching was not for me. To spend your entire day disciplining rude children is no fun. I'm not sure if I've become a better teacher or if I've just gotten better at managing the class. Because with 46 children in a

class, you don't teach, you basically crowd control. But, I can honestly say that there's some good in every day. I can go home and say "sho, today was a bad day, BUT..." and that 'but' makes everything worth it. I just have to keep reminding myself where these kids come from and that I have the opportunity to teach and to hopefully help them along.

Interviewer: My last question for you and then we're done for the day, is, "How did you adapt to and overcome these challenges?"

Participant E: Hmm... I think I was able to adapt to the challenges by implementing disciplinary structures in my class, such as a reward chart which reinforces positive behavior rather than disciplines the negative. I got the idea from a teaching website. I also learned to use my voice as a tool for managing the learners in my class – I would speak softly and slowly when I wanted them to listen carefully. My colleagues also offered advice and shared how they manage their classrooms in terms of discipline.

APPENDIX J: TRANSCRIPTION OF FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Transcription of the focus group discussion

- *Could we each share one account of the challenges you faced in your first year of teaching?*

Participant A: I really battled with all the admin. No one warns you about this stuff when you're studying to become a teacher.

Participant B: Ya, the admin is bad. I mainly struggled with student discipline. It was like the second I became a fully qualified teacher the kids just didn't care for listening. Lack of respect is something I dealt with on almost a daily basis.

Participant C: I battled with a lack of support from my colleagues – especially the principal. I had an issue with a learner and was still new to the school and its procedures and I was unsure as to how to converse with parents. So I had this meeting with parents of a troubled learner and they basically verbally attacked me. When I told my principal she didn't really care or take it further with the parents. I felt very unworthy and unimportant.

Participant D: Shame man, that's terrible! I also battled with a lack of support when I started teaching. For me, though, it was more the lack of communication at my school that I struggled with. My fellow colleagues were very rude and uninterested in helping me. I would feel so stupid to ask them questions about work because they would get so irritated. I also struggled with the admin, but it was mostly being alone and having to deal with problems on your own.

Participant E: See, I also had a challenge with discipline. I work at a government school and these kids... shame, these kids have seen some terrible stuff. I find that they don't care about having manners or showing respect around the female teachers. My colleague, who is a male, has no problems with discipline in his class because the kids are scared of him. I struggle every day, but I also don't want to be a scary teacher, you know?

- *What do you know now, that you wish you were told in your first year of teaching?*

Participant A: Oh my word! Haha, I think the phrase “this too shall pass”. I should have tattooed it somewhere on my arm. I think, for me, I wish I had been told about the after class workload and to be more organised. Like, daily planning is a mission, but it seriously helps.

Participant B: Don’t try and be friends with your students. And also to set classroom rules or boundaries or whatever very early on in the year.

Participant C: Hmm.. for me I think it would probably be to not sweat the small stuff. There were times were I thought I was a complete failure and that I had ruined everything and would never be a good teacher again. But unfortunately those things and that confidence in yourself only comes with years of experience hey.

Participant D: Sho, I think I wish I was told to choose another profession! Kidding, I do enjoy teaching. I wish I was more confident to speak my mind and ask for help. For me, I wish I was told that there’s no shame in asking for help and that everyone was once a beginner. That would have been comforting for younger me.

Participant E: Well, I must say I wish someone would have told me to just stop, breathe and take each day as it comes. Because nothing ever works out how you planned and you are forever playing catch up. I also wish someone had told me to focus more on the learner than their grades, because it really is a blessing to be able to touch so many lives. I also like that saying “don’t sweat the small stuff”. That’s nice.

- *How did you feel during those initial stages of your teaching career?*

Participant A: Goodness, I remember feeling very upset. Almost like I had been lied to because my expectations of teaching were so different to what the reality of it all is. I also felt very unsure of myself. My second year of teaching was totally different to my first because I had that year of experience under the belt. I guess we all go through it...

Participant B: Uhm, I think I was okay... I wasn't a total ball of stress. But I guess that I was very lucky to have had that experience teaching for most of my time studying. I studied online and worked at school in the mornings, so I got to see everything that was going on.

Participant C: I felt exhausted. I think I maybe even experienced burnout. I remember coming home after school at four o'clock in the afternoons and then just passing out until supper time I was so tired. I think I also felt overwhelmed because of all the marking... I took books home to mark almost every day.

Participant D: Haha I felt like a bit of a door mat to be honest. Everyone just walked all over me and I let them. I felt very insecure because I wasn't sure whether what I was doing and teaching was the right thing or not. You also worry about messing up these kids, I mean, you are in charge of their education! No pressure!

Participant E: I felt cheated! I thought teaching would be fun, but half your day you spend disciplining kids and the other half you spend worrying about them and stressing about their marks.

- *What strategies did you implement in your classroom as a means to adapt or cope?*

Participant A: I used to have something called a "brain-break" between each period, where I would give the learners a word search or a crossword or even riddles to solve. They loved it, but it was actually so that I could get ready for teaching the next subject's content!

Participant B: That is actually so clever. I used to spend ages marking books and correcting learners mistakes. There's always slower workers and fast learners in your class and I used to feel like I needed to give the faster workers new work to do – which lead to me marking almost double the workload sometimes! Instead, now when I mark books I use a code for marking. For example, my learners know that if they see a double-underlined word it's a spelling mistake they need to fix or if a word is circled it should have been left out and stuff like that. This helped me to

manage my admin load. I also ended up printing a 'busy book' with games and story problems in for the faster workers, so they still keep busy, but I don't have to mark any books of theirs.

Participant C: I was taught in university that every child learns in a different way, so my theme in my Grade R class was "unique-ness" and this meant that we embraced each other's differences. I used this in my own personal...professional life and adopted the mind-set of "you are not like the other teachers, so you don't have to do exactly what they do with their class". So yeah, my first year of teaching I basically took it one week at a time with regards to planning and prepping, which really helped me find balance.

Participant D: Don't judge you guys, but when I first started working I struggled to connect with my colleagues, so I would spend my breaks catching up on my marking and prepping for the second half of the school day. That also helped me get my work done mostly at school and not at home. I also implemented like a discipline chart, where the kids would move up the chart if they were good and move down if they were bad. If they reached the top they would get a sweetie. It's bribery, but it worked! Haha.

Participant E: Jong, I don't really know what strategy I used. You could say I used the strategy of walking out of my classroom if the learners misbehaved. Before I used to just shout and almost lose my voice, but instead I just walked out, calmed myself down – because they don't listen – and then I would walk back in and wait for them to be quiet again.

- *Did you seek alternative assistance or guidance during this period? From Who? Where?*

Participant A: In the beginning, I almost felt too embarrassed to ask my colleagues for help because I didn't want it to seem like I didn't know what I was doing. I ended up asking a friend of mine who studied with me for help, but it's difficult when they teach at a different school to you and are receiving amazing support from their colleagues, you know. I ended up Googling a lot of teacher activities and lesson plans and stuff. Oops.

Participant B: Uh, I didn't have to ask for help outside the school, if I was really stuck with something I would ask one of the teachers for help. But I did go on Pinterest a lot to try find ideas and lesson plans – especially for art.


Participant C: I also didn't have anyone to ask for help, really. I mostly tried to observe what the other teachers were doing with their classes and then took it from there. You actually feel like a total failure sometimes when you have to ask for help on how to do simple...at least now they feel like simple, things.

Participant D: Yoh guys, I asked my mom for help! Haha. I'm lucky, my mom is also a teacher, so I could ask her for help and guidance if I needed it. And as for the work aspect, the teacher who's class I took over from, was kind enough to leave me her planning file from previous years, so I was all sorted in terms of that.

Participant E: No, because luckily I didn't need to. One of my good friends is actually my colleague also. She gave me everything I need. And the staff are all very nice and supportive of each other. The discipline though, sho, I think I must maybe Google a behaviour chart for my class!

APPENDIX K: SIMILARITY REPORT

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EXPLORING THE ADAPTATION CHALLENGES FACED BY NOVICE
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By
Michelle Grimbeek

² Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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