

# **THE INFLUENCE OF CORE QUALITIES OF NOVICE PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ON THEIR PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE**

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## **SUPERVISORS' AUTHORISATION**

As the candidate's supervisors we agree/do not agree to the submission of this thesis.

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## DECLARATION

**I, Vikash Baichoo, declare that**

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RESEARCHER: V. BAICHOO



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Date: April 2019

## DEDICATION

*I dedicate this thesis to:*

*Reshma - my dedicated wife, you always stood by my side, you always encouraged me, you are and have been the inspiration for my progress*

*Tharun and Varun - my precious little boys*

*Dad, Mum, Ashlesh and Shikha who were always encouraging*



*Lord Ganesha and Kabir Saheb*

**“If we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.’ (Nelson Mandela, in his 1994 inaugural address)**

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Through the journey of writing this thesis report I have witnessed my own transformation thanks to people who have always motivated me. As I look back, I am grateful they came my way and I send them all my blessings.

Ubuntu: is a Nguni Bantu term meaning "I am because we are" which can also translate into "I am what I am because of you". I am what I am because of you, my supervisors, and colleagues. You have been most significant in my life.

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### **To my Novice Teacher participants Sweety, Alvin and Anita:**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study explored the deployment of the core qualities of Novice Teachers in facing challenges within the Mauritian context. The main purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the role of core qualities in how the average novice teacher adapts to the challenges they encounter in their first year as credentialed primary school teachers. Research literature used in this study has indicated that although novice teachers are often unprepared to meet the contextual challenges they encounter, many still adapt and survive. This is contrary to most the literature on novice teachers which tends to portray them in negative terms. Korthagen's core qualities derived from the field of positive psychology and the onion model proved useful in helping to understand how novice teachers adapt and survive their first year of practice as credentialed teachers.

This research study was located within an interpretivist narrative inquiry design. Three novice teacher participants teaching in various schools were purposively selected for the study. All participants have studied for their professional qualification at the Mauritius Institute of Education. Given the exploratory nature of the study because little is known about core qualities, a qualitative research approach was used for the generation of data. This included conversational interviews with the participants which lasted over a period of three years. Data gathering produced narratives for each participant which were presented in first and third person to both capture the voices of the participants and also analyse their teaching practices using the analytics of the study namely the personal biography of the participants; the education experience of the participants in becoming a teacher; their teaching practices that illuminates the core qualities that they deploy in their teaching practices and their reflections on their teaching practices based on their interview processes.

Analysis of the stories in the study identified three themes humanistic core qualities, much of which resonate with my theoretical framework that guided this study, professional core qualities that delve into the knowledge and training received in their training programme to become a teacher and contextual core qualities that I introduce as framing their teaching practices. Key findings that emerge from the analysis in the chapter reveal that because there is a disjuncture between being theoretically prepared to teach and the reality of the classroom, novice teachers default to three core qualities namely the humanistic core quality of empathy and compassion, the professional core qualities of knowledge and planning and contextual core qualities of regulatory frameworks that forces them to find alternate and more humane approaches to promote teaching and learning. Furthermore, the findings also reveal that the process followed by novice teachers in coping with their first teaching experience is reflection, going back to their basket of alternatives and adaptation of selected

alternatives to their classroom context. Those findings are theorized with respect to the theoretical framework and pertinent literature and an evolutionary adaptation model is proposed.

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## **ACRONYMS**

CTL -Contextual Teaching and Learning

HPE- Health and Physical Education

ICT - Information and Communications Technology

MIE - Mauritius Institute of Education

SBE - School Based Experience

TDP - Teacher's Diploma Primary

ZEP – Zones Education Prioritaires (French, literally meaning Priority Education Zones)

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The origin of my study

As a teacher educator with a background in educational psychology I have always been naturally interested by the personhood of teachers. My work as a teacher trainer allowed me to develop an interest in how our trainee teachers in Mauritius managed to teach during their first year despite all the difficulties and complexities associated with teaching. What I often saw in their classrooms was in contradiction to criticisms I often heard about our students not having the standards required to be teachers. My natural curiosity for how they managed through challenges led to my interest in the literature on beginning teachers, while deciding on a proposal topic for my thesis, I came to learn that many of them have to survive and adapt during their first year of practice which is fraught with challenges. However, what was also noticeable was that there were more studies on novice teachers' problems than how they survived and adapted to their profession. What really sparked my interest to do my study on the core qualities of novice teachers was an article by Korthagen (2004) mentioning the core qualities of a teacher related to the work of Seligman and others on character strengths and how they helped in overcoming adversity. Korthagen's article appealed to me both as a teacher educator and a psychologist. As a teacher educator I was aware of the challenges of teaching, and as a psychologist I was naturally interested in the personality of the teacher. The core qualities of a novice teacher, therefore, became my area of interest as core qualities was a newer way of representing the person in the novice teacher.

As I read articles on character strengths and I came across one by Sheldon & King, (2001) that defined positive psychology as the scientific study of ordinary human strengths that revisits the average person to find out "what works", "what is right" and "what is improving". This article struck another chord in me as those ordinary human strengths were what Korthagen (2004) had described as synonymous to core qualities but in contrast to Korthagen who mentioned core qualities as an ideal to be attained by teachers through core reflection, Sheldon and King (2001) provided an avenue into understanding the average and typical novice teacher because the character strengths in positive psychology are seen as typical to all human beings. This idea of strengths being typical to every individual is reflected in the term "ubiquitous" used by Dahlsgaard, Peterson, & Seligman (2005), to signify that strengths and virtues are universal across cultures in humanity and present to varying extents in every individual. This idea of the average novice teacher using their ordinary human strengths such as perseverance became compelling because by virtue of being ordinary and therefore typical for every person and therefore possibly the average teacher, I thought that they could explain

at least to some extent how novice teachers survive and adapt. I, however, decided to use the term core qualities for my study because character strengths were operationalized for quantitative research and thus narrowly defined. Core qualities on the other hand was a term that was more flexible to use and suited my intention to conduct an exploratory study.

Later on, by engaging with writing this thesis I realized with hindsight that the idea of core qualities could be related to my life story, and my engagement opened doors for rediscovering what was existent but unconscious in me. It came to my mind that I might be an optimist and that optimism has possibly allowed me to see the good side of life and helped overcome to some extent some of my challenges as a teacher educator and in personal life. Thus, this idea for a thesis on the core qualities of novice teachers and its influence on their pedagogical practice runs deep within me because it is both an outward quest and exploration into the unknown and concomitantly an inward journey of self-discovery into the unconscious.

In this chapter I, therefore, present the focus of my research, the research questions that guide this study and a contextualization of this study within the Mauritian education system.

## **1.2 Focus and purpose of the study**

The purpose of my study is to explore the core qualities that influences the pedagogical practice of Mauritian primary school novice teachers. Core qualities have been defined as attributes that form part of a person's essence (core), where core means that the qualities are fundamental, meaning unique to every person. Korthagen's (2004) core qualities used in this study are drawn from the list of thirteen core qualities which include empathy, compassion, tolerance, caring etc. and were contextualized for teachers by Evelein (2005). Core qualities for teachers were partly drawn from Tickle's (1999) personal qualities of teachers and the six core human strengths and virtues such as courage, justice, humanity, temperance, wisdom, and transcendence from the field of positive psychology. The latter is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups and institutions (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Researchers in the field of education were interested and listed core qualities of teachers for the purpose of training them to be in touch with their inner (core) strengths in order to realize them in their practice through a process called core reflection (Korthagen, 2004; Meijer, Korthagen, & Vasalos, 2008a). The aforementioned teacher education researchers therefore focused on the attainment or self-actualization of core qualities. The more functional aspect of core qualities described as ordinary human strengths accessible to the average person by Sheldon and King (2001)



received less attention from Korthagen and other researchers working on core reflection. The more functional aspect of core qualities and the claim from Peterson & Seligman (2004) that human strengths determine how individuals cope with adversity is what my study is based on, as core qualities provide an avenue into understanding the role of the character strengths of the average novice teacher in the coping strategies that they employ during their first year of practice described in the literature as a “sink or swim” experience (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Fry, 2007; Goodwin, 2012). The reason for the sink or swim nature of beginning teaching will be further discussed in the context section but are essentially attributed to novice teachers being unprepared for the realities of teaching because teacher development does not “prepare them for the real tasks they must accomplish” (Boakye & Ampiah, 2017, p. 3). Hence novice teachers have recourse to survival strategies (Beach & Pearson, 1998; Boakye & Ampiah, 2017; Çakmak, Gündüz, & Emstad, 2018). According to Chaaban and Du most novice teachers cope successfully even though they are still novice (Chaaban & Du, 2017). Given that human strengths from which core qualities are derived from have been associated with coping with adversity it would seem plausible that they play a role in their coping. One study by Tait (2008) in fact shows that they do indeed play a role in coping. Personal attributes related to human strengths such as emotional intelligence, commitment, and resilience from the literature on coping strategies were described as promoting the successful management of contextual challenges. Those challenges are well chronicled by the literature on novice teachers and will be discussed further in the section on context but common ones faced by novice teachers are classroom management, implementing the curriculum to mixed ability classes, administrative demands, relationships with colleagues, dealing with parents of students and balancing home and family life (Dickson, Riddlebarger, Stringer, Tennant, & Kennetz, 2014). Veenman’s list of the eight most common challenges as faced by novice teachers complements the above list and lists the eight problems novice teachers perceive to encounter the most as classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual differences, assessing student's work, relationship with parents, organization of classwork, insufficient or inadequate teaching materials and dealing with problems of individual students (Veenman, 1984).

A few core qualities such as empathy and perseverance were seen as important by novice teachers in managing the abovementioned challenges, for example empathy was utilized to deal with classroom management by a participant in a study by Hughes (2017) who said “You have to have empathy to understand what they’re going through and why they’re acting that way... So, I think the root is being positive and having a good rapport with students because in order to have good rapport with students then they have to know you truly care” (p. 91). In the same study empathy was also related to dealing with problems of individual students, one participant in the study said “I am referring to empathy as

verb. You have to have information about those students, about their conditions, about their lives, about their understandings, their perceptions, their feelings and realities” (p. 102). Other core qualities such as perseverance were reported by Sharplin, O’neill and Chapman, (2011) as one of the palliative coping strategies in adapting to their new appointment as teachers, those novice teachers made positive statements such as “never give up until the plane’s hit the ground”(Sharplin, O’neill, & Chapman, 2011, p. 142)(Sharplin, O’neill, & Chapman, 2011, p. 142). The role of perseverance in dealing with other challenges was mentioned by Fry (2009) who described how one novice teacher persevered as she overcame obstacles in teaching maths and classroom management.

Based on the few abovementioned studies core qualities seem to play an important role in facilitating the coping of novice teachers with some challenges, as they reveal the humanism of the novice teacher by providing windows into the depths of human interaction and also reveal their human strengths. However what core qualities are involved and what their roles are in how teachers cope with challenges, is still unknown. According to Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, (2000) human qualities have survival value and are so important that they go unnoticed like the fish in the water (p. 13). Beyond coping this means that core qualities could have significance in how novice teachers adapt and survive. The survival aspect is further discussed in the rationale (Section 1.5).

In the next sections I define the term “novice teacher” as it is used in this study and explain why this study focuses on primary school teachers. Later on, I discuss international and local studies that delineates their context.

### **1.3 What is a Novice teacher?**

Definitions of “novice teacher” vary in the literature. Some definitions include the years in training as well as the first five years. Novice teachers’ refers to those in methods courses, student teaching and five or less years of classroom experience (Doney, 2010). Other definitions focus on the first three years of teaching (Dickson et al., 2014; Fantilli & Mcdougall, 2009; Rieg, Paquette, & Chen, 2007). Caspersen, (2013) sheds some more light by breaking down the three-year period of being a “novice teacher” into two phases namely the first phase seen as the:

immediate reaction that teachers have when encountering work for the first time which lasts from the first few weeks and months through the first year where everything seems unfamiliar and strange. The second phase is longer and can last from one to three years where the teacher remains a novice until they reach the level of competence that can be considered as competent practice (p. 26)

In this study “novice teachers” refers to the first year of teaching which includes the first phase referred to in the previous paragraph.

### ***1.3.1 Why this study focuses on primary school teachers?***

Education is compulsory in Mauritius up to the age of 16 and the education system is made up of four sectors pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary. The primary sector lasts 6 years excluding repetitions (Seebaluck & Seegum, 2013). This study focuses on primary school teachers for several reasons. Primary school teachers in Mauritius face a lot of challenges in comparison to teachers in the other education sectors. Primary school teachers in Mauritius known as general purpose teachers have a heavy workload and have to teach five examinable subjects in a competitive education system (Hollup, 2004). Class sizes are normally high and can reach the maximum allowed of 40 students per classroom. Expectations are high on the teachers as they are accountable for the achievement of their students and “face pressure from parents, inspectors and headteachers” (Hollup, 2004, p. 24). The heavy burden put on their shoulders makes their job difficult and adequate training, preparation and support becomes imperative. The context of their preparation both internationally and locally is discussed in the next sections.

### **1.4 The international and Mauritian context**

The first year of teaching has been described as the most difficult in a teacher’s career as novice teachers “assume the complete duties of a veteran teacher including the instruction and management of a full contingent of students” (Fantilli & Mcdougall, 2009, p. 814). This phenomenon has been coined by Lortie (as cited in Fantilli & Mcdougall, 2009, p 814) and frequently mentioned in the literature on novice teacher’s as “being thrown in the deep end to sink or swim” (Dickson et al., 2014; Fantilli & Mcdougall, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 2003) or baptism of fire (Bezzina, 2007; Flores, 2007). Novice teachers experience of their first year as “sink and swim” to adapt the knowledge from teacher development to their school context. Three important reasons for this difficulty international and local context are the nature of knowledge taught during training, induction and posting policies. Those reasons are further explained below.

### ***1.4.1 Teacher development***

Worthy (2005, p. 380) points out that the difficulties faced by novice teachers is often attributed to the traditional model of teacher education also known as the scientific model or the technical rationality model, “Teacher education programs are often blamed for the fact that many teachers are unprepared for their roles” (Worthy, 2005, p. 380). The traditional model of teacher education has been described by Wideen, Mayer-smith, & Moon (1998), as such “the university provides the theory, skills, and knowledge about teaching through coursework; the school provides the field setting where such knowledge is applied and practiced; and the beginning teacher provides the individual effort that integrates it all” (p. 133). The problem with this approach is that the “the problems of real-world practice do not present themselves to practitioners as well-formed structures” (Schön, 1987, p. 4). According to Caspersen, (2013) professional knowledge of teachers consisting of general problem becomes “inapplicable and irrelevant” when novice teachers are confronted with the realities of school life (p. 56).

#### ***1.4.1.1 Teacher development in Mauritius***

The Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) is the parastatal body mandated by the government for the formal training of teachers (Samuel & Mariaye, 2014). In Mauritius primary school teachers are recruited by the Public Service Commission for enlistment as trainee primary school educator by the Ministry of Education. A condition of their recruitment is to follow a two-year and three-month Teacher’s Diploma Primary (TDP) programme to prepare them both theoretically and practically in all aspects of the work of a primary school educator.

According to the MIE TDP programme handbook, the TDP programme consists of taught modules which make up 65 credits and a professional practice component of 10 credits<sup>1</sup> (*Teacher’s Diploma Primary Handbook*, 2010). Core subjects are taught modules<sup>2</sup> such as foundations of education, pedagogy, psychology, curriculum studies, ICT, English and French teaching and mathematics education amongst others which are designed to equip trainee educators with a knowledge base for teaching attained through the professional practice component which is described in the next section.

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<sup>1</sup> Each credit is equivalent to 15 hours

<sup>2</sup> Core modules are taught 4 days a week throughout 4 semesters

### ***1.4.2 Teaching practice and Induction***

In this thesis “teaching practice” means the period that student teachers are allowed opportunities to observe and practice teaching under a supervisor’s and or mentor’s guidance during their teacher development. Induction means the transition period during which a newly qualified teacher enters school after teacher development. Related to the context of this study which focuses on the first-year teacher’s experience at school, the literature indicates that novice teachers’ experience of induction is very different from “teaching practice” as one researcher recounted his experience “My first year of teaching was a confused period because of the responsibilities that I had to take up as a full-time teacher. Being used to be under my supervisor’s guidance during teaching practice, it was hard to suddenly be let loose on my own. I had to figure out how things work on my own and how to do things” (Uugwanga, 2010, p. 5). Veenman refers to this process “as a reality or transition shock, when novices discover the harsh reality of everyday classroom life as different from what they had experienced during the teaching practice and training. This leads to stress and problems on their part (Veenman, 1984). The transition is not always abrupt and can be smoother for some novice teachers as Boakye (2017) puts it “some thrive, some sink without trace, and most find it difficult but struggle through” (p.4) the bottom line however is that many struggle.

#### ***1.4.2.1 Problems with teaching practice in teacher preparation***

Although support is provided during teaching practice it does not prepare trainees to face the challenges in their induction year real. One of the reasons for this is not enough teaching time. According to Arends and Phurutse (as cited in Uugwanga, 2010), “Teaching practice for student teachers is given less time and pre-service teachers do not spend enough time in the classrooms teaching. Therefore, it is important that there should be a balance between practical teaching skills and theory or subject knowledge” (p. 25). According to Conway & Clark (2003) less time means less opportunity for novice teachers to reflect on their practices.

Another reason teaching practice does not prepare trainees for their induction year is because trainees are not always given opportunities for “ownership” of their classrooms during teaching practice, therefore they do not have a feel of a real classroom. According to Swart (2013):

“Observation of others’ practices and having close-up support that is immediately available may support a developing teacher. Nonetheless, the process of acquiring professional skills and knowledge to teach independently requires the student teacher to personally own such knowledge. I would argue that such ownership can be obtained through creating opportunities

for student teachers to teach independently without a teacher mentor stepping in to continuously support the student (p. 154)

#### *1.4.2.2 Lack of a formal induction programme*

According to Magudu (2014) “Teacher professional development is a continuum which begins with initial training and continues throughout one’s career. Induction, which is one of the stages on this continuum, is considered to be very crucial because it provides a linkage between initial training and continuing professional development (CPD)” (p.1). The importance of induction is also supported by Fry (2007) according to whom “well-designed induction programmes provides beginning teachers with support which help them survive, those programmes are contrasted with “sink or swim” induction where novice teachers are left with minimal or no support and fall back on traditional teaching methods in order to survive” (p. 217). The importance of formal induction is also made visible in another study exploring the experiences of beginning teachers in Seychelles who explained that she had to learn procedures by trial and error for lack of a formal induction (Confait, 2015).

Although the literature stresses the importance of formal induction programmes to help novice teachers survive their first year of teaching (Fry, 2007), it has not been implemented in many countries especially developing countries. According to Uugwanga (2010) a few developed countries such as United Kingdom, Australia, Israel and New Zealand have established formal induction programmes (p. 9). In many countries, induction for novice teachers is a “neglected issue that results in the lack of formal induction, and the induction of novice teachers is often haphazard and chaotic depending on the goodwill, time and effort of experienced teachers (mentors)” (van Velzen et al., 2010, p. 63).

#### ***1.4.3 Teaching practice and induction in Mauritius***

The professional practice component of the Teacher’s Diploma Primary programme is assessed through contextual teaching and learning, and the teaching practice performance of the trainee called school-based experience (SBE) which consists of a school immersion programme and two six weeks teaching practice sessions called SBE 1 and SBE 2.

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) is aimed at giving opportunities for small groups of trainees under the supervision of a tutor to learn in a meaningful context through 10 tasks designed to make them reflect on the school context and the profiles of their learners then design and implement a lesson plan. CTL takes place throughout the 4 semesters of their training where they spend one day a week in school observing and reflecting on the different tasks.

Prior to CTL, the school-based experience (SBE) component of the TDP programme begins with school immersion which takes place before the semester starts and is aimed at providing trainee educators with their first experience in classrooms and schools and also familiarize themselves with the school culture through observation and a written report on 4 themes namely professional conduct, needs and abilities of pupils, classroom management and assessment.

SBE 1 and 2 takes place towards the end of each academic year, where trainees attend SBE 1 for six weeks in year 1 and SBE 2 over six weeks in year 2. During SBE 1 trainee educators gather information on the school environment and the profile of the pupils. They also start teaching under the supervision of the class teacher. During SBE 2 they also gather information on the pupil's profile and start teaching under the supervision of the class teacher. The professional practice component of the TDP programme is assessed over SBE 1 and 2 via a professional journal and 2 visits from MIE tutors who assess their teaching performance.

After teacher development, trainees receive no formal induction in Mauritius. Their preparation for teaching rests solely on the professional practice component of the TDP programme. The need for in-service induction has been expressed by headteachers in an ILO report (International Labour Organization, 2005).

#### ***1.4.4 Posting policies***

According to Castro, Kelly, & Shih (2010, p. 3) "Posting policies sometimes aggravate the problems that NQTs encounter. For example, in the United States and in most parts of Europe, new teachers are posted to areas with high needs in rural or urban areas. In those areas students have their own problems such as poverty and speak many different languages which makes the class highly multilingual". In support of this a study by Gagnon & Mattingly (2012) found that beginning teachers are more common in rural, high poverty and racially diverse schools.

Posting policies also affect novice teachers in developing countries. According to Boakye & Ampiah, (2017) "in Ghana newly qualified teachers are posted to teach in village schools with pupils coming from poor socioeconomic backgrounds and who struggle with English and a lack of infrastructure and resources" ,(p. 1). The problems novice teachers in South Africa are similar to those encountered in Ghana, according to Poonsamy (2012) "Novice teachers in rural areas encounter more problems than those at urban areas because of a lack of infrastructures and facilities more so because unmotivated pupils from economically depressed areas coming to school hungry and lacking basic resources" (p. 81).

### ***1.4.5 Posting policies in Mauritius***

In Mauritius, the Ministry of Education is responsible for the posting of primary school teachers after their training at the MIE. Although there is no data regarding whether more novice teachers as compared to experienced teachers, are posted locally in high needs or poverty areas, the school where they obtain their posting may pose a challenge if it is a difficult school. According to Sonck (2005), in Mauritius “there are large disparities between different schools in terms of quality, education, teacher development and infrastructural abilities”(p. 44). The disparities and inequality between schools is strongly related to socio-economic and ethnic status of families (Morabito, Carosin, & Vandebroek, 2017). In order to alleviate those disparities, reforms in the primary sector such as “the setting up of ZEP<sup>3</sup> (priority education zones) in less developed areas of Mauritius” (Seebaluck & Seegum, 2013, p. 452) have been carried out to support the academic needs of the student population with closely monitored new learning and teaching techniques and smaller class sizes (Hollup, 2004), by the Ministry of Education in order to raise achievement. Implementation of those measures to raise achievement has proven to be difficult for novice teachers who receive no special preparation in their training to support learners in ZEP schools. Challenges faced by teachers in those schools according to Deenmamode (2016) include indiscipline, “slow learners”, disadvantaged pupils from poor backgrounds consequently teachers expressed their difficulties in completing the national curriculum which does not meet the realities of the children in ZEP schools” (p. 140). In the same study she reported that “most class teachers considered that their teacher development courses were satisfactory but they also thought that it was not adapted to help them work in ZEP schools” (p. 180).

## **1.5 Rationale**

Why study core qualities of novice teachers? Core qualities deepen and contribute to the understanding on how the average novice teachers cope with challenges, this is significant for researchers as it informs knowledge on how the average novice teachers cope with the challenges despite being unprepared to face the challenges of teaching. This is also significant for teacher educators who can better prepare them to survive.

According to Chaaban & Du (2017), “most novice teachers cope successfully even though they are still novice” (p. 340). The role of human strengths in their coping has not received much attention in the literature although, (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) claim that human strengths determine how

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<sup>3</sup> ZEP primary schools have a pass rate of less than 40% in the end of school formerly certificate of primary education (CPE) exams



individuals cope with adversity. One study by Hughes (2017) shows that by showing empathy, novice teachers were able to understand learners and deal with classroom management, establish rapport with students and deal with problems of individual students by understanding their background. In another study by (Sharplin et al., 2011) another core quality, perseverance, was associated with adapting to a new school context by novice teachers not giving up and them overcoming obstacles in teaching and classroom management (Fry, 2007). All those studies explain the claim by Chaaban and Du (2017) that most novice teachers cope successfully by illuminating how one or two core qualities are deployed to meet challenges that they encounter. No studies have been carried out that looks at core qualities and their role as a whole in how novice teachers cope. Based on Peterson and Seligman's (2004) claim that human strengths determine how an individual copes with adversity, we can assume that core qualities play a role in the survival of novice teachers. According to Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000), "people are blinded to the survival value of positive emotions precisely because they are so important. Like the fish who is unaware of the water in which it swims, people take for granted a certain amount of hope, love, enjoyment, and trust because these are the very conditions that allow them to go on living" (p. 13).

Because core qualities are so closely associated with survival, they add impetus to this study on what core qualities are involved in survival of novice teachers, how they are deployed and why? Findings of this study can inform teacher trainers on how to help novice teachers survive. This is seen as important especially in a scientific model of teacher education where much of the knowledge on how to teach is often irrelevant and teaching practice provide reduced opportunities for trainees to develop a repertoire of survival skills. Learning survival is important, more so because there is no formal induction for trainees who are sometimes posted in difficult school contexts where their challenges can be exacerbated by learners and parents from high needs areas. Knowing the role of core qualities associated with specific challenges such as teaching learners from disadvantaged areas can inform teacher educators on the core qualities to cultivate in our trainees. For example, Akyeampong et al., (2018) study related the core quality of empathy to non-novice teacher's ability to connect with students in high needs areas. Their study underlines the importance of core qualities such as empathy and provide support to developing the core quality of empathy in trainees. Thus, developing core qualities such as empathy can therefore better prepare them to connect with all learners especially those from economically deprived areas. In a broader way it is hoped that this study reveals what core qualities are deployed for the common challenges that novice teachers often face in view of understanding them and how they survive in order to better teacher education.

## **1.6 Research questions**

The following research questions emanate from the above discussion of the importance of studying the core qualities of novice teachers. The research questions capture the purpose of the study in finding out what core qualities are involved in facing common challenges of novice teacher, how this takes place and why?

How do “core qualities” of novice teachers influence their pedagogical practice during their first year as credentialed teachers?

This question will be broken down into the following three sub questions.

1. What “core qualities” influence the pedagogical practice of novice teachers?
2. How do the “core qualities” of novice teachers influence their teaching?
3. Why do these novice teachers deploy these core qualities in the way that they do?

## **1.7 Methodology employed in this study**

The methodology employed for this study was a qualitative research process because it was the appropriate for the purpose of the study which was to understand the role of novice teacher core qualities in their school. The choice of methodology rested on the ontological assumption which is about the nature of reality of the phenomenon seen as subjective and multiple (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this way I became the principal research instrument by entering the worlds of my participants in order to understand their subjective realities who also had the flexibility to adapt research instruments during data collection (Merriam, 2009). Through the qualitative research process I was also able to describe how and why core qualities influence their teaching (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2010).

The design of the study employed the interpretivist paradigm seen as appropriate as the main aim of the study was to interpret or understand the phenomenon. The choice of the paradigm rested on epistemological considerations about the relationship between the researcher and what can be known from the participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this paradigm the researcher seeks to understand the phenomenon from the participants’ different and multiple realities (Myers & Avison, 2002). The interpretivist paradigm was also seen as appropriate because my study is exploratory in nature given that little is known about the phenomenon.

Building on the choices of methodology and paradigm I adopted narrative inquiry as a research approach which involved making the assumption that “the “story” is one and the fundamental unit that accounts for human experience” (McAlpine, 2016, p. 34). The choice of narrative inquiry was seen as

appropriate as deployment of core qualities was seen as forming part of teacher's experiences which are influenced by past events best captured in a storied form. According to McAlpine (2016), "a narrative lens can be integrated into the research process throughout the design or only at various points" (p.35). In my study the narrative lens was employed in collecting stories from my participants through conversational interviews and to analyse three teacher participants' individual stories holistically and finally the data was reported using a more traditional method called thematic analysis.

### **1.8 Significance of the study**

This study would be beneficial to teacher educators, teachers, and teacher education researchers. Teacher educators would benefit from this study because it will allow them to understand the role of their core qualities in adapting to the common classroom challenges. In this way novice teachers can better be prepared to cope with the contextual realities in Mauritian schools as teacher educators can prepare them to deploy their core qualities in anticipated classroom challenges and thus take part in helping trainees construct the character required for the teaching profession. Teachers will also benefit from the study as it will allow them to realize and understand the importance of their core qualities. By experiencing their core qualities, they will be able to better connect with students and this deepening of their relationship will be beneficial to their classroom management and teaching. Researchers in the field of teacher education and positive psychology will be able to use the findings of this exploratory study to extend knowledge of the role of core qualities in teaching based on the idea of Kowalczyk (2015) that exploratory research lays the groundwork that will lead to future studies.

### **1.9 Limitations of the study**

Initially my intent in this study was to video record lessons and then interview my participants in order to be able to talk about specific events that happened in the classroom. By experimenting with this method of data collection I soon found that I was limiting the scope of my exploration as using a narrative lens implied also going back to earlier events in the participant's lives which had an influence on their teaching. Furthermore, talking about video recorded events meant participants were limited to talking only on what was in the footage. One participant even expressed dissatisfaction with reviewing the same footage over again and said she much preferred telling me her stories. This led me to stick to conversational interviews as my sole method of data collection. Using only the conversational interviews meant I could be compromising the accuracy and credibility of the findings. I took steps in resolving that limitation by drawing from a guide by Creswell and Miller (2000) to ensure validity using disconfirming evidence, prolonged engagement in the field and thick rich

descriptions. Using disconfirming evidence, I found out that my data tallied with previous research on the experiences of novice teachers with postings and problems with school administration, my prolonged engagement in the field through multiple interviews allowed me to ascertain that their interpretations represented their experiences. Finally thick rich descriptions from my participants created what Creswell and Miller (2000) call verisimilitude-“statements that produce for the readers the feeling that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being experienced in the study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 128).

Another limitation of the study concerns the purpose and size of the study. Given that the study is exploratory in nature means that the phenomenon is not well known in the literature, therefore I decided to do a small-scale qualitative study in order to understand the role of core qualities in teaching. Hence the methods employed to collect data were geared at obtaining thick, rich, descriptions and not to prove causality.

## **1.10 Chapter Summary**

This chapter provides an overview of the study starting from its conception in the origin of the study to its focus and purpose which also provides the background which justify its realization by highlighting studies that mention the role of few core qualities in novice teachers. The term novice teacher as it is used in this study is then defined before laying out the essential elements that constitute the novice teacher’s context. Afterwards I explained the rationale behind the study rooted in the survival value of core qualities in humans and therefore novice teachers. The research questions emanated from the rationale and guided the choice of methodology employed. I ended the chapter with the significance and limitations of the study.

## **1.11 Chapter outline**

The following is a brief outline of this study.

### **Chapter One: Introduction**

Chapter one provides the origin of the idea of doing a study on core qualities and formulates the arguments which constitute the reasons for conducting such a study. The survival value of core qualities is highlighted and the need to explore further the role of core qualities are spelled out in the research questions that delineate the form and type of the methodology employed.

## **Chapter Two: Literature review**

Chapter two reviews the literature pertinent to core qualities and argue that their functional aspect has received less attention and point to studies that show that some core qualities are important for teacher both experienced and novice. I also point to alternative conceptions of core qualities as more professional and end the chapter by highlighting studies that show how novice teachers face contextual challenges.

## **Chapter Three: Theoretical framework**

Chapter three explores three framings of core qualities and argues that the chosen theoretical framing, Korthagen's onion model, was not really exploited by researchers. I then propose an alternative framing for core qualities which changes the view of core qualities as a "holy grail" to be actualized, to being ubiquitous and accessible to the average teacher. I end the chapter by arguing for the proposed model as theoretical framework for the study.

## **Chapter Four: Methodology**

Chapter four focuses on the research design that produces the data for the study and takes an argumentative stance in terms of the methodological decisions taken in producing the data for the study. The chapter is presented in four sections. The first section argues for the epistemological stance of the study, the second section presents the research methodology and the steps for producing data in the study. The third section explains the data analysis process and how the themes for the data presentation emerged. The final section of the chapter focuses on issues of credibility, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

## **Chapter Five: Data presentation**

Chapter five presents the narratives of three participants using the first person and third person which captures the voice of the participants and for the researcher to narrate coherent accounts of their practices using the analytics that guide the analysis. To fully explore the teaching practices of novice teachers the stories are constructed according to the following sections: the personal biography of the participants; the education experience of the participants in becoming a teacher; their teaching practices that illuminates the core qualities that they deploy in their teaching practices and their reflections on their teaching practices based on their interview processes.

## **Chapter Six: Data analysis**

Chapter six focuses on the analysis of narratives by identifying and engaging with three themes that emerged from the three stories. These three themes relate to the core qualities that these novice teachers relied on to navigate their daily teaching practices in the schools they were deployed to teach

in. The three themes identified are humanistic core qualities, much of which resonate with my theoretical framework that guided this study, professional core qualities that delve into the knowledge and training received in their training programme to become a teacher and contextual core qualities that I introduce as framing their teaching practices. Key findings that emerge from the analysis in the chapter reveal that because there is a disjuncture between being theoretically prepared to teach and the reality of the classroom, novice teachers default to three core qualities namely the humanistic core quality of empathy and compassion, the professional core qualities of knowledge and preparedness and contextual core qualities of accountability to people of Mauritius, human rights discourse and abolishment of corporal punishment that forces them to find alternate and more humane approaches to promote teaching and learning. Furthermore, the findings also reveal that the process followed by novice teachers in coping with their first teaching experience is reflection, going back to their basket of alternatives and adaptation of selected alternatives to their classroom context. Those findings are theorized with respect to the theoretical framework and pertinent literature and an evolutionary adaptation model is proposed.

### **Chapter Seven: Thesis**

Chapter seven, the thesis chapter restates retrospectively the focus, purpose and presents a narrative response to the research questions related to the key findings of the study. The significance of the study with respect to teacher educators, novice teachers and researchers are then discussed, and recommendations are made based on the findings. The chapter ends with a retrospective conclusion in relation to the background and purpose of the study presented in chapter one.

## **CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Orientation**

This chapter reviews the literature on core qualities in the context of novice teachers and the challenges that they face. I start section 1 of the chapter with the definition of core qualities as it is used in the literature on teachers and teacher education. This is followed by a review of papers on core qualities to explain how the concept was used for developing a model of reflection called core reflection. I argue that the functional aspect of core qualities has received less attention by reviewing empirical research on core qualities. Drawing from studies in the field of positive psychology, whose general aim is to determine “what works” for the average person I argue that the research on novice teachers has focused unilaterally on character strengths and teacher effectiveness and that more qualitative research also needs to focus on the role of core qualities in how novice teachers survive or adapt to their school context.

In section 2-part A of the literature review I argue based on findings in the literature that although the concept “core qualities” has not received much attention its standalone constituents such as empathy, compassion, and perseverance provide some insight into their role in teachers and their teaching although their role in novice teachers is less known.

In section 2-part B I argue that the notion of person core qualities needed to be expanded to include professional core qualities based on an alternative conception of core qualities from the literature that includes the professional qualities involved in being a teacher, based on the idea of core qualities being fundamental to an individual.

In section 2-part C I argue that because novice teachers teach in diverse contexts, they deploy their personal and professional core qualities to meet the challenges they encounter. Studies carried out in the international and local contexts are reviewed and the personal and professional core qualities novice teachers employ to meet those contextual challenges are discussed.

### **2.2 Section 1: A review of research on core qualities**

This section defines the concept of core qualities in subsection 2.2.1 and reviews past research on core qualities. Subsection 2.2.2 and 2.2.3 review the literature on core qualities. Subsection 2.2.4 relates the concepts of core qualities and character strengths and reviews past research on character strengths.

### ***2.2.1 What are “core qualities”***

The word “core” in the Cambridge dictionary as a noun means the centre or important part of something. Whereas quality means a characteristic or feature of someone or something. Put together “core quality” means a central or important characteristic of someone (McIntosh, 2013). Results of a web search on core qualities show that it is a concept coined by Daniel Ofman a management coach and consultant who published a textbook entitled *Core qualities: A gateway to human resources* in 2004. Core qualities have been defined by Ofman (2001) as:

attributes that form part of a person's essence (core); people are steeped in these qualities, which place all their - more or less striking - competences in a certain light. A person is 'coloured' by his or her core qualities. It is their strong point, the characteristic that immediately comes to mind when we think of this person. Examples of core qualities are determination, consideration (for others), precision, courage, receptivity, orderliness, empathy, flexibility, etc. Core qualities are expressions of the Self that generate inspiration. They are not so much characteristics as possibilities that can be 'tuned in to' (p.1).

### ***2.2.2 A review of publications on core qualities***

A review of past publications on core qualities reveals that since the concept was coined by Ofman in 2001 its purpose was to promote a model of reflection called core reflection (Korthagen, 2004; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2003, 2005; Korthagen & Verkuyl, 2002; Noordewier, Korthagen, & Zwart, 2009). The rationale behind developing core reflection was to help teachers overcome quick fixes and actualize their personal strengths which were called “core qualities” (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2003; Korthagen & Verkuyl, 2002). Quick fixes were seen as a response by teachers to the pressures of day to day practice in order to find an immediate solution to their problem. By suspending judgement they would become in touch with their inner core potential (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2003). The aforementioned researchers explained that core reflection was achievable by teachers focusing on the here-and-now and imagining the ideal situation where they would enact their personal strengths and become fully aware of the present situation in their classroom in terms of their thinking, feeling, and wanting and the environment. To help teachers in their core reflection a model called the onion model (illustrated below) was used to help teachers focus on the content of reflection and distinguished six layers where teachers can reflect on questions such as 1. What do I encounter? (the environment layer), 2. What do I do? (behaviour), 3. What am I competent at? (competency layer) 4. What do I believe? (belief layer), 5. Who am I in my work? and 6. What inspires me? (mission layer) (Korthagen & Hoekstra, 2009). To sum up, core reflection involves going through the



onion model in what Meijer, Korthagen and Vasalos (2008) call “going through the U” downwards across to the deepest inner layers of identity and mission in order to get in touch with their “core qualities” in order to for the person to build “on his or her awareness of self” (the identity layer) and sense of mission (ideals, calling, inspiration) and on an awareness of the demands of the situation (environment layer). Meijer, Korthagen and Vasalos (2008) provide an example to illustrate “going through the U”:

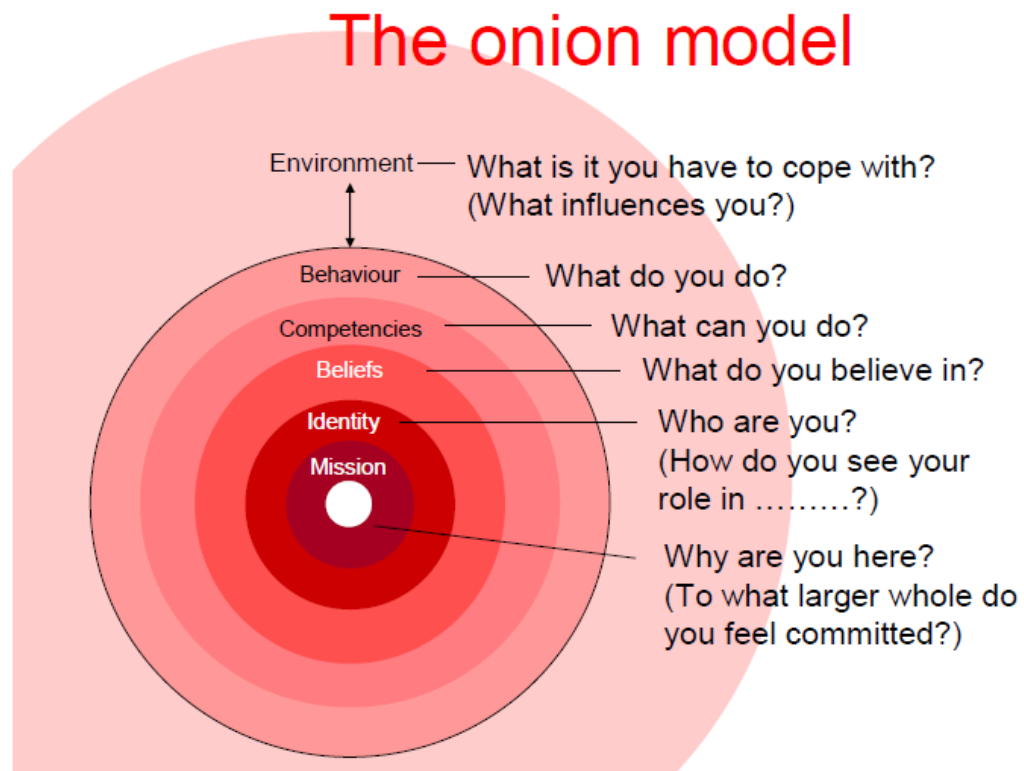
A teacher who believes ‘I can never deal with this class’ needs more than a cognitive awareness of the constraining impact of this belief: she needs to really feel (physically) that because of this belief, she makes herself weak and vulnerable, so that on this basis she can develop the will to reconnect with her strengths (at the layer of identity and mission) and deconstruct the belief (p.11)

In the above example the teacher is able to overcome the limiting belief and have a deeper impact by becoming cognitively, emotionally and motivationally aware and mustering “personal strengths such as care, enthusiasm, curiosity and goal directedness” (Meijer et al., 2008). The next step of core reflection would be “acting out” the inner potential (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2003, 2005; Meijer et al., 2008; Noordewier et al., 2009., Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009).

### ***2.2.3 Core qualities and critiques of teacher effectiveness***

Past publications on core qualities (Korthagen, 2004; Korthagen & Kessels, 1999) critique the technical rationality model popular in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, on the grounds that “a good teacher cannot be described in terms of some isolated competencies” which resulted in a fragmentation of the teacher’s role. According to those researchers, the technical rationality model is based on process-product studies such as teacher effectiveness which are based on the idea that concrete behavioural criteria could serve as the basis for the training of novice teachers. Core reflection discussed in the previous section, in contrast to competencies are not reductionist and are not focused on outcomes but rather on developing the core qualities of the teacher as a whole person. In support of this view Tickle (2001) critiques research on teacher effectiveness on the grounds that it provides too narrow a view on educational practice and adds that “teaching involves activities such as counselling, policy making, community relationships, leadership of colleagues, administration, self-appraisal and so on” (p.56), therefore those much broader domains of activities require more personal qualities and characteristics. In accordance with core reflection he mentions one of the aims from the Hong Kong education commission blueprint for the 21<sup>st</sup> century as “empowering learners to develop

their potential and attain self-actualisation”. This idea of actualising potential is fully resonant with core reflection and this study on core qualities.



**Figure 1: The Onion Model (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009)**

The review of past research on core qualities and the onion model provide a window in understanding the origin of core qualities as defined by Ofman (2001) and how this concept was used to help teachers actualize their strengths, however, because empirical research on core qualities has been limited to a few studies the role of core qualities in practicing teachers has been limited. The next section reviews empirical research on core qualities and provide some insight in how they are used.

#### ***2.2.4 Empirical research on core qualities***

Empirical research on core qualities has been limited to seven studies. In one of the rare studies involving student teachers, Evelein (2005) investigated the deployment of core qualities among 46 secondary school teachers in training in an exploratory part of their study whose main aim was to gain more insight into the relationship between teachers' informal thinking and their behaviour (Evelein, 2005). The theoretical framework of their study was based on unconscious cognitive affective and motivational factors (thinking, feeling, and wanting) called gestalts which are triggered by interaction

with the environment and guide behaviour. The role of those forces on the functioning of the student teachers was investigated using the theory of basic psychological needs and interpersonal functioning. Evelein (2005) hypothesized that the use of core qualities by the student teacher would contribute to a positive growth in the level of basic psychological needs. The core qualities questionnaire (CQQ) was developed and used with instruments to measure basic psychological needs Questionnaire on basic need fulfilment (QNBF) and interpersonal functioning (QTI). Their findings show that the use of core qualities of the feeling scale of their core qualities questionnaire such as commitment, empathy, compassion, trust, tolerance, and care had a significant although moderate correlation with a change in the level of fulfilment of the student teacher's needs for competence and relatedness. Their other non-significant findings revealed that student teachers used core qualities of the wanting scale such as decisiveness, perseverance and courage and core qualities related to the thinking scale such as fulfilment of the need for creativity, structuredness, clarity and accuracy were less used. Evelein (2005) reported that because the use of certain core qualities was positively correlated to with an increase in the need for competence and relatedness, it brought support to the assumption of Tickle, Korthagen and other researchers in that area that the use of core qualities can contribute to their professional development although they believed that more research in that area was needed.

Meijer, Korthagen and Vasalos (2008) conducted a study where they monitored and supervised a student teacher during her school year. The aim of the study was to deeply analyse her learning of core reflection (discussed in the previous paragraph). The method they employed was a single case study of one female teacher's developmental process in her first year of secondary school teaching. Interviews and a diary as well as the core qualities questionnaire developed by Evelein (2005) were used to collect data during their supervision. Their findings revealed that there was increase in the score on almost all the 13 core qualities in the core qualities questionnaire after they supervised the student teacher using core reflection.

Williams and Power (2009) reported on a self-study by two primary teacher educators (Kerith and Judy) using the core reflection model of Korthagen and Vasalos (2005). Kerith was supervised after her first year of teaching using core reflection by a facilitator (Judy) over three core reflection sessions over a period of one semester. Data was collected on "Kerith's teaching background, beliefs about teaching that influenced her practice, her ideal teaching environment and possible obstacles and problems that might be preventing Kerith from achieving her ideals" (p. 5) over three reflective conversations during the semester. Their results show that the sessions allowed them to explore notions of professional identity in terms of who they are and not what they do furthermore the qualities of "confidence" and "authenticity" were found to be important for Kerith's professional identity. Lastly their study showed that "exploring practices within teacher education not only from a

rational/technical perspective, but from a more holistic, humanistic perspective are essential if teacher educators are to be empowered in their practice” (p. 9).

Hoekstra and Korthagen (2011) conducted a study whose aim was to compare how formal learning through coaching differs from informal learning in the professional life of a teacher. An earlier study had shown that the majority of teachers did not change after they were “encouraged to foster active and self-regulated learning”. Hoekstra had hypothesized that informal learning would influence learning based on previous research. The follow up study followed Nicole one of the participants in the earlier study in a case study during which she was supervised using core reflection and given feedback about her core qualities “such as her strong commitment to her work and her enthusiasm” (p. 76). Their findings revealed that the whole person approach of core reflection was more effective as it brought a major transformation after seven coaching sessions.

Kim & Greene (2011), conducted a three-year collaborative self-study whose aim was to examine the impact of core reflection on their identities and practices as teacher educators. Basing themselves on the core reflection approach of Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) they explored how core qualities were actualized in their professional lives by applying core reflection to each other and recording the data through transcriptions, journals and e-mail communications. Their findings revealed four themes namely “(a) understanding the contradictory nature of core qualities; (b) confronting our own hypocrisies; (c) holding ambiguity; and (d) sustaining authenticity in everyday practice” (p. 109). The researchers reported that the study deepened their awareness of the influence of their core qualities on their evolving and emerging identities.

Horne (2011) conducted a study to examine how a teacher’s identity is revealed in a professional development activity called “the descriptive review of a child” defined as a “an exercise that is meant to do just that: to value and recognize your interest, caring, and knowledge and to build upon it for the benefit of children” (p. 31). Part of their data collection included using Korthagen’s core reflection (Korthagen, 2004) by asking four teachers to reflect on their feelings, beliefs and wants. The core qualities questionnaire was used by the researchers after interview with the participants a “point in time marker depicting the teacher’s sense of her own core qualities connected to thinking, feeling and wanting” (p. 59). Horne wanted to see to what extent the teachers felt they used their core qualities during the “descriptive review”. Findings revealed that the core qualities questionnaire provided an “avenue to reveal who the teachers believed they were, specifically what qualities of themselves they felt they used during the study” (p. 64). The researcher used the questionnaire data on each teacher as a cross reference with his observations and interviews. Their findings showed that the teacher’s identity can be revealed in the “descriptive review of the child” and that “bringing awareness of

teacher professional identity within professional development activities can provide valuable insight for professional development specialists seeking to support teacher learning” (p. iii).

Drvodelic and Rajic (2011) conducted a study inspired by Korthagen’s (2004) article on the qualities of a good teacher to determine prospective primary school teacher’s views on personal and professional qualities and to determine whether those views changed with the level of teacher development. Data was collected using a questionnaire to “examine student perception of the five most important qualities that a teacher should possess” (p. 47). The results show that first- and fifth-year students agreed that the two most important personal qualities that characterise a good teacher are patience and creativity while the professional core qualities seen as important was professionalism and the quality of being just.

All the above studies except for Drvodelic and Rajic and Evelein’s study relate supervision using core reflection as a means to actualize core qualities of teachers (Horne, 2011; Kim & Greene, 2011; Korthagen & Hoekstra, 2009; Meijer et al., 2008; Williamson, John; Power, 2009). Those studies also relate core reflection as a means for teachers to grow professionally and develop their identity by developing an awareness of their inner potential and acting it out as mentioned in the first section of this literature review. The results of Evelein’s (2005) study that “the use of certain core qualities by student teachers correlates positively with an increase in the fulfilment of the need for competence and relatedness” (p. 192), and indicate that there is a positive correlation between the use of core qualities and the natural need for teachers and humans to fulfil their basic psychological needs for competency and relatedness. Evelein (2005) also reports that there is a correlation between core qualities and basic psychological needs of teacher-in-training “These preliminary results, to some degree, support the assumption of Tickle (1999), and Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) that the use of core qualities by teachers can contribute to their professional development” (p. 192). Do the results of Evelein’s (2005) study suggest that supervision and core reflection are **not necessary** for teachers to enact their inner potential or core qualities? As seen in the above review almost all empirical studies on core qualities mention core reflection however research on character strengths a sister construct of core qualities provides support to the use of core qualities and their enactment **without** core reflection supervision. These studies are reviewed in the next section

### ***2.2.5 Are core qualities/character strengths naturally deployed in the classroom?***

Are core qualities naturally deployed in the classroom? According to Korthagen, core qualities have two functions namely to fulfil an individual and also to cope with adversity (Korthagen, 2004). As discussed in this section, studies on core qualities have been focused on how core qualities fulfil and individual but the other function of core qualities which is to determine how individuals cope with

adversity has not received much attention. Turning my attention to the field of education I review in this section studies focusing on character strengths because the literature on core qualities does not reveal their functional aspect in dealing with challenges. Character strengths have been associated with core qualities in a few publications and empirical research on core qualities. Korthagen first made the link between core qualities and character strengths in his 2004 paper where he stated “The way Seligman and other psychologists within this new field write about strengths, clarifies that they are synonymous to what Ofman (2001) calls core qualities” (p. 86). Korthagen explained that the new field of positive psychology focused on nurturing what is best in humans instead of fixing what is broken as has been the focus of traditional psychology. Character strengths and core qualities has been said to be synonymous in a few publications (Kim & Greene, 2011; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005; Noordewier et al., 2009). In those publications as well as the others in the previous section Korthagen and other researchers working on core reflection focus on only one function of core qualities/character strengths namely on “how they fulfil an individual”. This is because their theoretical framework “the onion model” and core reflection is based on the notion of “flow” which is how an individual is fulfilled through his or her qualities explained as “a feeling of excitement” when displaying a strength (Korthagen, 2004, p. 86). Hence no attention is given to the other function of core qualities/character strengths in how they “determine how an individual copes with adversity” (Korthagen, 2004, p. 86). Because core qualities and character strengths are treated as synonymous it makes sense to review studies on character strengths.

Character strengths form part of the relatively new branch of psychology called positive psychology defined as “an umbrella term for the study of positive emotions, positive character traits, and enabling institutions” (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005, p. 410). Character strengths according to Peterson and Seligman are “the psychological ingredients—processes or mechanisms—that define the virtues of man” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 13). The same authors define virtues as the core characteristics valued by moral philosophers and religious thinkers such as wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence. These virtues are called core virtues because they were seen to converge across major world religions in a survey whose aim was to obtain an empirically informed classification system of human virtues (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005). It was deemed necessary by researchers in the field of positive psychology to come up with a classification system in order to classify strengths and virtues to classify human thriving in a similar way that the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM) classifies mental disorders (Seligman et al., 2005). Another study with a similar aim identified and classified 24 character strengths derived from the six virtues (Seligman et al., 2005), and in order to be classified certain criteria such as “ubiquity” and “morally valued in their own right” were used to classify the character strengths.

Empirical studies that relate character strengths and positive traits to teaching are few but importantly some of them do support the claim that core qualities/character strengths “determine how an individual cope with adversity” (Korthagen, 2004, p. 86).

Duckworth, Quinn, and Seligman (2009) hypothesized that the rigors of teaching suggest that positive traits that buffer against adversity might contribute to teacher effectiveness. The purpose of their study was to examine the contribution of grit, life satisfaction and optimistic explanatory styles to performance among novice teachers in the Teach for America (TFA) program (a program where college graduates recruited to teach for 2 years with no training and placed in often under resourced schools). They collected data using instruments on Grit, Life satisfaction and Optimistic explanatory style and the effectiveness of their teaching was obtained from the Teach for America academic records. Their findings revealed that all three positive traits predicted teacher performance and suggest that grit and life satisfaction may be proximal contributors to teacher effectiveness. According to Duckworth et al. (2009) previous studies have shown that grittier individuals work harder and longer in very challenging settings (Duckworth, Quinn, & Seligman, 2009). The researcher also found that “teachers higher in life satisfaction may be more adept at engaging their pupils, and the zest and enthusiasm may spread to their students” (p. 545).

Maurer (2012) investigated the individual differences in terms of positive traits between teacher effectiveness on novice teacher with less than six years of experience. Data was collected using instruments on positive affect, optimistic explanatory style and life satisfaction and teaching effectiveness was measured using student growth, principal ratings and parent satisfaction. Results of Maurer’s study revealed that “none of the traits predicted teacher performance as assessed by student growth or by parent satisfaction” (p. 2).

Sturm, Conkey, Nibler, Brannan, & Bleistein (2012) examined Gender and Optimism as predictors of novice teachers of English to speakers of other languages. Data from 67 participants were collected using instruments measuring Optimism and Satisfaction with Teaching. Their results showed that there was a positive association between optimism and satisfaction with teaching performance. According to the authors these findings support past research showing that those who are more optimistic perform better.

Two of the above three studies show that character strengths and positive traits may positively influence teaching effectiveness however because the studies were quantitative how that takes place is not clear. Another problem with studies drawing from positive psychology is that emphasis is laid narrowly on teacher effectiveness, therefore they do not provide a broader understanding of the influence of positive traits on novice teachers. Considering that one of the principal aims of positive

psychology is to revisit the “the average” person with an interest in finding out what works, what is right, and what is improving” (Sheldon & King, 2001, p. 216), it is a paradox that less emphasis has been laid on how the average novice teacher survives their first year. The next section aims at reviewing studies to find out about the more functional roles of personal qualities of novice teachers in how they face challenges.

### **2.3 Section 2: A review of qualitative studies on what qualities novice teachers use to face challenges.**

Because less is known on core qualities/character strengths as they pertain to novice teachers and how they survive I review studies on personal qualities of novice teachers deployed to face various challenges. The next section reviews some of the personal and professional qualities employed by novice teachers in facing challenges such as teaching students from disadvantaged backgrounds, classroom management, dealing with mixed ability and adapting their teaching methods. Part A of this section reviews studies on the role of personal core qualities such as empathy, compassion, patience and perseverance in facing aforementioned challenges. Part B reviews professional qualities such as knowledge, preparedness and alternatives and their roles in how novice teachers face their challenges. Part C reviews studies on the role of personal and professional qualities in how novice teachers face contextual challenges.

#### **2.3 Section 2 Part A: A review of the role of core qualities in facing challenges**

The four personal core qualities reviewed in the section below are, empathy, compassion, patience and perseverance. Empathy, compassion and perseverance have been listed as core qualities in the core qualities questionnaire whereas patience has been listed as a strength and associated with the core qualities (Evelein, 2005).

##### ***2.3.1 The role of empathy***

The core quality of empathy has been listed as important in connecting with students from disadvantaged backgrounds in a study investigating the qualities, mindsets and behaviours of non novice teachers who work with disadvantaged children (Akyeampong et al., 2018). In their study several participants reported that “connecting with students is about making yourself an equal rather than a superior and demonstrating that you’re willing and able to make mistakes” (p. 13). According to Akyeampong et al. (2018) “This idea of connecting and empathizing with students is an indication of the importance these teachers place on knowing their students and opening up space for them to contribute equally to learning. It is about respecting them as co-contributors of knowledge. In effect,



without a deep connection with their teachers, students are unlikely to experience deep learning” (p. 13). Akyeampong et al. (2018) found that participants (effective teachers) explained they helped students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds by providing emotional support although the details of how this was achieved was not available as a mixed methods approach was used, and no qualitative data was available regarding how the students were supported. Importantly however, empathy, compassion, love and kindness and the ability to build relationships with students were the important findings in the study in meeting the learning needs of all students and “participants spoke about the importance of connecting and bonding with students. This included “playing”, “learning”, “laughing”, and “being friends” with students. The ability to listen to students was a strong sub-theme”(p. 35). The findings from the study in particular connecting to students, and learning from them, can be related to Care theory according to which “Knowing a student’s situation requires, but is not limited to, knowing something about the student’s home life, cultural history, and the political situations that she or he confronts outside of the classroom” (Bartell, 2011, p. 59).

Swan & Riley (2015) paper on the links between mentalization (ability to understand the intentions, goals and emotional states of ourselves and others) defined teacher empathy as, “the ability of the teacher to express concern for, and take the perspective of a student or students, and involves both cognitive and affective elements”. They also provide some perspective on its origin and manifestation mentioning that “empathy is often seen as an innate ability with an assumption that a capacity for it is only learnt through experience and whose expression highly depends on context” (p. 223).

Findings from Cooper’s qualitative study on non novice teachers provides more insight into the role of empathy and shows that empathy has three forms whose deployment in empathetic teachers depends upon the context (Cooper, 2004). According to her, empathy develops over time from fundamental empathy which is basic in empathetic teachers and consists of the basic characteristics and means of communication which are needed to initiate empathetic relationships to profound empathy which encompasses a rich understanding of others in their social, historical and relational contexts and is deployed over time and frequency of interaction and is more likely to be produced in small groups and one-to-one interactions. The third form of empathy is functional empathy, and is used by teachers to cope with complex interactions in large classes by treating the whole classroom as one person for the purpose of interaction. Empathy become a tool by teachers connecting with students on common topics such as football. Findings of Cooper’s study extends the understanding of how empathy works in teacher student interactions by showing that all form of empathy particularly profound empathy build a positive learning climate by increasing positive interaction and communication which not only builds a student’s self esteem but create emotional links between tutor

and student. The emotional closeness allows the tutor to “discover hidden factors which might enhance or inhibit learning and development, including home factors” (Cooper, 2004, p. 12).

Empathy has also been found to facilitate the way non novice teachers deal with mixed ability as a study showed that empathetic behaviour by teachers (not novice teachers) created harmony in the classroom and teaching methods were organized according to the diverse needs of each pupil. In addition those teachers “demonstrated continuous awareness of pupils’ conditions and they were attentive to their verbal and non-verbal behaviour” (Aðalsteinsdóttir, 2004, p. 106).

Studies focusing on the role of empathy in novice teachers is limited to a few studies which are discussed below.

The role of empathy among other qualities such as organization and resilience were identified as critical in a recent cross national case study carried out in four countries (Klassen et al., 2018). Data was collected by interviewing 150 experienced teachers and teacher educators who also observed a novice and experienced teacher and asked to identify the attributes required for successful novice teaching. The results revealed that empathy was involved in the ability to listen and build relations with learners and also adapt to their needs and recognize the distinctive qualities of each child. Since this study was a large scale study the details of how empathy was involved was not described at length.

A smaller scale qualitative study with a focus on the role of empathy in the cultural competency of five novice teachers has been conducted by Hughes (2017) and points to the possible role of empathy in their teaching. Participants in his study saw empathy as a last resort in accepting low achievers from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, motivating them where “empathy becomes a tool that makes students feel important and loved so that they can hopefully draw into caring about their education” (p. 73). Another participant reported that empathy was important to get information about needy students “I am referring to empathy as verb. You have to have information about those students, about their conditions, about their lives, about their understandings, their perceptions, their feelings and realities” (p. 83). Another participant spoke about developing empathy as a way of providing students with everything they need and a skill that can be developed “To really empathize affectively with my students in a way that is going to provide them with everything they need to be successful in life and even successful in middle school. Developing empathy as a skill is a process. Some develop that skill better than others” (p. 84). Interestingly empathy emerged as a theme in Hughes’s (2017) study in building teacher-student relationships as a way of building trust and also in helping their students master content. It’s role may also be associated with classroom control as “one challenging student on a wheel chair made it difficult for the teacher to be empathetic by constantly teasing her, however her

use of empathy by praising him allowed her to regain control as he listened and followed her direction thereafter” (p. 62).

In a study on the lived experience of 18 novice teachers empathy was found to be associated with two categories identified as important in their role. Empathy was associated with understanding and empowering students and facilitating learning. More specifically its role was important in identifying, relating and supporting students facing difficulties (Goh, Yusuf, & Wong, 2017).

### ***2.3.2 The role of compassion***

Compassion has been defined as “being moved by another’s suffering and wanting to help” (Lazarus, 1994). According to Biliias-Lolis, Gelber, Rispoli, Bray, & Maykel (2017), compassion is made up two parts namely feeling an emotion when perceiving the suffering of another and an authentic desire to help that individual, they discuss a compassionate model of teacher education which gives some insight into the role of compassion in teaching challenging students “The compassionate model calls for a deeper intimacy between the teacher and the student exhibiting the challenging behavior as well as the students among one another. It invests in relationships, in promoting helping behavior, and in the trust that every child deserves the opportunity to learn in a context where they are understood, embraced, and supported (p. 1235)”. Compassion can be developed as one teacher named Kim explained how he was deeply influenced by his Buddhist father’s spirituality and compassion in shaping the person he has become he offers a glimpse into his teaching and students (Miller & Nigh, 2017, p. 104). The development of compassion is also supported by Varathaia’s (2010) study whose participant Ann described how the values of compassion were instilled in her by her parents.

Compassion according to Cohen (2007), is a manifestation of humanism along with altruism, duty, integrity and respect for others. He defines humanism as a way of being and professionalism as a way of acting. The link between professionalism and humanism in the medical field is described as “humanism provides the passion that animates authentic professionalism” (p. 1029). In a similar way in the teaching profession, compassion can be understood as a manifestation of the teacher’s humanism.

Studies on how teachers and novice teachers use compassion is limited however studies carried out on non novice teachers support the way Biliias-Lolis et al. (2017) describe the role of compassion above as building relationships, promoting support and helping from teachers and fostering trust through understanding of a student’s situation is highlighted in studies on non novice teachers reviewed below.

Varathaiah's, (2010) study showed the expression of compassion by teachers in post apartheid South Africa. Varathaiah explains in the life of Ann (one of her participants) how she showed compassion and care to her tired and hungry students who were from a socioeconomically challenging school by being compassionate and assisting her student to whatever extent she could. This was expressed when she encountered one of her students who had his head to his desk and could not complete his worksheet and she showed her compassionate side by giving him money to buy food from a tuck-shop. Kate, another participant in the study explained how she showed compassion to one of her students who lost both his parents to ill-health by visiting him at home and taking groceries over to his place.

Yazan & Peercy (2016), discuss how one of the three English speakers of other languages learn to handle their emotional states in relation to teaching and learning and their emerging identities. In their case compassion was expressed by giving them the space to slow down. She also explained how she had to balance compassion for her student's unique situations and experiences with strictness and an authoritative style of teaching "When your kids are being annoying and when they're really disruptive, all you're thinking is I need to get this under control. Your compassion side goes out the window until you start to see the effects of that, and then you reel yourself in. Now is the time to show them that I still care, show them that they're still valued or show them that they never weren't [sic] valued" (p. 57).

In a study investigating the qualities mindsets and behaviours of effective teachers who work with disadvantaged children compassion and kindness were the dominant quality for effective teachers in meeting the learning needs of their students (Akyeampong et al., 2018). Compassion and kindness were the most highlighted qualities when participants were asked about the qualities they possessed that helped them to meet the learning needs of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This subtheme highlighted what participants said about the need for students to feel loved, accepted and important as a precondition for academic learning.

Developing a trusting relationship with students was listed as one of the behavior strategies used by novice teachers in an elementary school (Atkins, 2018). The study pointed out that those novice teachers showed their compassionate side by allowing students to share personal stories and was important in a broader way in developing empathy for students.

### ***2.3.3 The role of patience***

Patience is not listed as a core quality in the core qualities questionnaire for teachers (Meijer, Korthagen, & Vasalos, 2008) nor is it listed as a character strength because it can be decomposed into self-regulation, persistence and open-mindedness (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Patience has been

listed as a strength although it was not shortlisted by Evelein while developing the core qualities questionnaire (Evelein, 2005). Patience is listed third as a personal or psychological quality by Paul Witty (as cited in Strong, 2011) who reviewed “12,000 letters from children who had been asked to describe “the teacher who has helped me most””(p. 13).

Findings of a recent study on non novice teachers show that patience was listed after compassion and kindness as a dominant quality for teachers to meet the learning needs of students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Akyeampong et al., 2018). The study did not elaborate on how patience worked to meet the learning needs of the students and was carried out on effective teachers from the Varkey Teacher Ambassador Community. Findings from another recent study by Goh et al. (2017) extend further the understanding the role of patience among novice teachers. The findings show that in addition to its role in building the teacher student relationship and teaching, patience was also found to have a role in classroom management in knowing how to deal with problematic students and also to know their learning problems and issues (Goh et al., 2017). Marchbanks (2000) mentioned one of her non teacher participants’ characterization of patience as “The characteristic of patience meant that the person was able to repeatedly maintain composure throughout pressing situations” and “being understanding and supportive, providing encouragement no matter how frustrating the circumstances” and being able to tolerate them (p. 5). The role of patience was also linked with regulation of negative emotions in a study on novice EFL Teachers (Arizmendi-Tejeda, Gillings de González, & López Martínez, 2016). According to them “teaching is a form of emotional labor defined as the manufacture or masking of the teacher’s emotion in order to generate a positive response in others) that teachers exercise everyday” (p. 35). There are no recent studies that explored further the role of patience in novice teachers in the areas related to teaching like the study by Goh et al., (2017) however previous studies on non-novice teachers provide more insight on how patience works.

Patience was shown to foster the student teacher relationship at university level according to Alberto & Sánchez (2013) “if the student is treated with patience and respect in turn this fosters the trust that is needed in the teacher-student relationship”,(p. 125) in addition they also relate patience to listening to students in establishing clear communication between teacher and student. Patience was also reported to play a role in building relationships with students in another study. Patience was found to be one among twelve innate characteristics indicating effectiveness among early childhood teachers. Its importance was related to building positive relationships with students (Bingham Rees, 2015).

Patience seems to play a role in teachers understanding students and vice versa. A non novice teacher has reported that she developed patience in a study exploring the role of empathy in teaching culturally diverse students "I have developed a greater level of patience and tolerance for cultures

other than my own (McAllister & Irvine, 2002, p. 14)”. A student teacher in a study on teacher empathy and science education reported that students will understand a teacher’s expectations and what they mean when the teacher is patient in being honest consistent with them (Arghode, Yalvac, & Liew, 2013).

One study unpacked the role of patience in the activity of teaching in a university. Patience played a role in making students understand what is being taught “Students voiced the necessity of patience when giving explanations. Sometimes it is necessary to repeat the information several times, give examples, and try to find alternatives in order to clarify what is being taught”(Alberto & Sánchez, 2013, p. 125). Repeating the information several times was also shared by a novice teacher in Yost’s (2006) study who reported that she always showed patience and perseverance and never gave up on student.

### ***2.3.4 The role of perseverance***

Perseverance is listed as a core quality in the core qualities questionnaire (Meijer et al., 2008).

Perseverance is also listed as a character strength alongside persistence as forming part of the virtue of courage (Williams, 2016). The core quality of perseverance has been listed as one of the twelve innate characteristics indicating effective early childhood teachers (Bingham Rees, 2015). Perseverance has been shown to play a role in motivating teachers for instance, Varathaiah (2010) described perseverance as learnt and adopted from family members in a teacher and how it “spurred her on” in her educational achievement (Varathaiah, 2010).

In a recent study perseverance was listed as a the third dominant quality for effective teachers and was also found to be listed as one of the qualities non novice teachers working with disadvantaged students reported they possessed which they also believed to be important in meeting the needs of such students (Akyeampong et al., 2018). Although the aforementioned study highlighted the role of perseverance not much insight was provided as to how teachers more specifically novice teachers use perseverance. Chaaban and Du (2017) related perseverance to adaptation to teaching. Perseverance was linked with one experienced teacher adaption to teaching which was not her first choice, perseverance allowed her to face challenges in various schools (Chaaban & Du, 2017). Perseverance was also linked to adaptation of a novice teacher. Sharplin,O’neill and Chapman (2011) reported how novice teachers emphasized the need for perseverance as one of the palliative coping strategies in adapting to their new appointment as teachers (Sharplin et al., 2011) and Fry (2009) describes how one novice teacher persevered as one novice teacher described how she overcame obstacle in teaching maths and classroom management throught perseverance (Fry, 2009). Those studies highlighted the

role of perseverance in novice teacher's adaptation to a new appointment but do not explain how that happens.

More insight into the role of perseverance was provided in an exploratory study on the character strengths of a good teacher. Arthur, Kristjansson, Cooke, Brown, & Carr (2015) explored character strengths that the good teacher might need, one experienced teacher showed perseverance "particularly with lower ability students where she constantly thought of new ways to teach topics that these students find difficult to grasp" (Arthur, Kristjansson, Cooke, Brown, & Carr, 2015). Yost (2006) supported the role of perseverance in making students understand. Perseverance along with patience was seen as important to ensure students understand, one teacher participant in Yost's study stated that she possessed the quality of perseverance and patience and commented "I won't give up, I am stubborn..I won't give up on students" (p. 67).

Ensuring students understand was also related to the quality of persistence found to be closely related to perseverance. Wheatly (2016) discussed the role of persistence as "it means not just to teach again the next day and to teach mathematics again the next day, but to persist with those three students until they understand fractions. Thus, the disposition of teacher persistence may be manifested in many ways. A persistent teacher may, for example, try many strategies to teach a new concept or skill and not give up if students do not "get it" right away" (p. 3).

#### **2.4 Section 2 Part B: An expanded view of the personal notion of core qualities to include professional qualities**

In contrast to Korthagen's (2004) conception of core qualities in the beginning of this literature review. McArdle and Coutts (2003) provide an alternative conception of core qualities. They go beyond personal or human qualities such as empathy, compassion, patience and persistence and identify core qualities which are more related to "being a teacher", who is expected to think and behave professionally (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Those core qualities identified were derived from reflexive dialogues with teachers. The "core" in core qualities in their paper designates an emphasis on qualities that are central to many dimensions of practice including skills as well as qualities in the cognitive domain. To them the notion of strong core is a metaphor for the collocation of desirable fundamental qualities which they identified as strength, balance, ballast, and value maturity. McArdle and Coutts (2003) point out that those core qualities help manage the complexity inherent in teaching such as knowing when to start and stop and making choices. Related to the teaching complexities discussed by McArdle and Coutts's other researchers such as Yost (2006) found other profession related qualities such as "knowing students" as important namely in novice teachers which can be related to knowing when to start and stop. Similarly researching alternatives

(related to making choices) was found to help novice teachers choose alternatives when there were no tailor-made curriculum for students of a novice maths teacher (Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2010). They called those qualities of resilience. If we adopt the view of Mc Ardle and Coutts (2003), the profession-related qualities just mentioned such as knowing students and choosing alternatives can also be seen as core qualities because they are fundamental to many areas of practice.

Although profession related core qualities in themselves empower teachers and novice teachers in their role. Studies discussed in the previous paragraphs on core qualities such as empathy, compassion, perseverance, and patience show their roles and relatedness to profession related qualities. Two of the profession related core qualities discussed in the previous paragraph were shown to be related to personal core qualities. For instance Akyeampong et al., (2018) found empathy (a core quality) to be related to knowing students. Wheatley (2016) highlighted how a first-grade teacher developed an alternative curriculum for her diverse group of students (a profession related quality) for her students by being persistent (a core quality).

According to Guseva, Dombrovskis, & Kokina, (2009) such profession related qualities or rather core qualities are developed as novice teachers assume their role as a teacher. This information along with the findings that personal and profession related core qualities enable teachers in their practice is pertinent to novice teachers and how they meet challenges. In this section studies on those professional core qualities such as knowledge, preparedness, and alternatives as well as their relation (where it occurs) to personal core qualities will be reviewed in the light of their influence in helping novice teacher overcome their challenges.

#### ***2.4.1 The role of knowledge***

Korthagen (2004) conceptualizes teacher knowledge as a competency, however Mitchell, Robinson, & Plake (2001) portray teacher knowledge as a quality. This implies that teacher knowledge can also be viewed as a quality. Using the latter portrayal, this section reviews the role of knowledge as a quality when novice teachers face challenges.

Knowledge is classified as a virtue by positive psychologists (Williams, 2016). This means that it can also be considered to be enabling, in line with the principal aims of positive psychology as described by Gable & Haidt (2005) and Sheldon & King (2001), which are to find out what works in an individual, in this case enabling to a teacher. Knowledge is seen as important in teaching, for instance knowing students was highlighted in a report on exemplary teachers by Stronge & Xu (2011) who reported that exemplary teachers found that they knew their students from multiple sources namely



informally, from colleagues and knowing their cultures. According to Zinn & Scheuer, (2006) “good teachers know their students”. Centore (as cited in Amin & Vithal, 2015) mentions knowing as a value that can be traced to the nature of schools and humans, therefore to know students is to teach well. For example, the quality of knowing students entail going beyond just knowing students from the classroom setting. “Knowing a student’s situation requires, but is not limited to, knowing something about the student’s home life, cultural history, and the political situations that she or he confronts outside of the classroom” (Bartell, 2011, p. 59). Knowing students is influenced by a teachers identity (Amin & Ramrathan, 2009). Knowing students can also be influenced by their personal qualities which forms part of their identity. For instance, one recent study by Akyeampong et al. (2018) as described in the next paragraph highlight the link between empathy and knowing students.

In a more recent study by Akyeampong et al., (2018) on teaching disadvantaged children, empathy was highlighted as one of the dominant qualities to enable teachers to know students by relating to them. According to a survey carried out among the teachers in the study several teachers pointed out that the ability to know students and their needs was more important than knowing everything and being an expert. This is illustrated by what one surveyed teacher said “...relatability is very critical. There is more respect offered to teachers for being relatable than for being seen as an authority or an expert. The level of respect is about how much or how quickly students can connect and understand your point of view rather than what you know” (p. 11).

Empirical studies on novice teachers support the importance of knowledge for instance the importance of knowing students is understood well when reading about the testimony of Mary a novice teacher who taught to students of mixed abilities from an economically challenged community (Tait, 2008):

The bulk of her students were of Somali or Caribbean background; and although most spoke English fairly well, Mary had three students who required specialized ESL instruction, including one student from Latin America who spoke no English at all. Her biggest concern, however, was the academic level of her students. That was one of the biggest shocks, the slowness of my kids. I have a lot of kids working at a grade 3 to 5 level (p.66)

Tait (2008) mentions that Mary used problem solving strategies by learning about her student’s background. In order to achieve that she called on their parents and also sought assistance from colleagues in order to know what to do. He & Cooper (2011) found that getting proper knowledge of their students and their families was one of the strategies preservice teachers used to face challenges such as classroom management, keeping students motivated and involving parents. By connecting with students, observing them, knowing their backgrounds through conversation on topics that students

found interesting and talking to parents of students, novice teachers were able to get into the minds of their students and were thus better able to motivate them (He & Cooper, 2011). One strategy used by teachers of English as a foreign language in one study was to pretest students at the beginning of the school year and basing instruction on the results (Pajalic, 2015).

In high poverty schools, warm demanders (teachers effective in teaching Eskimo school children) knowing students and their cultures well was seen as a means to create a supportive climate among high poverty students (Bondy & Ross, 2008). This had the effect of engaging the students as the teacher was able to “take a stance communicating warmth and a demand for student effort and mutual respect” (p. 54).

### ***2.4.2 The role of preparedness***

Preparedness for teaching is not well defined in the literature. Preparedness as a term is defined by Merriam-Webster as the quality or state of being prepared (Merriam-Webster, 2016). Preparedness is listed as one of the professional qualities of a teacher and according to Raymond (2008), preparedness is one of the most common features of effective teachers identified in the literature. The literature on novice teachers suggests that they are often unprepared to teach for various reasons. Schwartz (1996) explains that novice teachers are often inducted in an exemplary school and then placed in a difficult school with low ability students from difficult neighbourhoods as in inner city New York. Another reason advanced is classroom management, Meister & Melnick (2003) point out the need for teacher education programmes to focus more directly on handling disruptive students. Although some studies in the literature point out that being unprepared is one of the problems novice teachers have to deal with, some studies show that novice teachers themselves acknowledge being well prepared in terms of lesson planning and the use of appropriate teaching resources as important as they begin their teaching roles (Goh et al., 2017). In order to deal with their unpreparedness and survive, novice teachers have to devise strategies in order to prepare lessons, manage students and adapt their teaching resources such as the textbook and teaching aids to their student needs. In the next paragraphs the strategies used by novice teachers to prepare themselves are reviewed in the literature.

#### ***2.4.2.1 Preparedness with lesson planning***

Coping with lesson planning has been mentioned as one of the challenges of novice teachers (Dickson et al., 2014). Novice teachers also saw teaching preparation and lesson planning as a problem (Senom, Razak Zakaria, & Sharatol Ahmad Shah, 2013). Some novice teachers have described their problems with lesson planning with a disorganized administration as an aftershock after the initial transition shock of no welcome and sudden change of textbook (Farrell, 2016). According to (Freiberg, 2002)

new teachers spend too much time preparing lessons sometimes staying up all night to plan the next day's lesson. Problems with time management of novice teachers is supported by Fantilli & Mcdougall's (2009) study on the challenges and supports of first year teachers who mentioned that new teachers dedicate an excessive amount of time to meet the demands of the profession. In Fantilli and Mc Dougall's (2009) study one teacher, Laura explains that she has "no time for her boyfriend. As she was in a survive today and at the end of the day you'll worry about tomorrow mode" (p. 823). Many participants in the study also explain how other tasks they have to do can steal time away from lesson planning. In another study, Mutton, Hagger and Burn (2011) describe how Bridget one of their participants "focuses on strictly what she needs to do as a teacher in order to cut down on the time required for planning" (p. 409). Mutton et al. (2011) mention that in order to be efficient and save time she sacrificed being effective in order to meet the needs of her students. In one study by Boakye & Ampiah (2017) on the challenges and solutions of newly qualified teachers time management is also mentioned as a problem faced by newly qualified teachers (Boakye & Ampiah, 2017). One of the teachers Bernard's solution to not having enough time to complete a lesson was to reduce the number of objectives in his lesson just to enable him to finish. Strategies such as that used by Bernard as well as other strategies developed by trial and error has been regrouped under problem solving by Castro, Kelly and Shih (2010) who describe the "act of teaching as constant problem solving" involving questions such as "what am I going to teach?" and "How am I going to reach this or that student" (p. 625). In their study trial and error methods were common and involved teachers "attempting to figure things out on their own" (p. 625). In a study of teachers who had a few years of experience their advice to novice teachers was to improvise and be flexible with planning because of uncertainty of what will happen (Bezzina, 2007). In one study by Nguse (2015) on coping strategies employed to manage daily workload, planning emerged as a key ingredient to manage it. Sonja one of the participants in her study explains how she tries to get everything done in school:

The school finishes at 3 o'clock, so sometimes I'm here till half- past 3, 4 o'clock depending on what planning I have to do. And trying to get everything done in school rather than at home because you know what happens when you get home, there are too many other things" (p.76)

Boakye & Ampiah's (2017) study show that science novice teachers improvised equipment in order to find a solution to their lack of resources such as equipment. Malheux and Lajoie (2010) suggest improvisation as a way for novice teachers not only "to know how but to develop know-how competencies to actually act in the moment and make the most of surprising events that sparkle in the everyday of teaching and learning" (p. 86).

#### *2.4.2.2 Preparedness with inadequacy or lack of textbooks or resources*

Besides lesson planning lack of resources for teaching and learning was also listed as another of the challenges faced by newly qualified teachers (Boakye & Ampiah, 2017).

Castro et al. (2010) describe another way of coping with lack of resources. Nancy prepared herself for not having enough teaching materials for her class of 5 to 6 year olds by using the internet. The approach adopted by the teacher is described in the study as a more advanced problem solving technique which may prove useful for novice teachers (Castro et al., 2010).

Using personal materials and resources was reported by Confait (2015) to be a strategy adopted by beginning teachers to prepare for the the lack of inadequate resources in schools or problems with administration in obtaining them reported by Castro et al., (2010) in another study. One study carried out in the Seychelles reports that beginning teachers improvised by relying on personal resources such as the internet to download additional curriculum resources and devising worksheets and handouts for students (Confait, 2015).

Oxford (as cited in Asokhia, 2009, p.81) defines improvisation as “using whatever is available because one does not have what is really needed” and “using alternative materials and resources to facilitate learning whenever there is lack or shortage of some first hand teaching aids.

#### **Preparedness with mixed ability students**

According to Al-Shammakhi and Al-Humaidi (2015) “in real teaching contexts, little attention has been paid to prepare and train teachers on how to cater for the different ability levels. They are not given many guidelines to help them prepare for suitable adaptation according to students’ needs” (p. 34). According to Perrera (as cited in Al-Shammakhi & Al-Humaidi, 2015, p. 34), the teacher’s book “does not support teachers in differentiating the materials in order to cope with mixed ability classes. The inadequacy/absence of a resource is also mentioned in another study by Castro et al. (2010) who describe how Kendra one of their participants developed and tailored a mathematics curriculum for her special education students to prepare herself for not having a mathematics textbook for them. This was accomplished by using help-seeking as a strategy therefore going to other teachers to see how they teach at that grade level and writing down problems to assess her students (Castro et al., 2010).

According to Dogarel and Nitu (2007) “research has revealed that teachers find classroom management more difficult in multilevel and mixed ability classes” (p. 431). In a study by Dickson et al.,(2014) novice teachers described “their struggle to cope with teaching the curriculum in a way which would enable their mixed ability students to access learning, feeling their lower-level students

were a particular challenge to deal with (p. 5). Another study found that one of the challenges faced by teachers was to improvise material to arouse and sustain learners' optimism and enthusiasm (Olibie, Nwabunwanne, & Ezenwanne, 2013). One study on how differentiated instruction is used by Croatian English as a foreign language tutors showed that a commonly used strategy to cope with students of mixed ability was "using different assignment and materials" (Pajalic, 2015). Boakye & Ampiah, (2017) report how some of her participants solved the problem of having inadequate teaching materials to teach his low ability students by improvising a measuring cylinder used in a science class, another participant bought batteries and bulbs using their own money. In another study novice teachers used help-seeking strategies to obtain teaching resources and materials and advice from other teachers (Chaaban & Du, 2017).

### ***2.4.3 The role of alternatives***

In a study on what experienced teachers can learn from newcomers, Ulvik and Langorgen (2012) point out what they bring, "As newcomers, new teachers bring alternative practices and may have different perspectives from their colleagues" (p. 52). This is in line with Dewey (as cited in Ulvik & Langørgen, 2012, p. 53), who "advocates open-mindedness and willingness to learn, which entails paying full attention to alternative possibilities". According to Peterson & Seligman (2004), Open-mindedness is a character strength defined as the "willingness to search actively for evidence against one's favoured beliefs, plans, or goals and to weigh such evidence fairly when it is available" (p. 144). Castro et al. (2010) associate researching alternatives as problem solving and "the act of teaching as constant problem solving" exhibited by some of the novice teachers in his study when faced with challenges in high-needs areas (p. 625). Studies discussing the role of alternatives in adapting the curriculum, approaching students, and teaching in novice teachers are reviewed below.

#### ***2.4.3.1 The role of alternatives in adapting the prescribed textbook/curriculum***

Castro et al., (2010), described that novice teachers in their study approached problem solving in three different ways: trial and error, consulting others and researching alternatives. Researching alternatives was described in two teachers. One of them dealt with classroom management issues with the class by writing down the specific problems she was having and consulted colleagues for solutions which she implemented. The other teacher Kendra developed a tailor made mathematics curriculum for her students by making observing teachers in their classroom teaching the subject to know what the levels were and subsequently collecting resources to tailor their curriculum.

The role of finding alternatives has been linked with persistence, in the sense that a persistent teacher will persist in looking for alternatives. According to Wheatley (2016) even though that teacher does not know the answer to reach every student “he or she will persist in looking for alternatives” (p. 5). Delpit (as cited in Wheatley, 2016) explains how a first-grade teacher named Stephanie developed an alternative curriculum for her African-American students by persisting in studying methods and curricula responsive to a diverse group of students.

#### *2.4.3.2 Alternative approaches to students*

According to Kučerová et al., (2015), each novice teacher is equipped with knowledge which can include strategies and resources for maintaining discipline which involves establishing positive teacher-pupil relationship and using disciplinary techniques. McAllister & Irvine, (2002) describe how teachers working with culturally diverse students developed an alternative more empathetic approach to their students after a professional development course by interacting positively and being supportive. Mc Allister and Irvine (2002) describe how one of their participants empathetic behaviour made her react in an alternative open way using tolerance and patience to a comment that bothered her. This approach gave her the opportunity for conversations. Another participant explained how she tuned in to a minority student as an alternative when in the past she had ignored the same student because she could not understand what she was saying. With regards to providing support to needy students another participant in the study “adjusted her support for language minority students by asking them to sit together” (p. 16).

#### *2.4.3.3 Alternative teaching strategies*

According to Wheatley (2016), a teacher who persists in looking for alternatives gives themselves opportunities and motivation for thoughtful reflection so that they do not persist blindly in using ineffective approaches. Boakye et al. (2017) explain how three novice teacher participants in their study devised alternative solutions to ensure their students understood their lessons “Asaph did extended periods of explanation and exercises. Edward mixed vernacular with English to enhance their understanding and proposed that practical work was necessary for enhancing understanding. For Bernard, he assigned them research work to enable them to understand” (p. 8). According to Stronge & Xu (2011) effective teachers adapt instruction to meet student needs and are able to select from a range of strategies. According to Flores (2006), “new teachers developed a set of coping strategies, according to a survival orientation, to adapt to the new tasks and roles required of them as teachers” (p. 2022). Castro et al., (2010) describe how Nancy one of the novice teacher participants researched alternatives by using advanced problem-solving strategies such as using the internet to teach

regrouping on mathematics, when she did not have enough materials for her class of 5 and 6 year-olds.

Mutton et al. (2011) describe through the example of one of their teacher participants how beginning teachers follow alternative approaches during a lesson in response to pupils' reactions on any given occasion. One teacher participant opened up alternatives by anticipating what might happen "This led to a position where he was able to continue to plan his lessons in some detail but nevertheless feel confident about following alternative approaches during the lesson in response to the pupils' reactions on any given occasion" (p. 410).

## **2.5 Section 2 Part C: A review of the role of teacher qualities in facing contextual challenges**

According to Amin and Ramathan (2009), "Schools are not homogeneous. They vary, for example, in terms of poverty and wealth distribution, geographic locations, demography, language, culture, social mores, and religious beliefs" (p. 70). The heterogeneity of schools is even greater in the international context where novice teachers are confronted with challenges that are specific to each country although the challenges may be common to a few countries for instance researchers from the United States and Canada report that novice teachers in those countries face a number of contextual factors namely classroom management, student motivation, diversity among students, classroom resources, workload, time pressure, curriculum changes, autonomy, professional development, societal recognition, and hiring practices (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Le Maistre & Paré, 2010). The situation in Qatar offers an example of the specificity of its challenges since its locally trained teachers are insufficient to meet the job demands of the education sector therefore teachers are recruited from neighbouring Arab countries without any formal induction program (Chaaban & Du, 2017).

Novice teachers in Mauritius are faced with challenges specific to the country such as the absence of a code of discipline resulting from the abolition of corporal punishment and sometimes challenges they have to confront by being offered placement in a competitive star school with parents having generally high expectations on their children's performance. Alternatively they may be posted in an average school with mixed ability students or a ZEP school. ZEP stands for Zones d'Education Prioritaire, French for schools that have a lower than 40% pass rate in five consecutive years among students in their Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) national examinations (Hollup, 2004).

Studies in the next section show that teachers use their personal and/or professional qualities in dealing with contextual challenges. The following three sections discuss studies showing how novice

teachers deal with contextual factors such as an exam based system and parental expectations, mixed ability and the abolition of corporal punishment.

### ***2.5.1 Qualities deployed in dealing with an exam based system and parental expectations***

The educational system in Mauritius is highly competitive (Morabito et al., 2017). As a result of its competitiveness the local educational system puts a lot of pressure on parents and pupils alike (Hollup, 2004). Teachers also feel the pressure as they have five examinable subjects to prepare learners for when completing primary school (Hollup, 2004). The pressure to prepare students however is higher in schools considered to be “star schools” in the Mauritius education system. Those star schools have a pass rate as high as 80% (Hollup, 2004). In low achieving schools, particularly ZEP schools there is less pressure put on teachers by parents “There are lower expectations regarding pupils' educational achievement from the parents who are mostly belonging to the working class” on teachers in ZEP schools (Hollup, 2004, p. 30).

In relation to exam preparation and parental expectation Lindgren, (2007) puts into context the challenge a novice teacher has to face since the first day “it is not uncommon for teacher students to be expected to be leaders in the profession from the first day of their career, as a consequence of both pupils and parents expecting a competent teacher”. Senom et al., (2013) mention one of the problems as parents of their students having unmet classroom expectation and struggling with high expectations from the parents.

A few researchers describe how their participants dealt with demanding parents. One study reported that a novice teacher dealt with parents who demanded to know why their child had not performed by being confident in the evidence she had collected evidence to defend the child's grade (Dickson et al., 2014). Uusiautti et al. (2014) describe how one of the participants was able to collaborate with parents through parents' meetings and personal encounters in order to relieve stress and obtain their support (Uusiautti, Harjula, & Pennanen, 2014). In another study by Fry (2009), Becca a novice teacher created a positive home-school relationship and also had one-on-one consultations with their students to support and facilitate her student achievements.

With respect to adapting to an exam based competitive education system a few studies provide some insight in how teachers coped. Gün (2014) conducted a study to explore the role between the positive traits of English as a foreign language teachers and their students' academic achievement and found that caring personality, teaching style, understanding and empathy, knowledge and professionalism were ranked as important by the participants (Gün, 2014). In a study by Faekah, Ariffin, Hashim, & Yahya (2010), conscientiousness which includes being persevering, thorough, well organized and



responsible was found to be related to workplace engagement and learning among secondary teachers. Conscientiousness was mentioned to be a characteristic of well-performing teachers in the study. More recently Wheatley (2016) mentioned that persistence may be related to student achievement as it promoted to self-efficacy (a teacher's belief in their ability to teach effectively). Self-efficacy in turn was found to be associated with student achievement (Wheatley, 2002). In a recent study the critical attributes of novice teachers were explored in a crossnational study across four countries and their findings revealed that empathy and communication, organization and planning and resilience and adaptability were the attributes critical for the success of novice teachers (Klassen et al., 2018).

### ***2.5.2 Qualities deployed in dealing with contextual factors-mixed ability***

Schwartz, (1996) explains how some novice teachers are posted in difficult schools and therefore have to deal more with contextual issues such as classroom management and students with mixed abilities which they were unprepared to deal with. Classroom management exacerbates having to deal with mixed ability students as it has been reported that “teachers find classroom management more difficult in mixed ability classes (Dogarel & Nitu, 2007).

Schwartz (1996) describes a scenario where student teachers are placed in an exemplary school and then posted in a difficult school:

Consider a hypothetical example. A new teacher, Ms. Jones, has been very well prepared by her student teaching for classrooms in schools that are "exemplary." If her first teaching position is in such a school, Ms. Jones will probably fare well. Unfortunately, the typical city school is not only not exemplary, but quite likely to have an ineffectual learning environment that will make it discouragingly difficult for Ms. Jones to apply the principles she learned in her "model" school. Her transition is apt to be traumatic (p. 82)

Although traumatic may not be the experience of all novice teachers who are posted in difficult schools two studies conducted in Mauritius show that they display certain qualities which allow them to survive the challenge of mixed ability by using the mother tongue. According to Sonck (2005), although English is the official medium of instruction, French creates a good impression and Creole, the vernacular has the lowest status of all the three languages, some teachers in Mauritius use Creole the mother tongue extensively to facilitate communication and teaching (Sonck, 2005). Another paper supports the fact that teachers in Mauritius use Creole as a support language to help the child to learn to read, write, and speak English. According to Avrillon, (2007) “As the child is most often unfamiliar

with French, Creole is also used as a support language to help him understand what is being taught in class” (p. 24).

More detail is not provided in the study on how Creole is used to facilitate students of mixed ability however another more recent study by Boakye & Ampiah (2017) shows that the mother tongue was used as a solution to the challenge of student’s inability to understand the lessons taught. Newly qualified teachers in Ghana teaching in village schools to students from poor socio-economic backgrounds “had to intersperse the usage of English language with vernacular to enhance the understanding of their students” (p. 7).

In another study on novice teachers by Goh, Yusuf and Wong (2017), understanding students being taught, empowering them and identifying students with problems and subsequently being patient and having empathy towards their problems was a way for them to deal with the challenge of diversity and differences in learning abilities. Delpit (as cited in Wheatley, 2016, p.6) mentions how Stephanie a Grade 1 teacher who was persistent in acquiring the knowledge to create a curriculum in order to face the contextual difficulty of working with diverse groups of students.

### ***2.5.3 Qualities deployed in dealing with the abolishment of corporal punishment***

In Mauritius corporal punishment has been abolished and is prohibited in schools according to a report by the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (“Progress towards prohibiting all corporal punishment in East and Southern Africa,” 2018). The banning of corporal punishment poses a problem for novice teachers in Mauritius in managing their classrooms. The same problem is reported in South African schools. Buton (as cited in Naicker, 2014) argued that many teachers cannot manage their students and their difficulties have been exacerbated “by the banning of corporal punishment without proper alternative discipline measures in place”(p.230). Classroom discipline is defined by Brophy (1988) as “actions taken to elicit or compel changes in the behavior of students who fail to conform to expectations, especially behavior that is salient or sustained enough to disrupt the classroom management system”(p.2). The absence of an alternative to corporal punishment is also reflected in Chaaban & Du's (2017) study where novice teachers reported facing challenges with classroom management especially in the absence of a school wide discipline plan. In that study help seeking and observing and imitating more experienced teachers was used as a strategy by novice teachers to manage their classrooms. Other studies on novice teachers describe how they dealt with classroom management. Tait (2008) describes one of her participants a novice teacher who also collaborated with her classmates about classroom management techniques which she found helpful. Goh et al., (2017) report that their participants saw classroom and behaviour management as an important competency stating “a competent teacher is in control of the classroom and behavior of

students”. Strategies they used to achieve this aim was “moving student seating position”, rearranging desk and chairs, doing exercises and communicating with students about disruptive behaviours (p. 24).

One case study by Hebert & Worthy (2001) about a novice teacher’s success in her first year describes how one novice teacher was successful in maintaining discipline. The participant Haley describes her experience with discipline as “Discipline...If I wouldn’t have had that, I don’t think I would have made it through student teaching or my first year” (p. 905). Haley was prepared to manage her classroom as she made learning about behaviour management a priority during student teaching by learning and practicing it. She heeded the advice of more experienced teachers to avoid “wanting to be their buddy” and explained how “she came in real stiff for the first few weeks then started to loosening up after the first few weeks” (p. 906).

## **2.6 Synthesis of chapter**

The literature review of this chapter points out that the role of personal and professional core qualities in novice teachers is not well known and that research in that area can increase understanding of their roles in survival or adaptation. The next chapter presents the theoretical frameworks which the study draws upon and justifications made to adopt them.

## CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 Orientation

The previous chapter reviewed the literature on core qualities. In this chapter I begin by identifying and exploring three framings of core qualities namely Ofman's (2001) core quadrant model, the onion model and character strengths which are synonymous to core qualities. I then discuss in section 3.5 how the chosen onion model for the study was not really exploited by other researchers other than for its intended design which was to help teachers actualize their core qualities by reflecting on its different layers. The view of core qualities as a "holy grail" to be actualized is challenged in section 3.6 and an alternative view of core qualities as ubiquitous and typical to the average person and therefore the average novice teacher is adopted using the concept of character strengths rooted in the field of positive psychology. Furthermore, the adaptive significance and survival value of core qualities is discussed and provide further impetus for its selection for my study.

Next, in section 3.6 I discuss how the onion model used in conjunction with core qualities is seen as appropriate for the study because its different layers offer a wide scope in understanding how specific challenges met by novice teachers trigger the deployment of specific core qualities which influence expression of his/her competencies. The conceptual framework thus allows understanding of how core qualities from the inner layers influence the competencies of the novice teacher which in turn influences the behaviour of the teacher represented by the behaviour layer. This has significance for the study in understanding how the core qualities of novice teacher's help them adapt and face challenges represented by the outermost (environment) layer of the model.

### 3.2 Ofman's core qualities

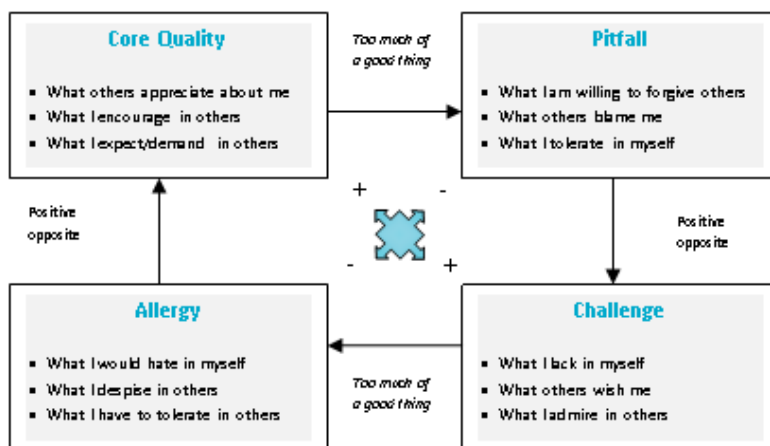
In this section I will describe and discuss the initial framing of core qualities using a model known as the core quadrant model. This framing is discussed first because it was the original model that inspired Korthagen's Onion model. I start with the definition of core qualities, describe the core quadrant model, and then discuss it in relation to the model adopted for my study.

Core qualities have been defined by Ofman (2001) as:

attributes that form part of a person's essence (core); people are steeped in these qualities, which place all their - more or less striking - competences in a certain light. A person is 'coloured' by his or her core qualities. It is their strong point, the characteristic that immediately comes to mind when we think of this person. Examples of core qualities are

determination, consideration (for others), precision, courage, receptivity, orderliness, empathy, flexibility, etc. Core qualities are expressions of the self that generate inspiration. They are not so much characteristics as possibilities that can be 'tuned in to' (p.1).

The core qualities mentioned by Korthagen (2004) is a term originally coined by Ofman. The “core” in the construct originates from Ofman’s (2001) core quadrant model in Figure 3.1 below. Ofman’s (2001) core quadrant model is useful in the sense that it can make a person aware of their core qualities its impact on others and qualities they lack. For example, a person could become aware of their core quality of decisiveness from colleagues or others. By imagining having too much of decisiveness a person can realize what others can blame him/her for and therefore become aware of the impact of too much decisiveness (nagging) on others. By taking the opposite of decisiveness a person can realize that they do not have patience. Finally, the person can realize that their allergy or what they would hate or despise in others is too much of patience.



**Figure 2: The core quadrant model (Ofman, 2001a)**

Ofman’s (2001) core quadrant model is used for self-betterment by career professionals but can be used by anyone. Although the model may be useful in developing an insight into one’s core qualities, the model has been restricted to the field of Management. What was seen as more useful for education research were the core qualities which form part of the core quadrant model. Those concept of core qualities was adopted by Korthagen (2004) because according to Ofman (2001) they were always potentially present in an individual meaning that they were central or fundamental to every teacher and also had high transfer value because they could broadly be applied in all areas of life including teaching (Noordewier et al., n.d.). By associating core qualities with Seligman’s (2005) character

strengths and Tickle's (2000) personal qualities of teachers, Korthagen (2004) developed a model to help teachers actualize their inner strength or core qualities discussed in the next section.

### **3.3 Korthagen's core qualities and the onion model**

In this section I discuss how the core qualities drawn by Korthagen from the core quadrant model were integrated with another model which as mentioned in the previous section was more suitable for understanding how teachers deploy their qualities in their practice. The purpose for developing the onion model was to help teachers overcome quick fixes and actualize their personal strengths which were called "core qualities" (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2003; Korthagen & Verkuyl, 2002). Quick fixes were seen as a response by teachers to the pressures of day to day practice in order to find an immediate solution to their problem therefore by suspending judgement, and engaging in core reflection they would become in touch with their inner core potential (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2009; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2003). The Onion model was therefore designed to help teachers reflect on the six different layers by focusing on questions such as (Korthagen & Hoekstra, 2009):

What do I encounter? (the environment layer), 2. What do I do? (behaviour), 3. What am I competent at? (competency layer) 4. What do I believe? (belief layer) 5. Who am I in my work? and 6. What inspires me? (mission layer) (p.4)

Korthagen's (2004) reinterpretation of core qualities within the Onion model is discussed next and the different layers are discussed further later in this section.

As mentioned in the last section, Korthagen associated the term Ofman's (2001) core qualities as similar to personal qualities of teachers and character strengths (Korthagen, 2004). Personal qualities of teachers was a term used by Tickle to describe the important qualities of a teacher such as creativity, trust, care, courage, sensitivity, decisiveness, spontaneity, commitment, and flexibility (Tickle, 1999). Korthagen saw character strengths defined as the "the psychological ingredients—processes or mechanisms—that define the virtues" of man (G. Williams, 2016) as another synonym for Tickle's (1999) personal qualities of teachers. Thus, core qualities were associated with both terms and became distinct from Ofman's (2001) core qualities. The core in core qualities was understood to be an important part or an important characteristic of someone. Examples of core qualities given of people were courage, empathy determination etc. An illustration of the idea of core was that core qualities were described as coming from the inside of a person in contrast to competencies which were seen to be coming from the outside

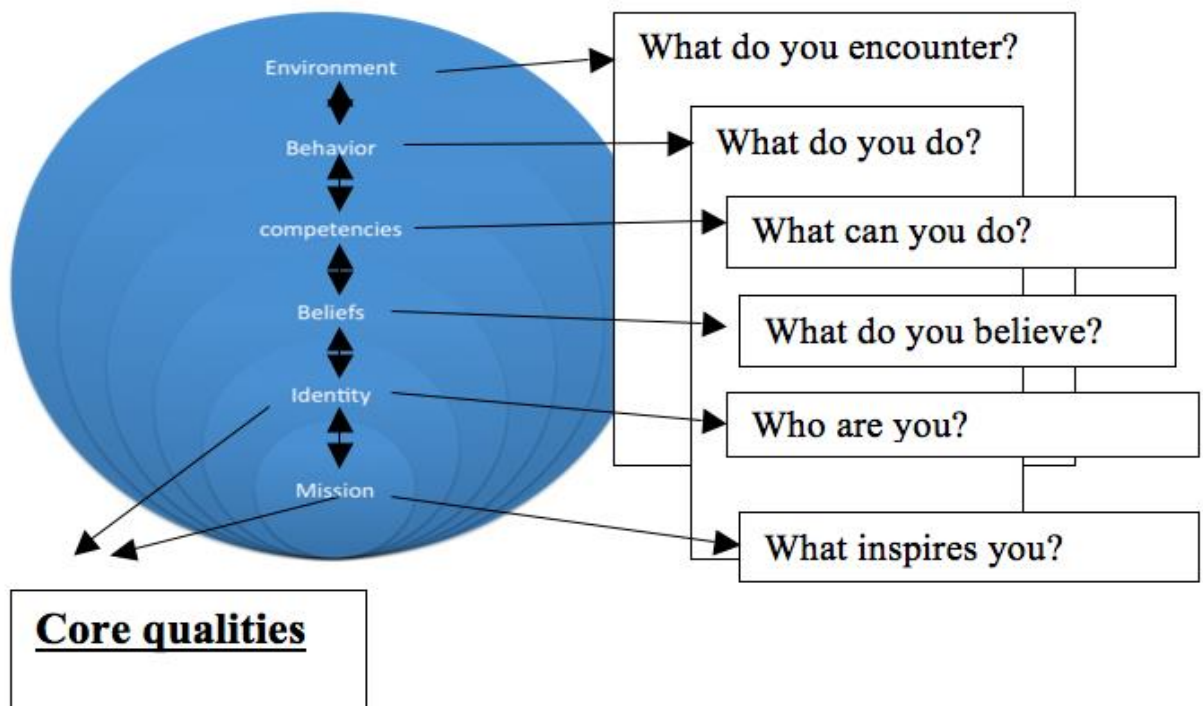
Korthagen (2004) framed core qualities within a model he called the Onion model (Figure 3.2 below). His model could guide my study and is appropriate for teachers because it is wider in scope than the core quadrant model and thus allows understanding of how the different layers representing the

personal characteristics of the teacher such as behaviour, competencies, beliefs, and identity are deployed in a given situation (the environment layer). The model is suitable for my study as it takes into account both the personal and the situational and how they influence each other. The appropriateness of the model will be discussed further later in another section of this chapter especially with regards to the deployment of core qualities within the two innermost layers of the model relevant for my study. In this section I describe Korthagen’s (2004) depiction of the different layers of the model and how they work together.

According to Korthagen (2004), the onion model shows that there are various levels in people that can be influenced and described them as follows:

1. The environment layer (the class, the students, and the school)

This layer was described as the outermost layer of the model which was directly observable to others. The question “what do you encounter?” was meant to help teachers reflect on their environment represented by the class, the students, and the school. According to Korthagen (2004) “this layer attracted the most attention from student teachers as they often focus on problems in their classes and the question how to deal with these problems” (p.80).



**Figure 3: The onion model (Korthagen, 2004)**

2. The behaviour layer

This layer was also described as being directly observable to others. The question “what do you do?” was meant to help teachers focus on their behaviour in response to what they encountered in the environment. According to Korthagen (2004) this layer also attracted attention from student teachers.

3. The competency layer

This layer represents the competencies of the teacher represented by Korthagen (2004) as an “integrated body of knowledge, skills and attitudes”(Korthagen, 2004, p. 80).The question “what can you do?” was meant to help teachers reflect on their competencies which guide their behaviour.

4. The belief layer

According to Korthagen “a teacher’s competencies are determined by his or her beliefs for example, if a teacher believes that attention to pupils’ feelings is just “soft” and unnecessary, he or she will probably not develop the competency to show empathic understanding” (Korthagen, 2004).He further adds that “The beliefs teachers hold with regard to learning and teaching determine their actions”(Korthagen, 2004, p. 81).The question “what do you believe?” was meant to help teachers reflect on their beliefs and how it influences the competency and behaviour layers.

5. The identity layer

This layer according to Korthagen was described as “the beliefs people have about themselves” (Korthagen, 2004, p. 81).The question “who am I?” in this layer was meant to help teachers reflect not only on who they are but also on “what kind of teacher do I want to be?” and constitute the basis of their model of core reflection as by visualizing the teacher they want to become, teachers also imagine the qualities they would enact in this future situation, become aware of them and identify through questions in each layer their inhibitions and how to address them. Over time the goal of core reflection is to help teachers actualize their core qualities. How this layer and the mission layer (discussed next) relate to my study will be discussed in section 3.6.

6. The mission layer

According to Korthagen (2004) “this level is concerned with such highly personal questions as to what end the teacher wants to do his or her work, or even what he or she sees as his or her personal calling in the world. In short, the question of what it is deep inside us that moves us to do what we do”(Korthagen, 2004, p. 85).The question “what inspires you?” in this layer was meant to help teachers think of their ideals which Korthagen (2004) described as “For teachers, we can think of ideals such as creating more acceptance of differences between



people, creating feelings of self-worth in children, and so forth. In any case, we are talking about deeply felt, personal values that the person regards as inextricably bound up with his or her existence”( Korthagen, 2004, p. 85).

Korthagen (2004) in his own words described how the different layers of the onion model influence each other “an important assumption behind the model, namely that the outer levels can influence the inner levels: the environment can influence a teacher’s behaviour (a difficult class may trigger other reactions from the teacher than a friendly one). A reverse influence, however, also exists, i.e., from the inside to the outside. For example, one’s behaviour can have an impact on the environment (a teacher who praises a child, may influence this child), and one’s competencies determine the behaviour one is able to show”.

As mentioned earlier in this section the model could guide the study because it explains in detail the interaction between the teacher and his or her environment through the different layers of the model. However, one limitation of Korthagen’s (2004) onion model is that it has been used mostly by the researchers that proposed for research on the development of core reflection. Thus researchers using the model were more interested in how teachers actualize their core qualities (Korthagen, 2004; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2003, 2005; Korthagen & Verkuyl, 2002; Noordewier et al., 2009). Although teachers have potential for self-actualizing their core qualities they also do deploy them in their day to day practice. It is not hard to imagine novice teachers using persistence and or courage to teach learners of low ability. Thus, core qualities and the onion model could explain how that happens as those qualities are deployed from the two inner layers in response to being triggered by the environment layer in this case the student.

Support for the fact that novice teachers with little experience in teaching could deploy their strengths is provided by the field of positive psychology. This new branch of psychology provides a lens which could explain how the average novice teacher deploys their core qualities as one of its fundamental assumptions is how character strength enable ordinary or average individuals to face challenges. The next section explores character strengths which Korthagen (2004) described as synonymous to core qualities which is a third framework seen as essential to my study.

### **3.4 Positive psychology and character strengths**

This section discussed a third framing of core qualities using the synonymous term character strengths and the branch of psychology on which it originated from.

“Positive psychology is the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups and institutions”(Gable & Haidt, 2005, p. 103). It is a relatively new branch of psychology whose aim “is to begin to catalyse a change in the focus of psychology

from preoccupation in repairing the worst things in life to also building positive qualities” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5).

Sheldon and King (2001) define positive psychology more simply as “nothing more than the study of ordinary human strengths and virtues” (Sheldon & King, 2001, p. 216). In their context ordinary means typical to the average person. They further add that “Positive psychology revisits “the average person”, with an interest in finding out what works, what is right, and what is improving”(p. 216). This perspective assumes that the average person has certain strengths and virtues which are pertinent to the purpose of the study.

Character strengths have been identified from six overarching virtues that are universal across every culture in the world using a set of criteria such as ubiquity, fulfilling, morally valued, trait-like etc. (Dahlsgaard et al., 2005). The aim of classifying the virtues and the strengths as laid out in Table 1 below was to operationalize character strengths and make them amenable to scientific inquiry (Seligman et al., 2005).

**Table 1: Classification of 6 Virtues and 24 Character Strengths (Seligman et al., 2005)**

Virtue and character strength	Definition
<b>Wisdom and knowledge</b> Creativity* Curiosity Open-mindedness Love of learning Perspective	<b>Cognitive strengths that entail the acquisition and use of knowledge</b> Thinking of novel and productive ways to do things Taking an interest in all of ongoing experience Thinking things through and examining them from all sides Mastering new skills, topics, and bodies of knowledge Being able to provide wise counsel to others
<b>Courage*</b> Authenticity Bravery Persistence* Zest	<b>Emotional strengths that involve the exercise of will to accomplish goals in the face of opposition, external or internal</b> Speaking the truth and presenting oneself in a genuine way Not shrinking from threat, challenge, difficulty, or pain Finishing what one starts Approaching life with excitement and energy
<b>Humanity</b> Kindness Love Social intelligence	<b>Interpersonal strengths that involve “tending and befriending” others</b> Doing favours and good deeds for others Valuing close relations with others Being aware of the motives and feelings of self and others
<b>Justice</b> Fairness Leadership Teamwork	<b>Civic strengths that underlie healthy community life</b> Treating all people, the same according to notions of fairness and justice Organizing group activities and seeing that they happen Working well as member of a group or team

<b>Temperance</b> Forgiveness Modesty Prudence Self-regulation	<b>Strengths that protect against excess</b> Forgiving those who have done wrong Letting one’s accomplishments speak for themselves Being careful about one’s choices; not saying or doing things that might later be regretted Regulating what one feels and does
<b>Transcendence</b> Appreciation of beauty and excellence Gratitude Hope Humour Religiousness	<b>Strengths that forge connections to the larger universe and thereby provide meaning</b> Noticing and appreciating beauty, excellence, and/or skilled performance in all domains of life Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen Expecting the best and working to achieve it Liking to laugh and tease; bringing smiles to other people Having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of life

As pointed out in the previous section character strengths are ordinary, typical and therefore present in every individual in varying extents (Seligman et al., 2005). Therefore, it would be safe to assume that character strengths are present in novice teachers and therefore could provide answers as to how they influence their practice.

The problem however with character strengths with regards to my study is a paradigmatic one, as character strengths have been operationalized for scientific research and therefore may reduce the scope of a qualitative study in its aim in understanding how the novice teacher uses their core qualities. Another problem with the above model is that some of these strengths are not directly applicable for teachers and teaching as a profession.

In his study on student teachers Evelein (2005) contextualized the list of 24-character strengths for teachers by combining it with Ofman’s (2001) list of core qualities and Ferruci’s (1979) list of personal qualities to develop his instrument which later became the core qualities questionnaire (Evelein, 2005). Table 2 shows how the list of teacher qualities from other works were combined and related.

**Table 2: Combined qualities and strengths (Evelein, 2005)**

Qualities and strengths	Peterson and Seligman	Ferruci	Ofman
1. Creativity	x	X	
2. Effectiveness			x
3. Perseverance	x	X	
4. Simplicity	x	x	

5. Flexibility			x
6. Patience	x		
7. Humor	x	X	
8. Interest	x		
9. Sensitivity			x
10. Love	x	X	
11. Courage	x	X	x
12. Curiosity	x		
13. Admissibility			x
14. Cheerfulness		X	
15. Orderliness			x
16. Originality	x		
17. Justice	x		
18. Transcendence	x		
19. Faith		X	
20. Wisdom	x	X	
21. Care			x
22. Caring			x

The table above consisting of the thirteen core qualities used in my study was derived from the above table by two teacher trainers who according to Evelein (2005) used the literature and also their experience who agreed to bring down the longer list of qualities to a list of 13 “core qualities”. The 13 “core qualities” as laid out in the table below are clustered into three scales namely feeling, thinking and wanting which represent the fundamental “forces” of the human organism which are explained by Jarvilehto (as cited in Evelein, 2005) argues: "Intellect, will and heart are descriptions of the fundamental aspects of the organism- environment system; 'intellect' (knowledge) being the quality of its structure, 'will' (motivation) the direction of its basic activity, and 'heart' (emotion) the quality of the reorganization”.

The concept of forces of intellect, will and heart was not used in my study as the focus of my study was solely the core qualities of novice teachers. I based myself on the assumption that every human being and therefore every novice teacher has a fundamental set of core qualities that is unique to them just like their DNA, this assumption is also supported by Seligman et al. (2005) when they mentioned that certain character strengths may or may not be present in all individuals (Seligman et al., 2005). Therefore, I decided to use solely the thirteen core qualities on the right-hand side of Table 3 below to guide my study.

**Table 3: List of 13 core qualities (P. Meijer, Korthagen, & Vasalos, 2008)**

<b>Qualities related to thinking (intellect)</b>	Creativity
	Structuredness
	Clarity
	Accuracy
<b>Qualities related to feeling (heart)</b>	Commitment
	Empathy
	Compassion
	Trust
	Tolerance
	Care
<b>Qualities related to wanting (will)</b>	Decisiveness
	Perseverance
	Courage

In the next section I discuss how other researchers used the onion model.

### **3.5 Use of the onion model by other researchers**

As mentioned before the onion model has mostly been used by researchers who proposed it with the purpose of developing core reflection and actualization of teacher's core qualities (Korthagen, 2004; Meijer, Korthagen, & Vasalos, 2008). Use of the model as shown in this section has been mostly used by researchers to highlight the importance of teacher identity among student teachers. In her study on student teacher identity formation Schepens, Aelterman, & Vlerick, (2009) used the model to highlight the importance of the need for a more holistic model of teacher education as teacher educators hold on to a more academic tradition of education. The model is valued because it is a synthesis of all the important elements of teacher education including the personal and the professional. Importantly emphasis is put on helping teachers become good teachers instead of traditionally focusing on what teachers need to know (Schepens et al., 2009). The onion model was

not directly used in their study but rather described in order to justify and support the focus of her study on the identity formation of student teachers.

In his Doctoral thesis entitled “The revelation of teacher identity in the process of the descriptive review of the child” Horne (2011), utilized Evelein’s (2005) core qualities questionnaire to “determine to what degree a teacher draws on their core qualities in order to assess professional identity formation among four teachers using the descriptive review of the child as professional identity development activity and Hawkin’s theory of the I, Thou and It as theoretical lens (p. 59). The core qualities questionnaire was used among other data collection methods to show to what degree teachers draw on their core qualities during the descriptive review of the child.

Drvodelic and Rajic (2011) used the onion model as theoretical framework in their study whose purpose was to “determine what the qualities of a “good teacher” are from a prospective teacher point of view and also to determine whether the education level of prospective teachers influence the perception of what a “good” teacher should be like” (p. 50). The onion model was used because it had been used by Korthagen to answer the question “What is a good teacher?” and “what are the essential qualities of a good teacher”.

Swan & Cano, (2000) modified Korthagen’s onion model to develop the teacher heart model in their study whose purpose was to determine the level of the teacher’s heart, how these levels changed during training and to what extent the teacher’s heart explained the student teacher’s level of intent to enter a career in education. The teacher’s heart model still kept the same layout of the onion model and had the level of mission in the innermost core however the outer layers were replaced with enthusiasm, care and faith defined as the elements that constitute a teacher’s heart.

Stenberg (2011) referred to the Onion model as one of the models promoting reflection among teachers whose purpose was “to promote student teachers’ professional development with the help of identity work” (p. 4).

A brief overview of the five studies mentioned in this section show that with the exception of Horne’s 2011 study, the model was not used as it was used by Korthagen and other researchers who proposed it in focusing on core reflection. Schepens (2009) and Stenberg (2011) both referred to the onion model in highlighting the focus of their research on core reflection. Drvodelic and Rajic’s (2011) aim which was to “determine what the qualities of a good teacher are from a prospective teacher point of view” (p.50). Thus, their study was related to Korthagen’s 2004 paper whose aim was to answer the question “What are the essential qualities of a teacher?”. Drovodelic and Rajic’s (2011) study did not exploit the onion model however but used it to support their aim. Swan and Kano (2000) went further by modifying the onion model in order to build another model they called the teacher heart model.

Horne's focus like Korthagen and proposers of the onion model were to provide a different lens to view professional development by "strengthening and cultivating the soul of the teacher" (Horne, 2011). Core reflection in Horne's study was used as a theoretical model to support the teacher's reflection on herself and their identity development was explored through what the teacher said about themselves, what they thought, believed, felt, did and wanted. All the aspects of teacher identity explored in their study was represented in the onion model as thinking, feeling, wanting core qualities can be explored through the core qualities questionnaire and the identity layer of the onion model. The thoughts of the teachers about themselves could also be represented by the identity layer of the onion model as mentioned in section 3.5 on the identity layer while the behaviour layer represented what the teachers did. None of the five researchers critiqued the onion model.

As I pointed out in section 3.3 and as seen from the above discussion in this section, the onion model has been fully exploited by researchers focusing on core reflection and its implications for professional development. In the next section I explain how the same model could be used in conjunction with character strengths discussed in section 3.4 to understand how novice teachers face their challenges.

### **3.6 The appropriateness of core qualities and the onion model for my study.**

In this section I explain how the onion model could be used for the purpose of my study to explain how novice teachers use their strengths to overcome challenges. Using the model in this way shifts the focus from core reflection which is reflecting on the different layers for the purpose of actualizing core qualities seen as buried within the two innermost layers of the onion model, to seeing core qualities as ubiquitous and accessible to the average novice teacher as seen by Sheldon and King (2001) and researchers from the field of positive psychology (discussed in section 3.4). When seen in this way, every novice teacher can be assumed to have certain core qualities. The question pertinent to this study then becomes what core qualities does each teacher deploy to face their specific challenges? Answering this question has significance as it could explain how novice teachers adapt to the challenges, they face possibly using their different combination of unique core qualities they bring or are forced to develop in order to survive. What core qualities teachers bring or develop constitute one part of the discussion on core qualities and their appropriateness for my study. Therefore, in the first part of this section I draw from literature showing that character strengths have adaptive and evolutionary significance and their manifestation depends on the situation or context represented by the outermost environment layer of the model. Support for the possibility that core qualities may also be developed is drawn from the statement from Peterson and Seligman (2004) that "There is a temptation to regard positive psychology as focusing on the stress-free individual, but this is a

mistake. Character may not even be relevant unless someone is called on to develop it and/or show it” (p. 78). In the second part of this section I discuss the potential of the onion model with respect to the other question of interest in the study namely how core qualities are deployed or developed in novice teachers to meet their challenges.

### 3.6.1 The appropriateness of core qualities

The use of Korthagen’s core qualities for the study was inspired by positive psychology and its major assumption that every individual has certain core qualities or ordinary human strengths and virtues that are typical to the average person. One important question asked by positive psychologists is “what is the nature of the effectively functioning human being, who successfully applies evolved adaptations and learned skills?” (Sheldon & King, 2001, p. 216). Asking the same question about the novice teacher, illuminates what works for them in their daily practices when confronted with the many challenges that novice teachers are often faced with during their first year. As pointed out in chapter 1, the literature has described the novice teacher in mostly negative terms and fewer studies have looked at their successes (Chaaban & Du, 2017; Hebert & Worthy, 2001). Even fewer studies focus on the average novice teacher and how they survive or adapt to their practice. Positive psychology could provide one of the possible reasons why the literature portrays novice teachers in terms of their deficits rather than their qualities as they pose one important question “why psychology has traditionally focused on pathologies of the human condition rather than what makes human thrive?” (Korthagen, 2004, p. 86). Their answer to their own question may shed light on why there is a tendency to describe novice teachers in negative terms. “Perhaps, however, people are blinded to the survival value of positive emotions precisely because they are so important. Like the fish who is unaware of the water in which it swims, people take for granted a certain amount of hope, love, enjoyment, and trust because these are the very conditions that allow them to go on living” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 13). Using the above explanation, one could infer that core qualities have survival value.

In line with the notion of survival and drawing from positive psychology core qualities also provide an evolutionary perspective which has implications in this study for novice teachers. The argument for positive psychology and therefore core qualities is made by Massimi and Delle Fave (as cited in Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) that “psychological selection is motivated not solely by the pressures of adaptation and survival, but also by the need to reproduce optimal experiences. Whenever possible, people choose behaviours that make them fully alive, competent and creative” (p. 9). This evolutionary perspective opens new doors in discovering how novice teachers may adapt and survive and exploring their core qualities could help in understanding how each novice teacher



utilizes certain combination of their core qualities to adapt to their contexts in the same way that certain traits allow animal species to adapt to their environment. Thus, two novice teachers could deploy their prominent core qualities differently in the face of adversity just as an octopus could use a jet of ink to elude a predator while a lizard may use camouflage to achieve the same end. The onion model provides a framework which shows where the core qualities are located and how they are deployed when the novice teacher is confronted with their specific contextual challenges.

Positive psychology and the thirteen core qualities identified for teachers provide a lens to revisit the average novice teacher and explore what works for them in their context. Importantly using that lens, I sought to find out how they adapted or survived their first year. In order to find out how novice teachers adapt, I draw from Table 3 which lists the thirteen core qualities used by Evelein (2005) in his study on student teachers. The core qualities are seen as an appropriate starting point for the study because they were designed to be used for student teachers and were drawn by Evelein (2005) from the field of positive psychology and and Ofman (2001) from the field of management. I am aware that some people may critique the approach of distilling the character of a teacher in thirteen core qualities as being reductionist, however I adopt the view of Peterson and Seligman (2004) whose stance is expressed in the following book extract “The stance we take toward character is in the spirit of personality psychology, and specifically that of trait theory, but not the caricature of trait theory held up as a straw man and then criticized by social learning theorists in the 1970s. We instead rely on the new psychology of traits that recognizes individual differences that are stable and general but also shaped by the individual’s setting and thus capable of change. The initial step in our project is therefore to unpack the notion of character—to start with the assumption that character is plural—and we do so by specifying the separate strengths and virtues, then devising ways to assess these as individual differences” (p. 10). Unpacking a teacher’s character in terms of thirteen core qualities therefore allows the exploration of individual differences in terms of the deployment of specific core qualities. This approach is in line with the purpose of the study which is to understand how novice teachers adapt and the notion of core qualities as traits is congruent and fits nicely with a possible evolutionary explanation of their adaptation and survival.

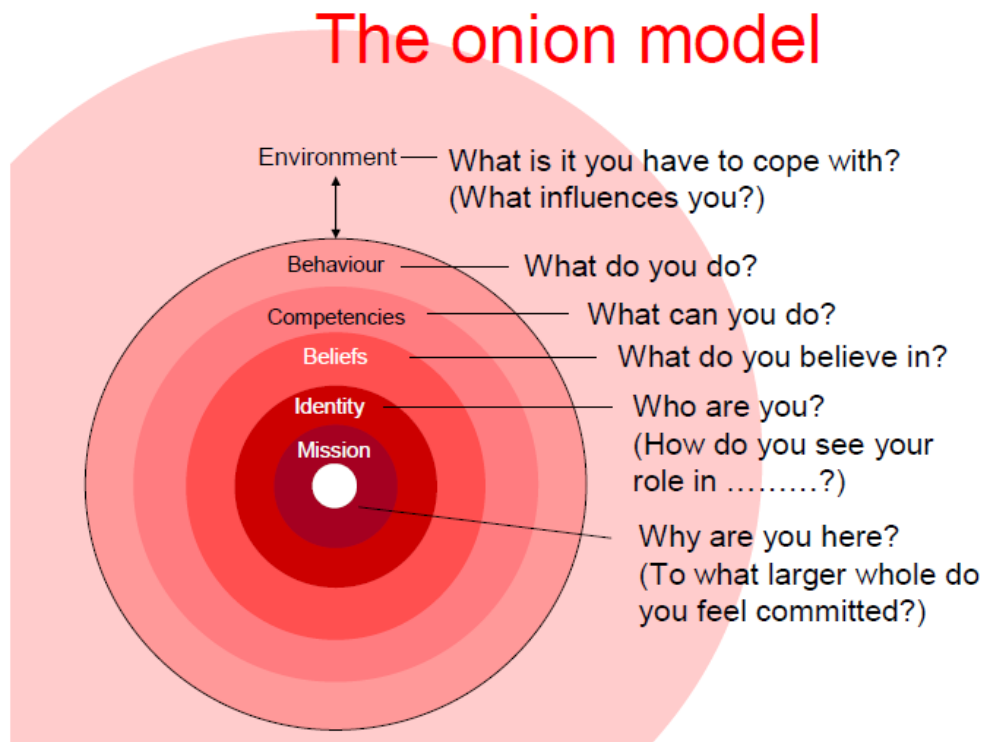
### 3.6.2 The appropriateness of the onion model

As mentioned in section 3.3, the onion model was seen as appropriate for my study as it provided a wide scope for understanding the interaction between the novice teacher and his or her environment. Thus, the onion model allows the exploration of how a core quality which according to Korthagen (2004) are associated with the two inner layers of the model are deployed to meet challenges located in the outermost layer.

The importance of five specific layers of the onion model outlined in section 3.3 is further discussed with emphasis on their appropriateness in this subsection. The mission and identity, competency, behaviour, and environment layers are seen as relevant to my study.

***The mission layer***

Starting with the innermost core of Figure 4 below, the mission layer according to Korthagen (2004) is related to the role of the teacher expressed as “such highly personal questions as to what end the teacher wants to do his or her work, or even what he or she sees as his or her personal calling in the world. In short, the question of what it is deep inside us that moves us to do what we do” (p.85). The association of the mission layer to the core qualities can be understood by comparing it with the level of identity which according to Korthagen (2004) is more related to the “personal singularity of the individual” whereas the mission layer is “about the role we see ourselves in relation to our fellow man” (p.85).



**Figure 4: The onion model (Meijer et al., 2008)**

Peterson and Seligman (2004) explain the relationship between character strengths and fulfilment using the Aristotelian notion of eudaimonia “which hold that well-being is not a consequence of

virtuous action but rather an inherent aspect of such action. For example, when you do a favour for someone, your act does not cause you to be satisfied with yourself at some later point in time; being satisfied is an inherent aspect of being helpful” (p. 18). In the same way a teacher showing the core quality of compassion is able to cope with the challenge of teaching disadvantaged child (related to the identity layer) and also feels fulfilled (the mission layer) as they feel satisfied to be able to help the student.

### ***The identity layer***

According to Peterson and Seligman, “strengths and virtues no doubt determine how an individual copes with adversity” (Peterson & Seligman, 2004, p. 17). Korthagen (2004) associated the characteristic of strengths in coping with adversity to the identity layer of the Onion model. Core qualities of a teacher is a representation of who they are, therefore, one’s response to the question “who are you?” in the onion model could be “I am a compassionate person”. Taking how an individual copes with adversity from the above quote, the next question of direct relevance to this study then becomes, “how does compassion help this teacher cope with teaching disadvantaged students?”. This question is directly relevant to the question how a novice teacher sees their role inferred from the identity level of Figure 4.

### ***The competency layer***

As pointed out in section 3.3, the competency layer was conceived by Korthagen as an “integrated body of knowledge, skills and attitudes” (Korthagen, 2004). For the purpose of this study this notion of competency needed to be expanded. In considering this layer’s appropriateness for this study, the question “what can you do as a novice teacher?” from Figure 4 above brings more perspective into this layer and its importance for the study. What a novice teacher can do was revealed in the data presentation chapter of this thesis and made clearer how they relate to core qualities. For example, knowledge of students was seen as important in the data and in order to get to know students the qualities of empathy and compassion was seen as important in developing a relationship with the student. Korthagen (2004) laid more emphasis on the beliefs, identity, and mission layers of the onion model but in using the model to understand how novice teachers deploy core qualities to meet their specific contextual challenges the competency layer is crucial. For example, a novice teacher may realize that in order to get the most difficult student in class to listen to her she has to adopt a more humane approach. She therefore deploys the core quality of empathy and spends more time talking individually to him. As a result, she gets to know and understand him more and as a result he now

listens to her. In this example the role of empathy is key in knowing and understanding the student, which the teacher found out to be important in her role as teacher.

### ***The behaviour layer***

The behaviour layer did not receive much attention from Korthagen and as pointed out in section 3.3 was said to be directly observable to others and also attracted a lot of attention to student teachers who were often focused on problems in their class. In my study this layer was seen as very important because behaviour is the direct outcome of the deployment of a core quality. For example, in my data, one novice teacher explained how he decided to put one of his students to sit next to her cousin in order to help her overcome her inferiority complex. He related his behaviour to empathy and patience and thus provided an analytical point to reveal the details of how that happened. The behaviour of novice teachers in this study were therefore seen as windows that allowed me to “see” the complexity in the chain of events triggered by the environment and behaviour layer (observing how the little girl felt inferior in class) to the deployment of empathy and compassion reflected changing where she was seated.

### ***The environment layer***

The environment layer is another layer which did not receive much attention from Korthagen in his discussion of the onion model. As outlined in section 3.3 the environment layer was represented by the class, students, and the school. In my study the environment layer is seen as appropriate and expands class, students, and school to represent the challenges encountered by novice teachers. As pointed out in chapter 1, some of the major well-chronicled challenges of novice teachers are classroom management, implementing the curriculum to mixed ability students, lack of resources for teaching and learning, student indiscipline and dealing with parents (Boakye & Ampiah, 2017; Dickson et al., 2014). Those aforementioned challenges put into perspective the environment layer and help comprehend in more detail what the novice teachers are faced with. This has tremendous significance because the deployment of the type of core qualities is highly dependent upon context. An example helps to illustrate how one or more specific core qualities can be deployed in response to a specific challenge.

When a novice teacher found out that his student came from an abusive home he was faced with a challenge of coping with a child with specific needs (environment layer). Upon hearing that she was physically abused he felt empathy (core quality) for her and he paid attention to her home situation by asking her if everything was fine at home (behaviour layer). When he found out how her dad had also

abused her mum, he built rapport with her (competency layer) and the trust allowed her to make some progress in her writing of alphabets.

### **3.7 Synthesis of chapter**

This chapter has presented three different framings of core qualities. Korthagen's onion model along with the theoretical lens from character strengths was selected to explore how novice teachers deploy their core qualities in meeting the challenges they are confronted with.

The next chapter describes the methodological design of the study which is located in an interpretative narrative inquiry design.

## **CHAPTER 4 METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Orientation**

In chapter three I focused my attention in presenting the theoretical lens through which the study unfolded. Two theories that had significant influence in this study were presented with a view to showing how the theoretical constructs from these theories have influenced the study process. In this chapter I now focus on the research design that produced the data for the study. Research design, according to Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit (2004) is a systematic plan for conducting an empirical research and it includes an epistemological stance that the research takes, the research approach adopted for the study, the research methodology employed to conduct the research, the selection of the participants for the study, the data collection instruments through which the data for the study is to be produced and the process followed in collecting the data. These elements of the research design are the subject of this chapter and is presented sequentially in terms of the decision-making process in producing the data for the study. Hence, the chapter takes on an argumentative stance in terms of the methodological decisions taken in producing the data for the study.

The chapter is presented over four sections. The first section commences with an argument for the epistemological stance taken in this study and includes the research approach adopted for the study. In summary, an interpretivist stance was argued for and adopted in the research process and a qualitative research design was adopted to respond to the research focus and research questions that guided the study. These epistemological decisions will be discussed in the first section of this chapter. In the next section of the chapter the research methodology is presented and includes the process for producing the data for the study. In this section I account for how the data was produced and what challenges I experienced while gathering the data. The third section of the chapter explains the data analysis process and how the themes for the data presentation and analysis emerged. The final section of the chapter focuses on issues of credibility, trustworthiness of data produced, ethical consideration taken in producing the data and the limitations that I had experienced in producing the data for the study.

### **4.2 Section One: Design of the Study**

#### ***4.2.1 Rationale for qualitative research***

A qualitative research approach resonated with the approach that I adopted because the aim of my study was to understand the role of “core qualities” of teachers in the school (their natural setting).

Furthermore, because I sought to understand the teacher the qualitative approach was the better approach to adopt. Seeking to understand the teacher meant that I had to enter their world and therefore, I became the main instrument for data production and analysis. This is in accordance with Merriam's (2009) contention that in qualitative research the researcher is the main instrument for data production and analysis (Merriam, 2009).

Another feature which supports the choice of a qualitative research approach in this study is that in comparison to a quantitative study the instruments can be adapted as we go along gathering data and is in line with Creswell (2013) who mentions that "the qualitative research process is emergent rather than rigidly laid out and followed". Qualitative research was also suitable for the study because it allows the researcher to answer "how" and "why" questions in describing, then explaining the phenomenon (Hennink et al., 2010). In my study those two questions were key questions that guided the study.

The interpretive paradigm within a qualitative approach was adopted for the study as "interpretive studies generally attempt to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them" (Myers & Avison, 2002, p. 6). My aim in the study was not to prove causality or to predict but to understand how novice teachers interact with their social environment by bringing forth their core qualities. Given the exploratory nature of the study because little is known about "core qualities" I sought to understand it. This choice was informed by what is said on exploratory research namely "Exploratory research is defined as the initial research into a hypothetical or theoretical idea. This is where a researcher has an idea or has observed something and seeks to understand more about it. An exploratory research project is an attempt to lay the groundwork that will lead to future studies or to determine if what is being observed might be explained by a currently existing theory" (Kowalczyk, 2015).

Exploring "core qualities" of teachers meant entering not only their world (natural setting) but also understanding the phenomenon from their perspective, an insider's perspective. Hence gaining an insider's perspective necessitated interpretation from my part. As the word itself implies "interpretivist" means to interpret and naturally became the paradigm for my study.

#### ***4.2.2 How I engaged with the ontology, epistemology, and research approach***

In the research design of my study I had to consider three major dimensions which constitute the research process namely ontology, epistemology and methodology (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Ontology is a branch of philosophy concerned with articulating the nature and structure of the world and it specifies the form and nature of reality and what can be known about it (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Based on that definition, the ontological assumption I had to make was that the phenomenon "How and

why the core qualities of novice primary school teachers influence their pedagogical practice” was that truth in the phenomenon was multiple and subjective. Epistemology concerns itself with the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). The nature of knowledge is based on assumptions about the nature of reality, the process of inquiry and how information is interpreted. In this study I explored the core qualities of novice teachers that they deployed in their teaching practice with a view to ascertain what core qualities they deployed, how they deployed such qualities in their teaching practices and why. In order to know and understand this ontology of novice teachers I drew on the epistemology of an interpretivist researcher. An interpretivist researcher, according to Myers & Avison (2002) is one that seeks to interpret and understand the meanings attributed by the participants, in this study.

#### ***4.2.3 Narrative inquiry as a methodology to explore the influence of core qualities on their practice.***

“Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling the stories of the experiences that made up people’s lives both individual and social” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 20).

Based on the above definition narrative inquiry is in line with the interpretivist paradigm of this study which as mentioned earlier seeks to understand a phenomenon from the participant’s perspective. Therefore, in order to understand how novice teachers, experience their core qualities in their social milieus narrative inquiry is seen as appropriate because, narrative inquiry is based on collecting stories from participants. Stories can capture the complexity of a phenomenon. According to Pithouse (2007), “In narrative modes of educational inquiry, story is used to bring the texture, depth, and complexity of contextualised, lived experiences of teachers, learners, and researchers in educational settings into view” (p. 15) .

In this study I employ narrative inquiry as a methodology to capture the complexity of lived experiences of novice teachers focusing on the phenomenon of how they experience their core qualities amidst and in interaction with their learners and other people in the school setting. The choice of narrative inquiry became obvious to me as I found out more about its power by researchers who used it before. For example McAlpine (2016) recounts how she used it as a methodology to make her dissertation more intentional and meaningful to her “I found this approach intuitively and immediately powerful and was able to complete my dissertation in a way that was meaningful to me and, I hope, of some value to those who participated in the research” (p. 32). The intuitiveness of



narrative inquiry according to McAlpine (2016) lies in the fact that we tell stories about our lives every day. As listening and telling stories is something we do, naturally. Narrative inquiry became appealing considering I am a novice researcher who was preparing to explore a complex phenomenon of which little was known about.

In narrative inquiry the complexity of the phenomenon and its relationship with time can be usefully represented using the concept of three-dimensional inquiry space. According to Clandinin, narrative inquiry allows for exploration of complexity by both the researcher and teacher participant using what Clandinin and Connelly called the three dimensional narrative inquiry space represented by continuity, relationality and place (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004). Clandinin and Connelly (2004) also calls the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space “commonplaces” and according to them, “Attending to experience through attending to all three commonplaces simultaneously is, in part, what distinguishes narrative inquiry from other methodologies” (Clandinin, 2013, p.39). According to Driedger-Enns (2014) this is what allows a researcher to think with stories rather than about stories in order to understand her participants’ lives being lived.

A concept that works in tandem with the concept of three-dimensional inquiry space is the concept of direction. Clandinin and Connelly (2004) refer to direction as backwards and forwards along the dimension of continuity which means that the phenomenon can be explored across time. The researcher and the participant can thus “time travel” together through stories on the phenomenon which has occurred in the present, in the past and probably in the future can be also be considered if need be. Inwards and outwards means inwards towards the internal conditions and outwards means the environment. By inwards Clandinin & Connelly (2004) refer to “feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions”(p. 50). In my study inwards means the core qualities of novice teachers along with anything inside them that they retell. “Outwards” in this study refers to towards the environment represented by the novice teachers’ students and other people around them. Therefore, by moving inwards and outwards with the participant, a rich understanding of the phenomenon may occur as they recount their lived experience and narrate this experience through a story. The relationship between direction and the constituents of three-dimensional inquiry space namely continuity, relationality and place are discussed next.

This link between past, present, and future events in time is called continuity in narrative analysis. As Clandinin (2013) puts it “for narrative inquirers this view of continuity has important implications for the way we think about our inquiries. Inquiry is within a stream of experience that generates new relations that then becomes a part of future experience” (p. 17). Continuity also implies the relational aspect of narrative inquiry because past, present, and future are bound by related events which is another term which renders the phenomenon appropriate for a narrative study. McAlpine (2016)

relates to the continuity of experience by referring to the chronological arc of meaning “Regardless of the methodological stance in any narrative study, if narrative analysis is used, the goal is to understand in the first instance the chronological arc of meaning in an individual’s experience” (p. 36). In this study therefore “core qualities” are explored temporally, which captures the story of the participant as it unfolds over time. This is seen as important not only because the phenomenon is complex but also because not much is known about it, for example some novice teachers may have core qualities, or they may develop some of them during their first year of teaching. Therefore, looking at the overall chain of events associated with a core quality is useful in providing insight into whether it is developed in the teacher over time and if so, why?

Clandinin (2013) refers to narrative inquiry as a relational methodology which “assumes the relational between the person and his/her world..” (p. 23). This assumption is based on a narrative view of experience according to Clandinin and Connelly (as cited in Driedger-Enns, 2014 , p.30) “that people cannot be understood only as individuals but need to be understood in relation to their social contexts, the places where their experiences occur, and that experiences grow out of other experiences and lead to further experiences”. Narrative inquiry as a relational methodology also involves relational responsibilities according to Clandinin, (2013). Narrative inquiry is a methodology that happens with people where the participant is honoured as a co-composer (Clandinin, 2013). Co-composing stories therefore involves always negotiating narrative inquiry spaces with participants. These spaces are defined by Clandinin as “spaces of belonging for both researchers and participants—spaces that are marked always by ethics and attitudes of openness, mutual vulnerability, reciprocity, and care” (Clandinin, 2013, p. 100). In my study the experiences of novice teachers could not be explored in isolation as they took place through interactions with their classrooms and the school context. Thus, the concept of relationality is directly related to the phenomenon and the research questions: What core qualities do novice teachers deploy and how and why they are deployed in the classroom context. Those research questions are essentially relational as they attempt to describe and interpret how novice teachers experience their core qualities in relation to the school context and the people within it. Mindful of the importance of negotiating narrative inquiry spaces with participants, I tried my best to approach my participants in an open, caring, and respectful manner with the idea of establishing trust and rapport building. In this way the participants felt comfortable to disclose intimate details of their experiences.

Another important concept used in narrative inquiry is the concept of place. Place is seen as an important by Clandinin (2013) and is defined as “the specific concrete, physical, and topological boundaries of place or sequences of places where the inquiry and events take place”(p. 41). In this study the place would be the school and its significance lie in the participants’ storied experience of the school. The

relationship between the school and other places such as their home, the school they attended, the training institute and the school they were posted for induction become significant as they can possibly reveal more about the phenomenon.

I cannot conclude in this section on the reasons for adopting narrative inquiry as a methodology without mentioning its critiques. According to Conle (2002), "Much criticism hinges on questions of legitimacy connected to the issues of truth and rationality. From which vantage points can educational narratives be judged or challenged?" (p. 22). Conle (2002) critiques the sincerity, truth claims and social appropriateness of educational narratives. To address these critiques, I had recourse to validity checks to ensure that the stories told by my participants were truthful. Validity checks are discussed in more detail in section 4.5 and consist of obtaining disconfirming evidence, prolonged engagement in the field and obtaining thick, rich descriptions from my participants.

### **4.3 Section Two- The data production process**

#### ***4.3.1 Sampling the research participants***

The target participants in my study were novice primary school teachers who were in their first year of study. There are different definitions of a novice teacher in the literature, however in this study a novice teacher is considered to be a teacher in their first year of credentialed practice. Purposive sampling was used in the selection of the participants. Purposive sampling, is a process of selecting appropriate participants who will be able to provide relevant information on the phenomenon being researched (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). In this case the participants were deemed to be novice teachers who are newly qualified teachers. Hence the criteria for selecting the participants were: (i) Newly qualified teachers, (ii) Were teaching for three years and less in a public school; (iii) Of both genders; (iv) Teaching in a primary school. These criteria were established in terms of the following: keeping some uniformity on the biography of the participants, like qualification status, teaching in primary schools and having limited teaching experiences so that issues of humanistic core qualities rather than learned coping strategies are the focus of exploration. Teachers who are longer in their teaching practices may deploy learned behaviours based on their experiences of teaching and may compromise my gaze on core qualities of novice teachers. Sampling the participants took place in two steps.

#### **Step 1 of the sampling process**

Step 1 of the sampling consisted of arbitrarily selecting 20 participants based on voluntary participation across different school types. Teachers were arbitrarily requested to participate in the research process after being explained the purpose of the study and their expectations of being a participant. Participants in the sample differed in terms of the type of the school they were in. I wanted my study to explore

different types of challenges and different “core qualities” novice teachers deployed in different environments. During this step I selected participants working in some of the schools located in poor areas which had more students considered to be low ability, other participants were from schools with mostly average learners and had a mix of different abilities and the third participant came from a school with learners ranging from low to average ability. The process of data collection during this phase involved video recording of lessons taught by the novice teachers. The video recordings of lessons provided me with the opportunity to explore the kinds the core qualities that teachers were deploying in the teaching practices and to find appropriate participants who have demonstrated quite clearly the deployment of such core qualities in their teaching practices. All participants agreed by phone to take part in the study however two participants did not agree to have their lessons video recorded. The following participants, therefore, contributed to the collection of video-recorded lessons.

**Table 4: Sample list of participants**

1. Toolsy 21.04.14,2.05.14 (Audio and video)
<b>2. Alvin 25.04.14 (Audio and video)</b>
3. Vanita 30.04.14 (Audio and video)
<b>4. Devina 12.05.14 (Audio and video)</b>
5. Rishinta 14.05.14 (Audio)
6. Aurore 15.05.14 (Audio and video)
7. Natasha 15.04.14 (Audio and video)
<b>8. Felix 16.05.14 (Audio and video)</b>
<b>9. Sweety 19.05.14 (Audio and video)</b>
10. Shaazia 20.05.14 (Audio and video)
11. Hema 22.05.14 (Audio and video)
12. Sanjana (Audio and video)
13. Sheforah 29.05.14 (Audio and video)
14. Sharvin 29.05.14 (Audio and video)
<b>15. Anita 04.06.14 (Audio and video)</b>
16. Shivane 04.06.14 (Audio and video)
<b>17. Maria 09.06.14 (Audio and video)</b>
18. Amiket 10.06.14 (Audio only)
19. Nushraat 10.06.14 (Audio only)
<b>20. Joelle (Audio and Video)</b>

### **Step 2 of the sampling process**

At the initial meeting with the potential research participants I explained the purpose of this study which is to explore the core qualities of teachers in Mauritian schools and asked the participants for their consent to have their lessons video recorded. Over the months of April to June 2014, I video recorded eighteen of the twenty participants as two of them did not agree to have their lessons video recorded. After watching the eighteen videos with a peer for observable behaviours that could be linked to the manifestation of “core qualities”, seven teachers were selected (see bold type in Table 4

above). Participants were also shortlisted based on their willingness to share information during a background interview. Participants shortlisted are shown in bold in the table above.

Having had further engagement with the seven shortlisted participants, only two eventually agreed to continue with the post video engagement in the data collection process. The narrative interviews with the two participants took place over a few weeks. There were multiple interviews with each of the participants over the few weeks to gather in-depth information about their teaching practices, the challenges they faced as novice teachers and how they approached their challenges. The video recordings of their lessons also formed part of the interview process. The participants were also encouraged to present examples of their teaching practices that they considered as having displayed their challenges and the ways in which they addressed these challenges. Hence the narrative interviews included deep introspection of their teaching practices, assisted by the video recordings and conversations around concrete examples of their teaching practices.

Having completed the interviews with the two participants I decided to choose a third participant for two reasons. The first being that I needed more participants for the in-depth narrative of novice teachers on their core qualities that informed their early teaching practices with a view to enriching the study. The second reason for adding a third participant was serendipity. I came across Anita as a novice teacher at the Mauritius Institute of Education who through our casual conversation was interested in my study aims and who readily agreed to be a participant. Noting that the focus of this study was on exploring a relatively new phenomenon on novice teachers' deployment of core qualities in their teaching practice through narrative inquiry, it was not prudent to follow a strict sampling process. Purposive sampling process was the main process of identifying participants and this participant had met all the criteria for inclusion as a participant. Anita's lessons were not video recorded, but the narrative interviews with her was deemed sufficient for the study's purpose. The video recordings were not material to the study. Rather it was one artefact that was used within the narrative interview process. Table 5 below presents details of the final sample.

**Table 5: The three sampled participants**

Participant name	Sweety	Ashwin	Anita
Government School	Havenside	Bethany	Sandybeach
Characteristic of primary school	Average types of learners	Many low ability learners	Ranges between average to low ability learners

### ***4.3.2 How I went about collecting the data***

In this section I explain the process of data collection. Primarily interviews were the process of producing the narratives of the participants on the deployment of core qualities in their teaching practices. While interviews were the primary process of producing the data, video recording of lessons conducted by the participants were used as artefacts to prompt the participants in revealing their stories about their teaching practices as novice teacher with a view to detailing the core qualities that they deployed in their teaching practices. Conversational, unstructured interviews was the format of interviewing the participants and the interviews did not follow a sequential pattern. Some interviews were conducted prior to the screening of the recorded videos, some commenced with the screening of the recorded video and yet another with no video recording. This process of interviews allowed for the freedom of the participants to narrate their stories of their teaching practices as novice teachers with the focus on deployment of core qualities in their teaching practices without external pressure that may have been exerted on them through a fixed data collection process. They were also encouraged to refer to specific episodes of their teaching practices (which may not have been recorded) or bring in any other artefacts that they deemed appropriate to engage in a conversational narrative interview to illuminate and explore the core qualities that they deployed in their teaching practices. In subsequent sections I present the sequence of the interviews with the participant as I detail how I produced the data for the study.

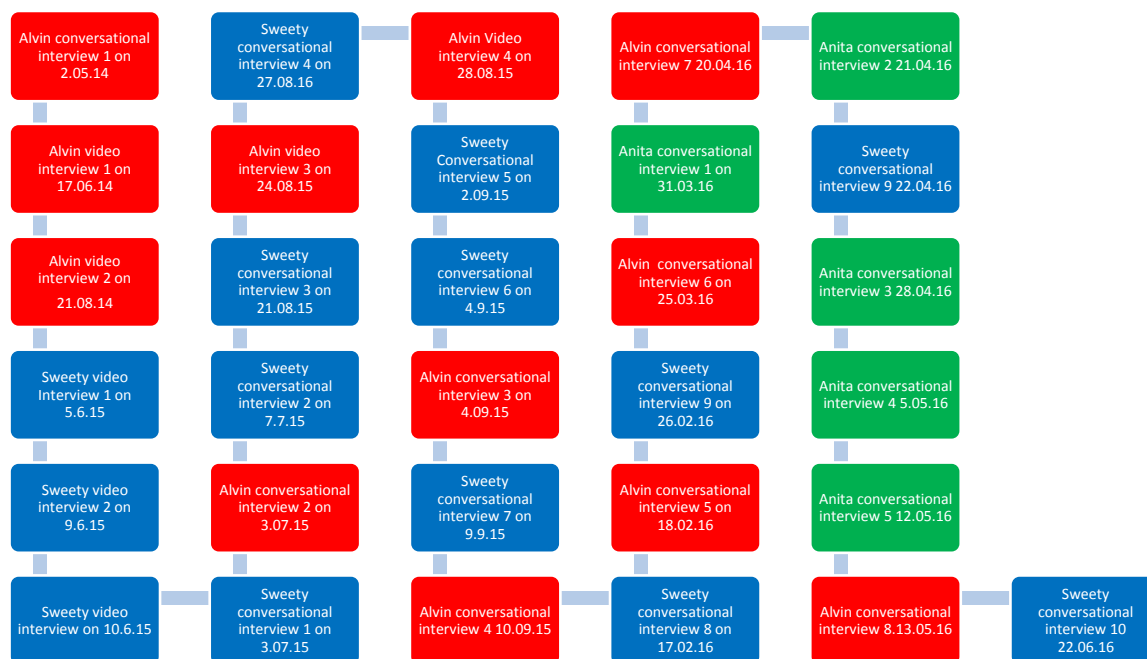
### ***4.3.3 Conversational interviews***

Conversational interviews which is a form of unstructured interview was used as the major way to collect stories from the participants. This is in accordance with the methodology of narrative inquiry explained by Clandinin (2013) that “the most frequently used starting point is telling stories and the methods most commonly used are conversations or interviews as conversations which create a space for the stories of both researcher and participant to be composed and heard. Conversations are not guided by predetermined questions or with intentions of being therapeutic, resolving issues, or providing answers to questions” (p. 45). Hence the unstructured interview process was in line with this view of collecting stories from participants.

I used my phone, after having received permission from the participants for the recording of our conversations, as digital recorder device to record conversations with all participants and the length of an interview ranged between thirty minutes and one hour.

### 4.3.4 Sequence of video and conversational interviews that provided the stories

The figure below shows the sequence of video and conversational interviews conducted with the three participants across time.



**Figure 5: Sequence of video and conversational interviews**

With each teacher participant I started with a conversation in order to break the ice and get to know them and their background and then proceeded to do the interviews. As can be seen from the above interview sessions held with participants, the nature and focus of the interviews varied across the participants. This kind of interview process is consistent with narrative interviews where the participant is in control of how the narration is to unfold. Hence interviews based on the video recordings did not follow any sequence in the engagement with the participants.

In the case of Alvin, the video recording was used four times during the interview process. The rest of the data was obtained using seven conversational interviews. In the first interview on the recorded lesson the following moments were identified “giving attention to Stacy a girl of low ability”, ignoring Kassa who is an attention seeker, testing knowledge of the verb “to hop”, improvisation of an activity while having them dance the Sega, using the first and last name of a student, and saying “very good” in a special way. In the second interview based on the recorded lesson moments identified were not giving the answer, using a student’s first and last name, going slowly and giving individual attention to learners, correcting mistakes early as they make them, raising and lowering his

tone of voice, engagement with Stacy a girl. In the third interview based on the video, moments identified were “imposing my discipline at the beginning of class”, placing them in a line in a “caring” way, smiled at them while telling them to stop moving and having fun with the children during the activity. In the fourth interview based on the video, moments identified were having them “cross their hands” during distribution of books because they have a tendency to play, giving extra attention to Damien Sara because he is in his own world, turning the page for the low abilities, putting myself in their shoes, sharpening a student’s pencil to save the student time, and using a game to teach vowels. Hence this brief explanation of how the video provided the scope for reflections by the participant (Alvin) is an example of how the narrative interviews unfolded over the few weeks of engagement with the participants.

Although the video interviews allowed an understanding of what a teacher does and gave some insight into the phenomenon as core qualities of the teacher maybe reflected in those moments I had to adopt a different strategy to get a more complete picture of Alvin’s experience since the beginning of his first year so I started to ask him about his challenges in the conversational interview 2 in between the video interviews so he told me stories about the challenges he faced such as a cold welcome, issues with placement, how he went into depression for six weeks and resurfaced when he had his own class, he revealed his policeman tactics to keep control of the classroom, how he improvised and adapted to the level of the children but felt unprepared to work in a school with predominantly low ability students. How he used patience emerged as he explained how it helped him stay in control of himself and to reteach. This was the type of response I was aiming for and I realized that conversational interviews might reveal more of those moments because I could move with him at different points into his past. In conversational interview 3 he focused more on challenges he faced with three students and how he met those challenges. In conversational interview 4 I decided to use the list of thirteen core qualities as triggers in order to collect the stories. In this way I was more able to get more focused answers related to the phenomenon. From conversational interview 5 to 8, I was able to add depth to the stories collected by using an interview technique called probing.

As can be noted from the above explication of the interview process, the data collection process was intense, involved, and attentive to details. Through this process of interviews and the substantive number of interviews, the writing of the narrative accounts became more complex, but more manageable in developing themes for the analysis.



## **4.4 Section Three-the data analysis process I used in the study**

### ***4.4.1 The data analysis process***

The data analysis process started with the transcription of the recorded interviews. Once that was done, I realized that the best way to make meaning of the transcriptions was to organize them temporally into a story for each participant and used cross case analysis to conduct the second level of analysis which was aimed at identifying themes where the similarities and differences between the stories of the three teacher were compared.

### ***4.4.2 Step one-transcription of the recorded interviews***

Transcribing the interviews was a tedious process and although there was the possibility of paying another person to do it for me, I resorted to do it all by myself because it was the most convenient option at that time, and it allowed me to become very familiar with the data.

My transcriptions were typed in a three-column table and I used initials to differentiate between interviewer and interviewee. I labelled the far-left column as codes and typed the transcriptions in the middle column and left the far-right column for reflective remarks.

The next section covers the different levels of analysis that were used in my study.

### ***4.4.3 Step two-restorying the interviews***

Restorying the interviews meant having to reread all the interview transcripts. I rearranged the stories in a timeline by coding all the interview transcripts and using numbers to organize the interview transcripts into a plot for each teacher. My decision for using restorying was guided by the procedures for narrative research. Creswell, (2003) explains that analysing the participants' stories and restorying them into a framework that makes sense is part of the procedures in conducting narrative research. Therefore, restorying became my first level of analysis. Re-telling the stories of the participants in first and third person (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p. 125) was used to capture the essence of what the participants said and also to present coherent accounts of their teaching practices based on their personal biography, education experience and teaching practices that illuminated their core qualities and their reflections on their teaching practices. Those above mentioned restoried` accounts allowed for identification and exemplifying the core qualities that novice teachers deploy in their teaching practices.

#### ***4.4.4 Step three-cross case analysis***

According to Samuel (2015) “the data produced during the narrative construction is regarded as potentially a first level analysis. The researcher is still then obliged to generate further insight through an “analysis of the narrative” (p. 16). I used this idea as a guide to use cross case analysis as my second level of analysis. Polkinghorne (as cited in Creswell, 2003) differentiates between “analysis of narratives” which used “paradigm thinking to create descriptions of themes that holds across stories” and “narrative analysis” in which researchers “collect descriptions of events or happenings and then configure them into a story using a plot line”. In my study “narrative analysis” takes place at the first level of analysis and the second level of analysis employs analysis of narratives through cross case analysis. Analysis of narratives was deemed appropriate as second level analysis as it allowed the themes which emerged from the story to be compared for similarities and differences. In this way those were generalized and related to theories guiding the study in the third level of analysis.

Informed by insights obtained from the abovementioned readings, storied narratives were read several times and analytics were recorded as comments which were organised into coherent assemblages and compared to the theoretical framework constructs and the literature on novice teaching. In this way three constructs were identified as themes and data related to them were extracted from each of the storied narratives and formed the basis for the data analysis and discussion of findings.

### **4.5 Section Four-Issues I had to address**

#### ***4.5.1 Credibility, reliability***

I concur with Creswell & Miller (2000) that writing about validity of which credibility is but one of the array of terms denoting it is challenging especially for novice researchers like myself. Authenticity and trustworthiness also form part of those array of terms for it. They however note that qualitative researchers agree that their study needs to be credible (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Before discussing steps, I undertook to render my study credible I think it is important to define validity. Qualitative validity “means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). Therefore, steps taken to ensure validity makes the study credible in the eyes of other researchers. Those steps are triangulation, member checking, thick description, clarifying researcher bias, presenting negative or discrepant information, spending prolonged time in the field, using peer debriefing and an external auditor (Creswell, 2013).

According to Creswell & Miller, (2000), the steps that are chosen by a researcher to ensure validity are guided by the “lens researchers choose to validate their studies and the researcher’s paradigmatic

assumptions” (p. 124). Drawing from this guide which is further explained in the table and explanations below, I chose disconfirming evidence, prolonged engagement in the field and thick, rich description as steps to ensure validity.

**Table 6: Steps to ensure validity in a qualitative study**

<b>Paradigm assumption/Lens</b>	<b>Postpositivist or Systematic Paradigm</b>	<b>Constructivist paradigm</b>	<b>Critical paradigm</b>
<b>Lens of the researcher</b>	Triangulation	Disconfirming evidence	Researcher reflexivity
<b>Lens of study participants</b>	Member checking	Prolonged engagement in the field	Collaboration
<b>Lens of people external to the study (Reviewers, readers)</b>	The audit trail	Thick, rich description	Peer debriefing

My choice of steps to ensure validity was guided by the 2 dimensions in the above table namely the lens of the people taking part in the study and the paradigm employed. According to Creswell & Miller (2000) “compared to quantitative researchers, qualitative researchers use a lens not based on scores, instruments, or research designs but a lens established using the views of people who conduct, participate in, or read and review a study” (p.125). In my study using disconfirming evidence was seen as appropriate because searching for it in a study “provides further support of the account’s credibility because reality, according to constructivists is multiple and complex ” (p.125). Therefore, the search for disconfirming evidence was carried out by checking to what extent the data confirms and disconfirms the preliminary themes or categories in my study. Analysing the data revealed that experiences of novice teachers from previous research tallied with the narratives told by my teacher participants. For example, their problems with placement and school administration and challenges tallied with previous research however some of the data was contradictory.

Another lens employed is the lens of the study participants which is the “assessing of how the interpretations accurately represent them” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.125). In my study prolonged engagement in the field is seen as appropriate because “constructivists recognize that the longer they stay in the field, the more the pluralistic perspectives will be heard from participants and the better the

understanding of the context of participant views” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.125). Prolonged engagement in the field was achieved by conducting many interviews with the teacher participants. I verified the number of times I had been in the field and in all I had conducted twelve interviews with Alvin, fourteen with Sweety and five with Anita. Being in the field for that length of time and after hearing the different stories of the three participants across time I understood the phenomenon in a deeper way by as I was able to understand how they experienced their core qualities in different school contexts across different challenges and situations.

A third lens “may be the credibility of an account by individual external to the study such as reviewers and various readers”(Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.125). In my study thick rich description was seen as appropriate because it “creates verisimilitude, statements that produce for the readers the feeling that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being experienced in the study. Thus credibility is established through the lens of readers who read a narrative account and are transported into a setting or situation” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 129). Thick description according to Denzin (as cited in Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.129) “may involve describing a small slice of interaction, experience or action; locating individuals in specific situations; bringing a relationship or an interaction alive between two or more persons; or providing a detailed rendering of how people feel”. In my study this was achieved through the conversational interviews (where teacher participants felt free to voice out their opinions regarding their training and the school system as well as what they thought about parents. Interactions between teacher and students were portrayed through the lesson videos and the teacher conversational interviews. For example, Sweety explained to me how one of her students threatened her with a ruler and described the conversation between them. All three teacher participants recounted specific situations as they shared experiences with students, parents, and the school staff as well as experiences of induction and training. One of them, Anita explained to me how she had to look after her grandfather who had Alzheimer’s. Another one, Sweety described in detail how she felt on her first day at school. In my opinion many teachers would be able to relate to the experiences of the three teacher participants and that tallies with the concept of verisimilitude explained above.

#### **4.5.2 Ethical considerations**

“In a hierarchical group, institution or organization, it is usual to ask permission to research from gatekeepers or key authority before approaching other participants this can be negotiated in person and confirmed in writing” (Farrimond, 2012, p. 115). In order to gain access to the field and also safeguard the rights of the participants. I had to obtain ethical clearance for my study which forms part of the UKZN research ethics policy. I obtained ethical clearance after my research proposal was

reviewed by an ethics committee. The informed and consent forms from gatekeepers and participants were also approved by the committee and I obtained Gatekeepers permission to enter the field. In order of hierarchy therefore I sought the written permission of the Director of Primary, Ministry of Education and the permission of the Head Teachers to conduct the study. The gatekeepers were provided with the procedures, risks and benefits of the study, confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of the study.

Once permission was obtained from the gatekeepers, I sought the permission of the participants. In line with that policy, participants taking part in the study were asked to sign an informed consent form in order to protect their autonomy. The informed consent form gave background information of what the study was about as well as the procedures, risks, and benefits of being in the study. Confidentiality of the participants was also safeguarded by pledging that information they supplied would not be disclosed without their permission. Teacher participants were also informed that pseudonyms would be used instead of their names to protect their privacy. They were also informed that the research data would be destroyed after the mandatory period of data keeping and that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequence to them.

#### ***4.5.2 Limitations of the research design***

The phenomenon in this study “the influence of core qualities on pedagogical practice” is subjective and from the ontological assumption I had to adopt was that truth is subjective in order to understand the meanings that my participants assign to their experience of “core qualities”. As stated in section 4.2.1 to know my participants’ meaning I had to enter their world to gain an insider’s view of the phenomenon which posed an epistemological problem because the phenomenon is not well known therefore to know something which is not well known posed a problem. Adopting an exploratory research approach solved part of that problem as by adopting narrative inquiry as a research methodology I was able to know to some extent how novice teachers experience their core qualities in the face of different challenges through the conversational interviews. I used the words in the list of “core qualities” as triggers to elicit more direct conversations about their relationship with the pedagogical practice of my participants. This research approach posed some limitations as I was restricted by what the participants said and remembered about the way they experienced their core qualities. Their subjectivity and bias as well as my own also posed some limitations on the study. My own bias was addressed by reflexivity which is defined as an “awareness of a researcher’s

positioning, biases and assumptions” (Merriam, 2009, p. 219). However those limitations were counterbalanced by the authenticity of the participants and their genuineness, those two words are regrouped under sincerity defined as not only as sincerity between the participants and myself but also by honesty about my biases, goals and foibles (Tracy, 2010).

Other limitations I experienced with the research design especially the methodology is that the video interviews proved to be limiting as it provided only a narrow window into the practice of the novice teacher and within that window the occurrence of the phenomenon was limited. The limiting issue was the time lapse between the recorded lesson and the interview process as participants sometimes, found it difficult to account to some of their actions during the recorded lessons. This limitation was addressed through having several conversational interviews and participants were encouraged to present exemplars of their teaching practices that they felt useful in developing their narratives.

#### ***4.5.3 Reflections on how I experienced the data collection process in producing the data for the stories.***

The data collection process was stretched over time as I had to spend a lot of time on the field to collect enough data. During that time, I became more aware of what the life of a novice primary school teacher is like. The conversational interviews were what I retain as the most enriching experience I had on the field. Of the three teacher participants I interviewed, Sweetie was the most talkative and her bluntness to “tell it like it is” helped explore the phenomenon to greater depth with her. She was a natural storyteller and she preferred conversational interviews which made me shift to this mode of data collection after three interviews that were based on the recorded video of her teaching. As I progressed with the conversational interviews, I learnt ways and means to get her to talk about her challenging moments by using themes like “your first day in school” and your “most challenging moments” to help her focus on those aspects of her experience in the beginning of the school year. One technique that was useful was to ask her the most memorable names of her student in her first year and that helped jog her memory to specific times as well as provide information as to what qualities helped her face those situations. Another technique that helped was to ask her the specifics about the types of challenges she encountered and that helped her revisit the place and time when the event took place and allowed me to glean the information needed.

The techniques that I learned by interviewing Sweetie were also used on my two other participants, Alvin and Anita. I must point out however that the techniques were found out entirely through trial and error and that although I could have documented myself more about interviewing techniques, it would have been difficult for me to apply them on the field as developing a technique requires very

specific knowledge of participants and their contexts, something I found out by being a novice researcher, making mistakes and learning from them. I also went by advice I received from a more experienced researcher that the researcher knows best what he/she is after. A handwritten mind map also helped me focus during the interviews. The technique of using a mind map had never occurred to me but because lots of information can be represented on a single sheet of paper. I found this to be particularly useful.

There were moments with the participants that were deep and reassured me that conversational interviews were one of the better techniques to glean the information. Naturally, this realization came later after I read the transcripts. I called one of such moments “blunt truth moments” where Alvin for example explained how he used empathy with a few of his students. “I used it for Elodie and Bradley. When I went to Toolsy’s class I was the only one to decode Shakil the little boy with autism who did not express himself. I am telling you that seriously, during recess he used to come and visit me in my class. I used to be able to know what he said he would show his cake or when he wanted to go to the toilet. I looked at his body language and knew that he needed to go when he came to my class, I understood him even further”.

My experience on the field changed my thinking about collecting data. I became more aware of how to do interviews and I learned by making mistakes and correcting them as I went along. Coming from a positivist worldview I also realized what data collection means for a qualitative researcher and how intimately linked with the field one must be. This helped me develop insight into narrative research and narrative thinking. Thinking narratively means you become the process as the phenomenon is relived with the participant. In a scientific experiment, factors or variables are used to investigate a phenomenon from the outside but in narrative research the researcher dives into the phenomenon and “swims” with the variables alongside the participant. This totally different view of seeing and doing research has drastically changed my worldview and coming from a positivist paradigm having studied psychology, I find narrative inquiry to appeal to my more intuitive side.

#### **4.6 Synthesis of chapter**

The chapter was presented over four sections. I began the first section by making an argument for the ontological and epistemological stance taken in this study as well as the research approach adopted for the study. In the second section of the chapter the research methodology was presented and included the process for producing the data for the study. The third section of the chapter explained the data analysis process and how the themes for the data presentation and analysis emerged. The final section of the chapter focused on issues of credibility, trustworthiness of data produced, ethical consideration

taken in producing the data and the limitations that I had experienced in producing the data for the study and reflections on how I experienced data collection. In the next chapter, I represent the three participant stories as the first level of analysis.



## CHAPTER 5 DATA PRESENTATION

### 5.1 Orientation

This chapter presents the narratives of three participants. The narratives are presented in first and third person voice (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p. 125). The reason for re-telling the stories in first and third person voice is both, to capture the essence of what the participants say about their teaching practices and to present coherent accounts of their teaching practices in terms of the analytics that guides the analysis of the narratives of the participants that allows for identification and exemplifying their core qualities that they deploy in their teaching practices. Using this process of re-telling the stories of the participants, I constructed the stories according to the following sections: the personal biography of the participants; the education experience of the participants in becoming a teacher; their teaching practices that illuminates the core qualities that they deploy in their teaching practices and their reflections on their teaching practices based on their interview processes. The purpose of re-writing the stories based on these sections is to fully explore the teaching practices of novice teachers in their elements through a coherent presentation of what was deemed as a complex story telling process of the novice teachers across the many iterative interviews that I held with them over the three years of data collection.

### 5.2 Introduction to first level analysis

In my study I had a choice to use first or third person in telling the story of my participants and the literature showed that both have their merits and limitations. I decided to use both the first and third person to organize the story as it unfolded over time and the first person's voice to capture the authenticity and the genuineness of the participant.

### 5.3 The story of Sweety

#### *5.3.1 The personal biography of Sweety*

*My name is Sweety and I am a novice teacher. As far as I can remember I used to like playing the teacher when I was a little girl. I think all kids are like that when they are small. Although it was my childhood dream to become a teacher, I started studying law at the University of Mauritius. I could not complete my Law degree as I had a health problem and when the teacher enrolment form came*

*out for teaching, my dad kept pestering me to apply. I hesitated at first and my mum told me to apply or my Dad would get angry. When the letter came in the mail, I knew I got the job before opening it<sup>4</sup>. At home I am the spoilt child and I think that's because I am the only child. My relationship with my parents is a friendly one and we chat a lot. Although in my classroom I am very much the teacher as everyone passing outside my class can hear my voice, at home no one pays attention to me, so I must scream to get attention.*

*I consider myself to be affectionate and I show a lot of affection to my dog. I think with people and animals you must show affection. For example, if I don't give my dog food and water on time, he will be a sad dog. When I come home if he's waiting for me and if I just go straight and not pay attention to him, he will be sad because he is attached to me. When my mother used to travel overseas, and my Dad used to work nights as a Doctor, my dog had only me as companion and I used to go out at night with my friends and when I returned home, he would be waiting for me at the door even if it was eleven o'clock at night. He will not sleep and will go around in circles and wait for me. My dog is like a family member and stays in the house.*

### ***5.3.2 Sweety's educational experience in becoming a teacher***

Sweety describes her secondary schooling as follows

*I think in secondary school I had to go to tuition and sometimes I would find that I don't understand too well in a subject. I think in school most students have it but in small doses. I persevered in secondary school. I realized I must motivate myself to do it otherwise I might lose out.*

On completion of her secondary school education, she applied for and got accepted in a Law programme at the University of Mauritius but later dropped out of this programme due to health reasons. She pursued teaching as a career on recovery of her health issues. She qualified as a primary school teacher and was qualified to teach across the school curriculum in a primary school. Her first appointment as a teacher was in primary school. She describes her first experience of being a teacher as *overwhelming and challenging*.

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<sup>4</sup> In Mauritius when a student applies to become a teacher, a letter of a job offer is presented to the student after a selection process, and this letter confirms offer of placement in a teaching post in a public school in Mauritius on completion of training.

### **5.3.3 Teaching practices that illuminate her core qualities**

#### *5.3.3.1 Sweety's first experience of her class*

Sweety felt unprepared on her first day of class. She describes her first day experience as *given that we were new I thought that if I was the headmaster and knew that teachers were coming I would make an effort, I would present the staff and introduce them to the school the same way you would welcome a child who just comes to school. There was no such thing they said ok there are such and such new teachers then they said bye you can go home<sup>5</sup> ...then came Monday. No one took the pain to tell me it's the first time you are doing standard one you are supposed to decorate your class. I know when you will be doing standard one, they tell you a few days in advance, not on the day that you are doing allocation of classes. So, on the day of allocation of classes the teacher comes to school and decorates her class. When I came on Monday, they said Ok here's your class look after your students. This abrupt entry into her grade 1 class was followed by her realization that her classroom management skills were lacking, what I found difficult was classroom management. They take time to adapt to you. She explained that school children at that age are difficult enough to control for the parents and that she had to cope with a classroom of them. Us teachers are with them from morning till afternoon and we have so many children in a class". Sweety felt powerless as she could not use corporal punishment to control her students. She reflects on her school days and say *it's still difficult because before when someone misbehaved, they were beaten when I was at school. In my days, all teachers were like that. I don't know a child in my generation who was not hit, and I can't say things when I did get a beating, but today you can't do anything, you can't shout, or you may be accused of verbal harassment. A child doesn't react like an adult. I can tell them a few times to keep quiet, but they won't understand generally these are the kinds of problem that I get.* During her training period, she was trained to teach the subjects that constituted a grade curriculum and not as a class teacher *to face students*, therefore she felt she was not prepared for teaching within a class full of learners and she said that her tolerance and patience allowed her to cope with them. *At the start patience and tolerance have stopped me from becoming mad. Yes, if you are not tolerant you will not be able to cope first thing.* She explained that school children at that age are difficult enough to control for the parents and that she had to cope with a classroom of them. *Most parents have 2 or 3 kids and cannot cope with them in their place. And those 2 or 3 are at home most weekends and only on afternoons. If for 3 days, you cannot cope with your child - us teachers are with them from morning till afternoon and we have so many children in a class.* According to Sweety tolerance and patience allowed her to cope with her students by giving her the time to think how to manage them. *Tolerance and**

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<sup>5</sup> this happened on the Friday before the school commences

*patience come in the sense that I know the child is like this and how will you manage for them to stop doing like that when you are teaching. For example, I began to understand what was bothering Vigneshwaren (one of her difficult to manage students), with him I needed patience, sometimes I had to let them misbehave just to find out why they are misbehaving.*

### *5.3.3.2 Getting to know her learners*

*A challenge that Sweety had was not knowing what level learners were at. Sweety used little activities to find out about the level of her learners. She brought some drawings, made photocopies, and made them draw. That's when I got to know their fine motor and gross motor skills. You can't go into a class and say hi to everybody and start to work because children need a different approach. After one week I learned the names of rowdy ones fast; at the beginning I used descriptors like red jacket to gain the attention of the learners. Sweety got to know her student's abilities in other ways. On the first day because they were not used to me, you are observing them, and they are observing you at the same time. This is a 2-way traffic and you already know how many know how to write their names and how many can/cannot do colouring. Through some simple activities you get to know some important things if you take the pain then you begin and say ok let's do a little alphabet and a little song. I think in the beginning they loved going to the board. That's what I noticed in the beginning.*

### *5.3.3.3 Classroom management and learning*

*As she established relationships with her pupils Sweety learned to manage them. In the beginning you are in the dark, it is trial and error, but when you know how the children are, you know more how to manage your class. For example, if you know that guy likes to talk you can put him next to a child that he doesn't like. Sweety learnt about her students through observation and then made appropriate decisions about what to do about each of the learners. Through observations she says: then you finished identifying which child is bad this one likes to talk a lot, this one before I enter the class must begin talking. She also got to know them by listening to their stories When you first begin your work you are not used to those things, a child coming to attack you every morning and to tell stories. There must be some patience, you also must listen, and you cannot not listen because some children may have family problems. There came a point when Sweety had to decide about the inattentiveness of her students. I said to myself, if they cross their hands there would be less risks of them playing with anything. At the beginning I used to hit the table or do the face of a boxer or I fixed (meaning to stare at the student) them for a long time. If they're talking, I fix them for a long time and when they see me fixing them, they become quiet that doesn't keep them quiet, but they calm down a bit. I also controlled them by asking them to put their finger on their lips this came gradually because when I*

*used to write on the board, they used to make noise. Sometimes you must think about an activity on the spot. So, when they make noise, they distract you because you must attend to so many little things.*

#### *5.3.3.4 Making teaching and learning happen*

Sweety learned a lot of things during her training which she felt was a mismatch to the real classroom situation. She admitted that some of it was procedural but difficult to apply in practice. *I won't say in training we did not learn procedural knowledge but its adult delivering to adult and they expect us adults to deliver to kids. In that sense there is a difference. Everybody understands each other. If you do the same thing with kids, it may not work. We were trained to do lesson plans in all subjects, but it was all adult to adult. But you cannot pretend an adult is a kid. It's impossible".* She described her first experience trying to teach. *I came here one day and did a class and it didn't work. I came to do alphabets, wrote it on the board and told them this is capital "A" the children got bored and so did I. Then I realized that it was wasn't working.* Having introspected through her realization of her teaching methods, she adapted to a learner age appropriate strategy by *looking for a drawing of Apple and finally taking out an apple from my lunchbox to show the learners.* Sweety wanted all her students to understand her lessons and described it as follows *That process of finding demanded courage and perseverance because if I did my lesson for those who understood I will not persevere to try to improve what I will do. The courage made me grab the laptop and search on Google. Courage brings perseverance and when that works you get the motivation to persevere that now I must do this. Courage brings perseverance and perseverance bring courage and vice versa.*

Other difficulties she faced was the mixed abilities of her students and their difficulties with English as the activities were in English in the textbook. *I began with shapes them moved to colours; they knew it in Creole but to do it in English is another thing. Then I do a few classes orally in creole, then I moved to written, then I shifted to English. You know that they understand it in their mother tongue when they say "yes Miss that's a circle and that's a square" you know that they know in their heads this is a circle and this is a square, these kids are not like in a high achieving school where their parents show them what a circle and a square is.*

Recognizing that she is a professional teacher Sweety had to find ways overcome her challenges that she experiences in class as she is accountable. She says *because I am the teacher, I am supposed to give results therefore I adapted the resources of the prescribed textbook in my own way when I did not get results. For example, when I did colours, I see that's not working because it became difficult to monitor. For example, if you tell a child to put all the reds on one side sometimes it becomes difficult because you may go in a group and they are fighting. Finally, you are not able to do your work as required and I decided we must change. I brought other things, including Bristol paper and*

*I've brought my materials and seen it hasn't worked again. I persisted and done it in the following week, and I went on my laptop and did PowerPoints and colours. Sweety's focus on results as her professional accountability is because in Mauritius everyone expects only results, they judge the book by its cover. In school it is also the same thing they will judge a book by its cover, they will judge a teacher by what kind of results they brought. If they did not bring any results, they are not good.*

### **5.3.4 Reflections of being a teacher**

In concluding the narrative on Sweety's teaching experiences as a novice teacher, her reflections focus on the training she received, the induction into the classroom teaching, getting to know her learners and her identification of the challenges she faced and the responses to these challenges.

#### *5.3.4.1 The training she received*

*Sweety had problems adapting her training, because for example MIE prepares you subject wise but not to face the students when you reach here the first time. There was a mismatch between what she learnt in training and what more experienced teachers told her. There are different versions on teaching. MIE tell you that you can do like this like that then over here teachers tell you since the first day. You must show them that you are strict if not they will have the upper hand. Her first experience was that of unpreparedness. I was mentally prepared but not ready to face reality because it is very different from the reality MIE shows you. In training they tell you to apply Piaget and Vygotsky in class but over here you don't have time to think about those people. Sweety felt that what she had learnt was irrelevant: what does that have to do with the class when you have a syllabus to complete. It is pointless. Sweety felt that her training prepared her to teach subjects but not to face the students: they are not like students in secondary, the student knows how to behave. She also felt that the way she was taught to do a lesson plan was inappropriate. I stopped writing long lesson plans because when I was at MIE they tell you to write lesson plans with clear objectives but the longer the lesson plan the more you waste time because you can't improvise and do a song for example because it defeats the purpose also I have to read a lot if I need to look at the lesson plan again. So, if I planned something to do today, I know what to do without looking at the lesson plan. It is just for the headmistress to sign generally you know what is supposed to do.*

#### **5.3.4.2 Induction into classroom teaching**

Sweety reflected on her induction and to what extent it prepared her for teaching. *The teacher will rarely involve you and you will just observe their class*". She pointed out that she did not have ownership of the class: *when the tutor comes to assess you, I know that the teacher goes outside when the tutor arrives, but my teacher stayed in the class*. She thought that the presence of the teacher influenced the students' behaviour *given that he was here his students were really quiet and I had little trouble controlling the class*. Sweety also thought that there was no challenge to repeat a lesson *it was a lesson that had already been done and the children already knew the answers*. Sweety thought that the teacher was helping her out by having her repeat one of his lessons. *It was a lesson that had already been done and the children already knew the answers somewhere u can't blame them because they are helping us to get good marks u can't reproach them*. She added however *but then the problem starts when you come to school*.

#### **5.3.4.3 Getting to know her learners**

According to Sweety knowing your students happens over weeks not months. *Relationship with students is not over the year, it is within the first few weeks that you work with them*. Sweety thinks that to know her students she had to develop a rapport with them. *It comes together as you, establish relationships you know your students*. Sweety thought that she had to be tolerant and patient to know her students at first. *Tolerance and patience come in the sense that you know the child is like this. How will you manage for them to stop doing like that when you are teaching?* To illustrate her point, she recalled how she got to know one of her students. *With Vigneshwaren I began to understand what was bothering him. Before I was obliged to tolerate him. So, when you tolerate you have to look for ways to make that more tolerable for you*. Sweety also recalls having to be patient to know them. *You need patience sometimes you have to let them misbehave just to find out why they are misbehaving*. Sweety recalls knowing one of her students only after becoming aware that he came from a broken home. *With Rouven, it was very shaky since the beginning, with his ways of telling me he would hit me, he threatened to hit me with a ruler. With him also I had to develop patience because I had to know him. Then I got to know the dad left the child and the mother and then I realized that's why he is acting as he is. I think at that age they look up more to the father figure and when he sees fathers coming to fetch their kids maybe unsolved issues. My patience came when I realized his parents were separated*.

#### **5.3.4.4 Her identification of the challenges she faced and responses to these challenges**

Sweety thinks back about challenges she faced and recalls tolerating her noisy student as a way of coping with them. *Let's say a child is making noise, sometimes it's unbearable but you have to control yourself, you have to tolerate what the child is doing. If I don't tolerate, I will have high blood*

*pressure and harm my own health. How will I then work them? It's a mixture of everything. You need tolerance to be able to cope, and you need tolerance to be able to have patience. All that is combined."* Another challenge Sweety faced was in adapting activities in the prescribed textbook. *I drew shapes on the blackboard. It was not in the textbook and I had to persevere.* Another problem she faced with the textbook was the lack of classwork. *Here I am doing time I can't explain a topic and there is not enough classwork to consolidate the topic. For example, in that book there is only that that's it you won't have anything else on time, but it is not enough for children when you know that they need many repetitions and a lot of drilling you have to look for other books.* A third major challenge Sweety faced was the lack of motivation of her students. *In the school that we are in you have to keep doing your lesson in different ways because these are children who do not understand. They do not keep in touch with what's happening in the school. Those are kids who go home, and their copybooks remain in the bag. I send some of them to the board to see if they understand. Then I give them work on their copybooks and correct the copybooks to see if they are doing well. If I see I must re-explain, then I re-explain. If I see one or two have not understood I, then call them to my table and re-explain to them. Sometimes you are fed up, but you need patience to be able to continue yourself."*

## **5.4 The story of Alvin**

### **5.4.1 The personal biography of Alvin**

Alvin, a novice teacher, came from a family background in which his father, although uneducated formally, was a mechanic. His mother was a housewife and took care of the domestic environment. Alvin also grew up with his frail grandfather. He cared for his grandfather and saw to all his personal needs until his death. Alvin grew up in a strict home environment. *My father who was very strict, even though he was uneducated, he believed that if you have a child you need to discipline him or her.* Being a mechanic and working from home, Alvin used to play with his spare motor parts. *When I was in primary school I also used to play with his perfumes. He used to frown, give us the stern looks and hold his hips with both hand when we misbehaved. My mum was also very strict, until now she still scolds me if my room is untidy.* Alvin says he learnt good values during his upbringing. *I wouldn't say that my mother is very religious, but she recited her prayers and was spiritual. I learnt from her that if you have a job to do you have to do it well or not at all.* Alvin developed his caring and compassionate attitude through his grandfather. *Thinking of my childhood also reminds me of my paternal grandfather whose illness marked me. He had twenty five percent mobility and at night he would shout my name if he needed to go to the toilet. I would then wake up and help him walk to the toilet. He passed away in 2004 and I helped him to the toilet all those years and also helped him eat*



*and drink. Alvin had a childhood dream to become an army general and had a passion for reading books. When I was an adolescent, I was a nerd. I used to finish whole books in days...was not involved in youth activities. He claims that he learnt a lot from reading books and draws on these learnings to assist him in his teaching.*

#### ***5.4.2 Alvin's educational experience in becoming a teacher***

*Alvin describes his primary and secondary schooling as follows: My best memories of my primary school were standard 5 and 6, my teacher was much disciplined, and I was hit to learn mathematical tables. What I liked about him was that he was impartial, all children were equal for him. For example, at one time teachers were not allowed to park cars in the school yard. I stayed next to the school and he parked his car in our yard. Although he was used to my parents but when I misbehaved in school, he would still hit me. Mr. Ram (pseudonym) was all smiles in the morning, greeted parents but as soon as we entered class he would "raise his voice" and at the beginning he raised his voice a lot to get our attention. As a result, we were disciplined after two months. The way he managed his class impressed me when I think back, it created the space for teaching and learning to take place. It was worth it. We did not know our tables before Mr Ram became our class teacher because our previous teacher was a sloppy teacher, the class was not disciplined. Alvin claims that Mr Ram commanded discipline from the students and he learnt a lot from his ways of getting discipline in class.*

*Alvin went to a state secondary school on the east coast of Mauritius. During this period of his schooling he said that he was a nerd and knew plenty of things because I used to read e-books and that helped me with my studies but also provided me with theories that I use now as a teacher. He also said that during this period he went through a transition by becoming a rebel, had spikes, wore caterpillar shoes, and used to listen to a lot of heavy metal music. He changed again and became religious.*

*On completion of his secondary school education, he pursued teaching as a career. He qualified as a primary school teacher and was qualified to teach across the school curriculum in a primary school. His first appointment as a teacher was in a primary school. He describes his first experience of being a teacher as unwelcoming and he had to adapt to a context very different from the school where I did my induction.*

#### ***5.4.3 Teaching practices that illuminate his core qualities***

##### ***5.4.3.1 Alvin's first experience of his class***

Alvin's first class was a standard 1 class. His first experience of his class was that it was difficult to manage, and he also felt he did not have ownership as *my first class was overcrowded because the school administration combined two classes together - my class and Toolsy's class*. He also felt uneasy teaching as there were two different styles of teaching. *She (Toolsy) did one bit and I did the other*. Later the classes were split, and Alvin had his own class of students. The school context was different compared to where he did his induction. *I had to adapt myself physically and psychologically*. The learners were a diverse group comprising of, what he describes as, *mixed ability* with slow learners and high achievers. Discipline was his main challenge. *The children here, they were rowdy, and they forget what I teach them*. This sudden exposure to the school context and to the nature of students that he had to teach took a toll on his health. *During the first 6 weeks I went into a depression and it started in the second or third week. I had no support and the kids were rowdy. I used to go to bed early and did not interact with friends over social networks*. Alvin's rocky beginning into teaching stabilised when admin realised that the merged classes was not working. *I was feeling down for about two weeks and then I resurfaced around the time that I had my own class. I felt better because I could teach in my own way and the kids changed when I had my own class, Standard 1 Blue. I liked my small class in the corner near the container, because it was quiet, and I had a control over the pupils. There was less distraction as they did not get to look outside*. Alvin realized that his students were ill disciplined, and he would have to gain control over them. *When I thought about how I was disciplined at home and compared it to the discipline here, I thought that I needed to instil discipline in these students. Respect starts with fear. When it was time to take them to the toilet, I told them to put the hands on the side and fingers on their mouth and I would also look at their shirts. One teacher, Mrs. Bone (pseudonym) said to me that since the first day "you are making them like the military". Normally you are not supposed to be so strict in standard 1 but I was because I anticipated problems later*. He explained that he needed to instil discipline in order to get results later. *As a teacher I am growing and getting older and building experience and have to show commitment. I have to be committed if I want results the way I want it. What I want is a child who is a good citizen who shows respect and discipline*.

#### 5.4.3.2 Establishing discipline since the beginning in a mixed ability classroom

Alvin had several assumptions about teaching, learning and learners' behaviours. He had a notion of a *model student*. *I don't know if it exists but someone who listens more, is disciplined, and can learn in class*. For him being the teacher meant to be *dedicated and committed* to his work, *give them classwork, and correct their books to be a model*. To be a teacher meant being responsible. *I had responsibility to make them count etc. and to make them become good citizens*. The reality was that

this ideal student does not exist. His notion of being a good teacher did not exist. Discipline was his major focus in the first few weeks of his teaching. Just like he learnt from his keen interest in reading books, he focused on developing habits, structure for conformity and consistency. Asking students to cross their hands was his way of coping with students he saw as ill-disciplined. *In the beginning if you don't ask them to cross their hands, some students have a tendency to play. They push others, pull their hair, or move on their chairs. This means that the attention is not there so the attention span that they have, I try to make it longer.*

According to Alvin rapport building takes time but for the first few days discipline and being structured is more important. *They must conform first and then teaching and learning will take place.* After a month Alvin felt happy because he realized he had control. *When I saw them walking straight with their finger over their mouth then I felt happy and I knew there was discipline.* He developed an intended routine by being consistent. *It was everyday instructions - finger on mouth - and there came a point whereas I said it, they did it. When I began class, I told them hands on the table and raise your hands. I don't want anyone to speak without permission.* Alvin believed that managing a class requires being structured and ensuring consistency. *Structuredness meant classroom management. How do you manage the class if it is not structured? It is the steps, every day the same steps. For me it's like that in my head. Structuredness is steps, learning cannot take place without classroom management.* Although Alvin was able to maintain discipline in his classroom, one of his students, Liliana, frustrates him by raising her hands and blurts out the wrong answer and misguiding the whole class. *I had to tell her not to blurt out answers and just to follow the lesson. If there is something, I will explain to you later but don't talk for the time being and until now she is like that. She does that to get attention and it is difficult because I had to do everything again. I control myself because sometimes that hits on my nerves. There comes a time when I don't know what to do and then I send her to the office. We don't have the right to use corporal punishment.*

#### 5.4.3.3 Catering for mixed abilities

Alvin felt that his training did not prepare him to work in the school he was posted. *We learnt that at the MIE, which was rather theoretical, you have to do such things and we have to cater for low ability, average etcetera but when u go on the field and live it, then you see that it is truly different and how will I adapt it. Then you have to go and do research.* Alvin realized that some of his students were worse off than he thought. *There is a category that is not low ability but the lowest ability, like Shalil who is autistic and who was of the lowest ability. I managed to make him write alphabets and words through perseverance. I walked with him on all fours.* Alvin felt that, while being made aware

that as teachers they would be teaching children with mixed abilities, he lacked the procedural knowledge of how to work with them. *MIE taught us that we had to cater for those abilities but how do we do it? How do I differentiate? I can't do my class normally. I have to call them to my table. Sometimes I have to help them sharpen their pencils, sometimes do the dotted lines, and ask them to join the dots. I remember how I used to talk to Shalil. As a teacher in such cases I have to be compassionate.* Bradley was another pupil who he considered to be amongst the lowest ability children in his class. *Bradley came from a fisherman family whose writing is too large. I don't know how the former teacher was working, his performance was really low. I did not judge him. I never judged anybody, if somebody tells me that someone is doing a lowly job, I do not judge that person. It's my nature.*

#### 5.4.3.4 Getting into the world of the child

In attempting to address his concerns about teaching mixed abilities children, Alvin claimed that he saw himself as still being a child. *In my head I am still a child. To put myself in their shoes is not difficult.* Alvin saw being a child as important because he believed that not all children develop at the same rate. *The child has to grow in his own time. When I entered the shoes of children, I have started to understand how they are, and therefore understood the pace at which they worked. I then had to adapt myself and become flexible.* Anabelle is a student in his class who lacked self-confidence, and this affected her learning and her progress in class. *Anabelle is short and everyone else is taller than her, so she feels inferior. She was also a bit timid. I asked her who she played with during the recess. She said with my cousin. I then put her next to her cousin in class. Her self-confidence began to improve and after the first few weeks her handwriting was tops but she could not recognise letters, but she copied them well. When she did not know something, I took time to explain it to her, even played with her simple things and even asked questions about her family and home. For example, I asked her questions like what the names of your two little brothers are. Are they naughty and not you? Or do you hit them? Then she would tell me about her home stuff. In this way I got to know more about Anabelle, and this helped in developing a good and trusting teacher-student relationship.*

Alvin explained how he walked into Elidia's shoes to build trust so she could write more clearly. *When I first saw her, I thought she was shy. Then a colleague told me her dad is a hitter. When I corrected her copy book I would ask "everything's fine at home girl? Then she would begin to say there was a fight. She would say sir they fought on my road with broken beer bottles. Dad punched mom and her nose was bleeding.* Alvin use this communicative strategy to get to know Elidia more deeply and then attempted to make her feel differently when at school. *I started to joke with her more*

*and tell her: ask the laziness to stay on the trees and not to enter the classroom - and she would hold her pencil and write. She would often dream in class. She had problems with letter recognition. Her handwriting was big, but it managed to get smaller. At the beginning she did not know to insert the word "cat" in a sentence when she was shown a picture of a cat in the basket. Her vocabulary was not good because at home they did not pay attention to her. Alvin recognized her capabilities and encouraged her in different ways. I pull her towards me so that she can write and write down a few words because I know her capacity. She wouldn't have been able to remember all the words that the majority would be able to learn. At least she would be able to recognise a minimum number of words. Her "b" was becoming a "p" or a "d". Sometimes her "e" was upside down. On that I took patience I would rewrite the word in red. I knew it would not solve the problem but at least diminish it.*

#### **5.4.4 Alvin's reflections on his practice**

*For Alvin commitment as a teacher is crucial. As a teacher I am growing and getting older and building experience and must show commitment. I must be committed if I want results the way I want it. Alvin's vision of his student is a child who is a good citizen, who shows respect and discipline.*

*While not being prepared to teach in a variety of contexts, adaptation and improvisation are key to his teaching practices. Adaptation included moving at their pace and integrating learning across subjects. In training how I learnt I must say that I combined HPE<sup>6</sup> and English. When we did HPE in training it was mostly games. We did not really associate the languages such as teaching of words. Here I teach English while I engage the students in HPE.*

*The class was mixed and by the way they responded we knew if they went to kindergarten and we used the Creole language until now. I have problems talking in English to them, but I always used Creole to help the students to learn and understand. In std 1 it was mostly using Creole because the student does not have that background when you expose them to English and French. In training we were told that an English class should be done in English but in practice it doesn't work because at the end of the lesson the student must have grasped that concept.*

*Alvin thinks compassion is also important. For Alvin being compassionate was a means to understand the child. If I was not compassionate, I wouldn't understand the child and therefore the situation. Rapport building takes time but for the first few days discipline and structuredness is more important because they have to conform first and then teaching and learning will take place within a compassionate environment.*

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<sup>6</sup> Health and Physical Education

## **5.5 The story of Anita**

### ***5.5.1 The personal biography of Anita***

Anita is a novice teacher teaching standard one in a primary school located in a community that is considered poor to impoverished. She grew up in an extended family situation that included her grandparents and other extended family members. She considers herself to *be a carefree person and happy go lucky by nature* who seldom worry *about the consequences in my personal life*. She has a high regard for others and *don't like to let people down*. She also indicates that *by nature* she is *someone who likes to learn a lot of things. I don't do it for other people, but I do it for me. I learn things for my own pleasure. Whatever I choose to do I persevere to finish it*. She cites an example of such learning for self where she *did a course on how to apply mehndi and am considering learning how to dance*. She is also compassionate and caring, having grown up in an extended family situation she took care of the aging folks that lived with her. *At home I had to look after my grandfather who fell sick, there also lives an old woman relative who has Alzheimer's and next door to our place lives a little boy with Autism. I think empathy comes from your family background and having empathy is important in order to understand other people*.

### ***5.5.2 Anita's educational journey into becoming a teacher***

Anita was a visual arts person who loved paintings and drawings. During her secondary schooling she *did visual arts and painting until Form 3. I like to try new things and back then I also started drawing mehndi pattern on women's hands for special occasions*. After completing her Higher School Certificate, she had planned to study at a university but eventually *started working as a clerical officer at the Private Secondary School Authority*. While working as a clerical officer she applied for teaching when the vacancies for primary school teachers were advertised in the local newspaper. Her application was successful, and she then trained to become a primary school teacher. She qualified as a primary school teacher that trained her to teach across the school curriculum in a primary school. Her first appointment as a teacher was in a primary school. She describes her first experience of being a teacher as supportive although she had to adapt to a context very different from the school where she did her induction.

### ***5.5.3 Teaching practices that illuminate her core qualities***

#### ***5.5.3.1 Anita's first experience of her class***

Anita's first experience of teaching was in a standard one class. She reported on several challenges that she had to overcome, both personal and that of teaching. Her personal challenge was on arriving at school on time due to transportation issues. *There was no transport, and, in the morning, parents would wait for me.* She had overcome this late coming after a short while through getting more information on transportation and adjustment of her travelling time. Another challenge related to herself was on adjusting to the school environment. Adjusting to her school took some time. *It took me a month to be able to teach and learn the school routine and a year to be at ease completely with myself.* A further challenge that she had to overcome was that of gaining the confidence of parents. *When I first started given that I was new, there were parents who were not happy that a new teacher got standard 1.* She complained that the parents of her students used to check on her work consistently and were quick to pick up on issues, *in the sense that they tell you that you haven't done this.* In order to gain the confidence of the parents, Anita had meetings with parents to address the various concerns that they had raised.

With regards to the challenges that she faced as a novice teacher teaching standard one class, she experienced several issues, including lack of adequate resources, difficulties with her teaching methods and planning of lessons in the absence of textbooks. The school had not received the new textbooks for teaching and *the headmistress told us not to use the old textbook because they had received instructions not to do what was in the previous textbook.* This was difficult for Anita as she was a novice teaching, teaching standard one for the first time. She reported that *it was difficult for me to adjust.* In order to adapt Anita, say that she was *obliged to plan, we cannot come to school and do nothing. The planning helped but it was quicker to do the same thing with the textbook.* In order to create opportunities for planning, she stayed at school beyond 15h00 which was the end of the school day for this school. She used the additional time after school *to plan for the next day.* In the absence of textbooks and resources, Anita used the internet and drew on colleague's expertise to assist her in her teaching. *Google was important, but she also asked the view of other teachers, those who did the class before, what method they used, what they did, so a bit of that also.* She indicated that she relied on *about 50:50 internet and other colleagues.* She also indicated that the headmistress was supportive, and she *used to pop in all the time and often make them sing and tell me what to do with them.* She voluntarily came to the class as she liked it and the kids liked her as well. She was *new and didn't mind that.* Another challenge she had was to adapt the syllabus to student needs. *Let's say I did something, and the students did not understand, I was obliged to change because I know that say we did 1-5, I would ask them to bring objects and make them count these objects.* Anita also used outdoor activities to reinforce her students' learning. She cited learning verbs such as dance, write and walk. She *planned an outdoor activity to show them to do a circle and to show them dance and to write and walk.* She thought that these outdoor activities work well because of prior planning and responding to

how the student might learn better. These outdoor activities were one of her coping mechanisms of teaching with limited resources during her initial year of teaching.

### 5.5.3.2 Responding to students needs

The school that Anita teaches in is located in a relatively impoverished community and the challenges that the community faces often has implications for the students attending that school. Anita presents this example: *there is a girl who lives opposite the road. The last time she told me there was no electricity at her place and the father stopped his job and she had to look after her sister. When she doesn't come to school, I see her walking outside with her sister.* She felt empathetic when she saw kids with problems in her school. *I think empathy comes from you family background, but it also developed when I came here and saw parents having problems with their kids at home.* Parental care and interest in the school of their children was also an issue in this community. She relates that *one-day Ophelia came to school with plenty of marks. There is a type of creeper with plenty of thorns on it and she got hit by her mother with it and there were marks all over her body. I was a bit shocked and this was during the first term of school.* Speaking to parents has not made any changes. She says that *at home she (the student) won't get help because when you talk to the parent there is no response. For them schooling of their children is not a priority.*

Anita's experiences of schooling during her training period was different from that which she is teaching in. *My approach towards children has changed because when I was in training schools, I did not have these situations. In the training schools the kids were at ease in difficult situations. All people have problems, but the students were well catered for by their family and they did not lack anything. Therefore, the approach was different as compared to here where all the children have a different problem.*

In responding to the contextual realities that her students come from, her own experience of growing up in a caring family context and a lack of exposure to difficult teaching contexts led Anita to make situational decisions. Empathy guided her actions and responses to the students' needs. *If you don't have empathy you won't understand why the child does not understand in the classroom. I think a good example of empathy is when a child comes to me two or three times and tell me they haven't understood something. I won't tell them to go and sit down or to go and ask their mother at home. I will explain to him. If I don't understand their situation and there are things that we also don't*



*understand, I seek assistance from my colleagues or the headmistress. Empathy helped her as a teacher because it made her understand them better. Having empathy helped me make better decisions as a teacher. In teaching I know that given this kid has a problem and cannot follow like her friends and will not be able to do like she wants to.*

Anita also thinks that her compassionate nature helps her understand her students. *It happens often that they don't bring bread because there are some kids who don't come to school because they don't have bread to bring to school. When I see them not bringing their bread, I have a certain compassion. I get someone to look for food to feed these kids.* She presents another example of compassion: *I must look for a different method to be able to guide Princha, to also give her moral support because her dad died lately. One day she started to cry in class and told me that her dad has died as a result of being involved in an accident. I felt for this child because at that age it will have an impact on her. Academically she has gone down and had stopped drawing and other things that she previously would do. Her attitude and the way she does things following these painful events, has changed. I took a different approach to her schoolwork. I invited her to sit next to me for classwork because in her situation I think that she must be surrounded by her friends. She is also sitting next to a girl who is quite close to her for classwork and when she is having difficulty I have her sit near me and I help her do the work, not the whole day but only if the child isn't able to do work or something is bothering or when I feel she needs motivation. I am motivating her by giving her attention given the situation at home. I don't think that they have time to look after her individually at home.*

### *5.5.3.3 Professional growth through experience*

Although Anita received some support from the school administration, she realized that being a teacher meant having to take quick decisions. Anita thinks that being a teacher means you have to take decisions. *There are situations when a child comes in front of you even in standard 1 and is injured you automatically take decisions. You can't look at the child and not know what to do.* When Anita first started, she did not have courage: *before if a parent told me something, sometimes through lack of knowledge and experience I would not know the exact workings of school. There are things that I won't dare say, because I was not sure of myself. I was not sure if I could do this or that because I just started school and you are supposed to do what the head teacher says. There is a hierarchy and we are supposed to follow it.* Over time Anita has developed through knowledge and experience. *Now more than before when I first started, there were things that I would not dare do that I am sure I would do now. When I first started there were decisions that I wouldn't take as quickly as I would now.* Over time and across situations she developed courage. *Now if a parent comes, I will*

*know what to tell them and I have the courage to face them. Anita pins this development of courage to knowledge when she says that knowledge plays a big part for me. A lot of things developed over time before I worked in an office which was different from the school. Even with the MIE training when you spend only one day in the school, being in the school every day provides you with many different situations with new things happening consistently. She compares herself now and before and believes that I am being more independent. With experience Anita is now able to read a situation. She cites an example let's assume a situation where a parent comes and says that the teacher has written the student's name on the board and has complained in the office and the head teacher tells me that I am not supposed to do that. Before I would not have the courage to tell the parents that's a way of conducting a class and to instil discipline. Now if a parent says something it is easier for me to deal with it. I don't have to worry about what other people are saying. Now I am sure of my response. This works in my class.*

Anita also thinks that she now has the courage to go beyond the syllabus. *I can do research if a child has asked me something in class. Before I would not do it because other people would question me because it is not in the syllabus. Her experience and confidence in teaching in this school has now given her the latitude to experiment and go outside of the syllabus and textbooks with ease. Now I know why I am doing it. For example, in a subject I was teaching, a child asked me about the moon and who walked on it. It was a French lesson and the word "moon" appeared in a phrase. I re-directed the lesson to speak about moon expeditions and the history about the moon visits. I used Google to assist me. This was not part of the syllabus, but I deviated to support and encourage inquiry. If tomorrow somebody asks me why I have done this. That it is not in the syllabus. I can justify what I have done. Anita sees having the courage to go outside the syllabus as beneficial to her students the child is more motivated and interested because I am not doing only what's in the book.*

#### ***5.5.4 Reflections of being a teacher***

In concluding the narrative on Anita's teaching experiences as a novice teacher, her reflections focus on her training, learning to teach, knowing her students and relationship with school administration and parents

##### ***5.5.4.1 Anita's training***

Anita felt that she learnt more on the job than from her training "I learnt more on the job in situations that came from training. For Anita becoming a teacher happened gradually. *For me, a lot of things*

*developed over time. Before I worked in an office which was different than the school. For her the new setting provided her with new experiences. Being in the school every day provides you with many different situations with new things happening every day. For Anita, being a teacher and coming out of her training meant she had to be independent. When I first started, when the head teacher told me something, I used to say yes, I will do it. Whereas now I will suggest her certain things. I am being more independent. Anita learnt by observing situations. For me I will observe first. Let's assume a situation where a parent comes and says that the teacher has written the student's name on the board and has complained in the office and the head teacher tells u that u is not supposed to do that, She explains that she has a job to do and that she has to do what works for her class: but you have to keep doing your job. That's a type of situation where maybe I would not have the courage to tell the parents that's a way of conducting a class and to instil discipline. Now if a parent says something it is easier for me to deal with it. I don't have to worry what other people are saying. Now I am sure of my point. This works in my class.*

#### *5.5.4.2 Learning to teach*

*Anita developed a method of work by being structured. The situation brought the structuredness. There were no books for more than a month. I did some activities and I did some research to look for some work to give them on the internet. Google was important, but I also asked the view of other teachers, those who did the class before about what method they used and what they did. An example of how she adapted is illustrated in her English class: if I have to show them boy/girl, I know it must be in the book somewhere. According to the teachers who did standard 1 previously I had to teach the words for objects in the classroom such as table, chair, pencil etc. Then based on that I devised classwork and work sheets to make them draw and write down the words. If I don't do that I am not structured for English and French. I cannot come to class not knowing what to do. Anita felt that by being a teacher she had to prepare in advance. I used to prepare for my class in advance, given there was no textbook. If there was the textbook it was different.*

#### *5.5.4.3 Knowing her students*

*At the start Anita got to know her learners through activities. When I did Lego for some children, they would understand it. For others they don't understand. They see Lego and for them it's a game and they won't concentrate. The aim of using Lego according to Anita was to show the students counting and have them play at the same time. Given that some students did not understand, she had to change her approach. I tried other ways, maybe drawings, draw 5 apples rather than do it through Lego. For Anita planning ahead or being structured helped meet her learner's needs. Structuredness in the sense*

*that maybe we finished planning, let's say we're doing numbers 1-5, I was thinking of Lego and thought it's already here, the way of teaching. If they have not understood through Lego maybe I can use drawings, I already thought about using the worksheet for those who have not understood well.* By using different approaches Anita understood her student needs and when one method worked, she kept using it. *I continued doing it here, up till now I do it.*

#### *5.5.4.4 Relationship with school administration and parents*

Anita thinks that her commitment to her work helped her get along with administration, parents, and her students. *Given that I am committed to my work. I come on time every day and give my best in my class everyday there is a sort of getting along with administration, parents, and pupils.* Anita sees the *getting along* as an indication of her commitment. *This shows that I am committed in my work.* She shows her commitment to her students, when they don't come to class and don't perform, by communicating with parents. *Some pupils don't give their best or are absent and then you see that the commitment that I show in how I deal with parents and what I do every day, and this creates a bond with the parents, and they trust you and therefore I face less issues in the job.*

## **5.6 Narrative analysis:**

### ***5.6.1 Sweety's story on entering into school:***

#### *5.6.1.1 Coping with unusual situations:*

Sweety's personal growth as an individual was influenced by her home circumstances that allowed her to take responsibilities in the absence of other significant persons (e.g. like being alone at nights without her father). This is significant as it developed qualities of coping in unusual situations and this quality was carried into her post-school education experiences and her teaching experiences.

#### *5.6.1.2 Adaptation to unfamiliar context:*

Her entry into the school situation as a novice teacher was met with abrupt initiation, despite there being policies of school induction for novice teachers. She was just told which class to teach on her first day of arrival and was directed to that class with no preparation for creating a welcoming class, both for the teacher as well as for the learners who were receiving a new teacher that arrived in the school for the first time.

### *5.6.1.3 A culture shock for novice teachers:*

The transition from theoretical knowledge of and about teaching to the reality of being in a physical space of teaching students was a culture shock for Sweety. This was despite being theoretically prepared for the classroom, interspersed with supervised teaching practices, she questioned her capabilities as a teacher. She was also prepared as a subject teacher but in reality, she had to do both, teach her subject specialisation as well as be responsible for a whole class the whole day long and for everyday of her being in school. A further culture shock was that she was prepared for teaching normal class sizes, but in reality, the class size was much bigger than anticipated.

### ***5.6.2 Sweety's major challenges in teaching:***

There were two major challenges that Sweety experienced. These included discipline challenges and working with a diverse group of students. Sweety expressed feelings of powerless in managing discipline in her class. Her personal history of schooling as a growing child was different from the context of schooling during her teaching episode, with different forms of disciplining learners. Hence her personal experiences and modes of discipline and which she believed did discipline students was now considered illegal and unprofessional and this realisation made her feel powerless in disciplining the students. She claimed that patience and tolerance were key to her assisting her cope with the discipline challenges. Noting that students were eager to tell their stories of what happened at home, she allowed this to happen so that the students could release their urge to tell their stories and to get heard and this helped in quietening them down before lessons could commence. The patience of letting of the students to tell their stories was one way in which she was able to deal with discipline issues. By doing this, she was able to also get a sense of who the students were and to better understand them and this understanding of each of the students then allowed her to tolerate them rather than censoring them for the greater good of informing her teaching practices and engaging her learners into meaningful learning processes.

Working with a diverse group of students also posed a challenge to Sweety. In managing this diverse group of students, she relied on four constructs. These included realisation, introspection, courage, and perseverance. The realisation emerged at different vantage points. First the realisation that procedural knowledge learnt at College did not work for her in reality. Hence the direct application of such knowledges learnt on becoming a teacher was disrupted by the reality of the classroom context. The second realisation, which is linked to the first, is the variance from universalised notions to differentiated responses. This variance is shown in her thinking that everybody should understand but

her classroom experience says not so because of the mixed ability students that she had in her class. The second construct of introspection was a key construct for her to progress in her teaching endeavours. For example, when she realised that not every student was understanding her teaching, she had to introspect about her assumptions about who the students were, about the usefulness of her teaching methods and about what the learners could relate to in the concepts that were being taught. This introspection provided her with options that she could pursue to enhance learning. The third is also linked to the first two as she had to have the courage to venture outside of her comfort zone informed by her teaching training period. She had to have the courage to try out new approaches to teaching (e.g. use of Google to find things to show to her students to enhance understanding amongst them) and have the courage to adapt available resources that will appeal to the diverse group of students. Perseverance is what allowed her to find workable and practical solutions to her challenges as a novice teacher.

### ***5.6.3 Sweety's reflections on being a novice teacher:***

Four concerns were raised by Sweety in her reflections about her novice teaching experience. These included a shift from being a subject teacher to a whole class teacher, from being taught how to teach as an adult to teaching children, from being mentally prepared for teaching to the reality of teaching and a shift away from an emphasis on detailed lesson planning to a planning that could accommodate flexibility for improvisation. These shifts from her learning to becoming a teacher to, being a teaching in a real classroom are significant for a novice teacher and requires serious attention beyond just induction into a school.

### ***5.6.4 Alvin's story on entering into school:***

#### ***5.6.4.1 Coping with undisciplined and needy students:***

Alvin's upbringing in a strict environment influenced his internalization of good moral values. The values allowed him to do his job well at a later stage. Caring for his grandfather who had only 25 % mobility developed his compassionate side. The cumulative effect of all those home influences allowed him later to enforce discipline and develop relationships with those students who were from disadvantaged homes.

#### ***5.6.4.2 Adjusting to a demanding and unfriendly environment:***

On his first day of class Alvin felt he received a cold welcome from the school administration. He also did not even have his own classroom and felt uneasy as he had to share his classroom with another novice teacher who had a different style of teaching. He was also exposed to mixed ability students

who were undisciplined, many of his students were unmotivated and low in ability and kept forgetting what they were taught. During the first 6 weeks the school environment took a toll on his health and he went into depression.

#### *5.6.4.3 A reality shock for novice teachers:*

Alvin felt his training did not prepare him to work in the school where he obtained placement. He claimed that he was theoretically prepared to teach students with mixed abilities but adapting his theoretical knowledge in order to meet the learning needs of his students was what he found to be challenging as he had to go and do research. He was also unprepared for another category of students he called “lowest ability” and lacked the procedural knowledge to work with them. He had difficulties to differentiate his teaching and could not conduct his class in the same way as in the previous school where he was inducted and also had supervised teaching practice.

#### *5.6.5 Alvin’s major challenges in teaching:*

Alvin experienced two major challenges. These were establishing discipline in a class of undisciplined students and teaching students of mixed abilities including a category he called lowest abilities. Compared to the school where he was inducted, where his students were obedient and well behaved, Alvin had a class of rowdy students in a school located in a disadvantaged neighbourhood. He claims he had to adjust psychologically and physically. His students were ill disciplined, and they did not follow his instructions at first. Alvin realized that he had to resort to the discipline methods he grew up with at home and in primary school. He thus raised his voice and developed habits of conformity and consistency in his students by making them cross their hands when he was explaining and to put their fingers on their mouth to ensure they kept silent when he needed them to be quiet. Despite his efforts in maintaining discipline Alvin claims one of his students, Liliana always frustrated him by disobeying and because he has no right to use corporal punishment, he had to either tolerate her by controlling himself or send her to the headmaster’s office as a last resort. According to Alvin learning cannot take place in a classroom without classroom management therefore ensuring there was structure was a necessary first step. Establishing rules and ensuring his students abided by them was his way of maintaining discipline.

Another major challenge for Alvin was to teach students of mixed abilities to which he added another category he called lowest ability. Alvin realized that although he was made aware in his training that he would be working with children of mixed abilities he did not have the procedural knowledge of how to work with them. Alvin also came to the realization that some of his students were worse off than he thought. By questioning himself on the approach he should adopt, he concluded that he could

not do his class normally and that he should be compassionate and call them to his table, talk to them individually and sharpen their pencils for them. Although Alvin had two students that he considered to be lowest in ability, he did not judge them, admitting that it was in his nature to be non-judgemental. Alvin also thought of himself as child-like and because of that he was able to adapt by empathizing with his students. Through this empathy they, his students, allowed him to enter their worlds by what he calls “entering their shoes”. This enabled him to understand his students and the worlds that they lived in. By seeing them from the inside he understood how they are and at what pace they worked. Alvin had to adjust his teaching according to his students’ abilities and be flexible in order to meet their learning needs. “Entering their shoes” was also a way to build trust. By empathizing with his needy students on their home situation, he made them feel comfortable and the trust established facilitated his teaching as his students followed his instructions. In this way Alvin motivated them to take small steps in improving their basic skills in writing. When they made mistakes and were not making progress his patience allowed him to redirect them as often as needed. Alvin admitted that in this way at least if he could not help them, he could at least diminish their problems.

#### ***5.6.6 Alvin’s reflections on being a novice teacher:***

Four concerns were encountered by Alvin in his reflections on his novice teaching experience. From being a teacher trained to teach mainstream student to someone who is compassionate to teach low ability students from disadvantaged homes, from being a teacher who taught disciplined and well-mannered students to becoming a disciplinarian to his unruly students. From using English and French to using Creole as a medium of instruction. From using a basic form of empathy to maintain student teacher relationships to entering students’ shoes in order to understand their worlds.

#### ***5.6.7 Anita’s story on entering into school***

##### ***5.6.7.1 Preparedness to teach students in need:***

Anita’s upbringing as an individual was influenced by her home circumstances where she grew up in an extended family and had to take care of aging folks which developed her compassionate and caring side. Her love of learning new things and persevering nature allowed her to complete whatever hobby she undertook. Those aspects of her nature, along with her upbringing, prepared her for later teaching in a community that was considered poor to impoverished.



### *5.6.7.2 Adaptation to new context:*

Anita's entry into teaching was marked by coming late for work because she was unfamiliar with the buses that went to her school in the morning. She faced a lot of unhappy parents who waited for her in the morning and were not happy that a new teacher was teaching their kids in standard 1. The parents in that school use to check on her work consistently and were quick to pick up on issues. Anita took a month to adjust to the school routine and get used to the parents.

### *5.6.7.3 A reality shock for novice teachers:*

Anita was faced with a situation where the new books for teaching and learning had not arrived and they were instructed not to use the old textbooks. She found the adjustment to be difficult as she was not prepared to face such a situation where planning was not in terms of a textbook. Adjusting to the needs of her students was also difficult and she had to change strategies as a way of coping with the different ability levels of her students. Anita taught in a school located in an impoverished community that lacked basic needs, but she was trained and exposed to students who did have all of the basic needs to support their school education.

### ***5.6.8 Anita's major challenges in teaching:***

The major challenges that Anita faced was being unprepared to teach mixed ability students and responding to students from an impoverished community as she was not exposed to these kinds of learning environments. During her induction she was only exposed to students who were average or of high ability but is now teaching in a school where the majority of students are low ability students. In order to adjust, Anita had to use a more concrete approach like using outdoor activities to teach her students and this approach sometimes did not work. Finding alternative teaching strategies posed a challenge to her. Anita collaborated with other teachers who had taught Grade 1 students for exemplars that they have used in their teaching practices.

Teaching within an impoverished community presented challenges of learner absenteeism's which often required her to give extra lessons to assist these students. Parental support was also non-existent. Her learners, as it often happened, came to school hungry. They did not bring food to school and some of them would be absent because they don't have bread to bring to school and eat during their lunch breaks.

### ***5.6.9 Anita's reflections on being a novice teacher:***

Three concerns were raised by Anita in her reflections about her novice teaching experience. These included a shift from being trained to teach abled students to teaching students of low ability, from depending on the textbook to independently planning ahead and adapting to her learners without a textbook, from relying on parental support to the reality of there being no parental support.

## **5.7 Synthesis of chapter**

In this chapter I presented the narratives of three novice teachers using the first and third person to, both, capture their voices and to construct accounts of their practice using the personal biography of the participants. The chapter engages with the education experience of the participants in becoming a teacher; their teaching practices that illuminates the core qualities that they deploy in their teaching practices and their reflections on their teaching practices based on their interview processes. Through narrative analysis, the first level of analysis, their stories were retold based on their experience entering school, challenges encountered and their reflections on being a novice teacher. The chapter ended with a narrative analysis of each of the storied narratives to illuminate the issues that influenced the teaching practice of these novice teachers. In the next chapter through, the analysis of narratives, I engage with the stories to identify three themes that explain the core qualities that they rely on to face the realities of teaching in school. The derivation of three themes are explained and the data is presented within each of these three themes.

## CHAPTER 6 DATA ANALYSIS

### 6.1 Orientation

In the previous chapter I narrated the stories of my three participants Sweetie, Alvin and Anita followed by a narrative analysis that illuminated the key issues emerging through the stories as novice teachers taking up their first teaching post in public schools in Mauritius. In this chapter I focus on the analysis of narratives by identifying and engaging with the data from the three stories within three themes that emerged through the data coding process. These three themes relate to the core qualities that these novice teachers relied on to navigate their daily teaching practices in the schools they were deployed to teach in. The three themes identified are humanistic core qualities, most of which resonate with my theoretical framework that guided this study, professional core qualities that delve into the knowledge and training received in their training programme to become a teacher and contextual core qualities that I introduce as framing their teaching practices. These three themes will be elaborated in this chapter. Through the analysis of narratives, I delve deeper into their teaching experiences as novice teachers by exploring the core qualities that they rely on in facing the realities of teaching in a school with a view to distilling the key findings of this study. In delving into the storied narratives of the participants, three themes were developed within which the data is presented, findings articulated and discussed.

In identifying the three themes, the storied narratives were read several times and through each reading, analytics were identified and recorded as comments in the comment box using the Word review facilities of the Word package. The analytics were then extracted from the comments block and pasted onto a new Word document page. Working with these extractions of the analytics, I grouped them into coherent assemblages. Each group was then reviewed against the theoretical framework constructs and that of the literature on novice teaching. I then further refined the groupings and identified three constructs that could be used as themes for the data presentation and analysis. Through this process I developed themes on humanistic core qualities, professional core qualities and contextual core qualities. Data related to each of these three themes were then extracted from each of the storied narratives and these, in turn, formed the basis for the data analysis and discussion of findings.

## **6.2 Theme1: Humanistic core qualities that influence novice teachers in their teaching processes**

### ***6.2.1 Subtheme 1: Empathy and compassion humanistic core qualities***

Humanistic qualities as core qualities of a person are well explored in the literature (Evelein, 2005; Hoekstra & Korthagen, 2011; Horne, 2011; Kim & Greene, 2011). In particular and relevant to this study, Higgs (2011) contribution to a humanizing discourse that includes the construction of plurality, being pragmatic and judicious are the human qualities that these novice teachers defaulted to in taking on the challenges that they had faced in the first teaching practices as professional teachers. Being human is what is explored in this theme as it relates to novice teachers' teaching practices where they deploy their core qualities in managing their teaching and learning situations within classes. Under this theme I explore empathy and compassion simultaneously as core qualities that these novice teachers deployed in their teaching practices and which are both considered as human core qualities (Ofman, 2001b)

The concepts compassion and empathy are often used interchangeably in literature, but some (e.g. Langstraat and Bowdon, 2011) argue that compassion is usually more intense and entails both judgement and action. They argue that compassion might be a more fully social and political emotion than empathy (Langstraat & Bowdon, 2011). This argument is drawn from Nussbaum's (2001) three principles framework; that it requires understanding of suffering as serious, it is also grounded in the belief that the sufferer does not deserve to suffer, and it forges identification between sufferer and those who feel compassion (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 190).

Similarly, to compassion, which according to Korthagen (2004) is omnipresent, the occurrence of empathy is ubiquitous amongst humans (de Vignemont, 2007). The ubiquitous notion of empathy suggests that empathy is also a universal quality. In relation to teaching, the construct "teacher empathy" has been defined as "the ability of the teacher to express concern for, and take the perspective of a student or students and involves both cognitive and affective elements" (Swan & Riley, 2015, p. 223). The importance of empathy has been related to teaching as a helping profession. Warren (2014, p. 298), who further argues that "when one considers the work teachers do to support the intellectual and social-emotional development of students, it is hard to dispute that teaching is a helping profession". Empathy has been associated with the role of teaching in that emotional competencies are regarded as essential for successful carrying out the various professional roles of teachers, and should therefore be taught programmatically (Stojiljković, Djigić, & Zlatković, 2012).

Through the narratives the element of empathy and compassion as a core quality emerged in several ways and instances across the participants teaching practices. These include empathy in

understanding their students, empathy in taking the time to help them, empathy in deciding what to do in class and empathy to deliver results.

*Sweetie viewed empathy and sympathy synonymously and said empathy and sympathy work together: I sympathize more than empathize, but I am not able to put myself in their shoes. You can't think like them. You can try. So, you can sympathize more than empathize.*

Alvin used the expression *entering their shoes* to express how he used his natural ability to use empathy with his students. In attempting to address his concerns about teaching mixed abilities children, Alvin claimed that he saw himself as *still being a child. In my head I am still a child. To put myself in their shoes is not difficult.* Alvin saw being a child as important because he believed that not all children develop at the same rate. *The child has to grow in his own time. When I entered the shoes of children, I have started to understand how they are, and therefore understood the pace at which they worked. I then had to adapt myself and become flexible.*

With Anabelle he understood her at first: *Anabelle is short and everyone else is taller than her, so she feels inferior. She was also a bit timid.* Subsequently Alvin was able to adjust and help her. *I asked her who she played with during the recess. She said with my cousin. I then put her next to her cousin in class. Her self-confidence began to improve and after the first few weeks, her handwriting was tops but she could not recognize letters, but she copied them well.* Getting to know her background through empathy also created the space for Alvin to be patient in explaining things and establish rapport with her. *When she did not know something, I took time to explain it to her, even played with her simple things and even asked questions about her family and home. For example, I asked her questions like what the names of your two little brothers are. Are they naughty and not you? Or do you hit them? Then she would tell me about her home stuff. In this way I got to know more about Anabelle, and this helped in developing a good and trusting teacher-student relationship.*

When Alvin found out that Elidia came from an abusive home he got to know her better. *A colleague told me her dad is a hitter. When I corrected her copy book I would ask if everything's fine at home girl? Then she would begin to say there was a fight. She would say sir they fought on my road with broken beer bottles. Dad punched mom and her nose was bleeding.* Alvin was able to make Elidia feel better through rapport building. *I started to joke with her more and tell her ask the laziness to stay on the trees and not to enter the classroom. The rapport helped and she would hold her pencil and write but when the time came, she would dream.* Eventually the established rapport and patience alleviated Elidia's problem. *I pull her towards me so that she can write and write down a few words because I know her capacity. She wouldn't have been able to remember all the words that the majority would be able to learn. At least she would be able to recognise a minimum number of words.*

*Her “b” was becoming a “p” or a “d”. Sometimes her “e” was upside down. On that I took patience, I would rewrite the word in red. I knew it would not solve the problem but at least diminish it.*

According to Anita *empathy comes from your family background and having empathy is important in order to understand other people.* Anita had to respond to the fact that her students came from difficult backgrounds. She thought empathy was important to understand them. *If you don’t have empathy you won’t understand why the child does not understand in the classroom. I think a good example of empathy is when a child comes to me two or three times and tell me they haven’t understood something.* Anita also acknowledges her limitations in understanding her learners. *If I don’t understand their situation and there are things that we also don’t understand, I seek assistance from my colleagues or the headmistress.* Empathy according to Anita made her take her time to explain. *I won’t tell them to go and sit down or to go and ask their mother at home. I will explain to him.* Anita also indicated that empathy helped her make better decisions. *Having empathy helped me make better decisions as a teacher. In teaching I know that given this kid has a problem and cannot follow like her friends and will not be able to do like she wants to.*

The importance and relevance of empathy is highlighted by Warren (2014) who sees it as more than just an emotional response to others, rather, it is an attempt on the part of the teacher to enter in the world of the child, to see the world through this child’s eyes. Knowing and understanding the life world of the child allowed these teachers to reflect on themselves to identify and understand why they were not getting through to the students in their class. This identification and understanding allowed the novice teachers to find solutions and by relying on their empathetic humanistic quality, they were able to get by as teachers, confront, manage and teacher the students in gainful ways. Their challenges became more manageable by deploying their caring and empathetic quality of getting to know, understanding, and acting in a way that is acceptable and productive both for the learner and the student. The value of being empathetic is captured by Hughes (2017) who argues that one has to have empathy to understand what they’re going through and why they’re acting that way. This understanding is crucial when teaching in a diverse teaching and learning context embedded in cultural diversity that these teachers found themselves in, upon taking up their first appointment as a professional teacher (McAllister & Irvine, 2002). According to Noddings (1984) (as cited in McAllister & Irvine, 2002,p.13), “various attributes, such as listening, being patient and being supportive, reflect a receptivity that leads to caring”. Teachers in their study connected the various attributes of caring to empathy and believed that such behaviour on their part developed better relationships with their students. Deciding what to do in class can be likened to exercising teacher agency, defined as a teacher’s capacity to act (Priestley, Biesta, & Robinson, 2015) and this agency

that these novice teachers exercised as professional teachers allowed them to re-negotiate their teacher identity through reflexive positioning (Kayi-Aydar, 2015) in ways that the students were able to seek comfort and trust in them and reveal real life experiences that compromised their learning possibilities. Without their re-negotiations of their teacher identity, empathy may not have been revealed and the challenges that these novice teachers were faced with, would have been overwhelming. Hence, defaulting to empathy and compassion human core qualities allowed them to know and understand their students with a view to enhancing their teaching attempts and for the learners to progress in their learning despite the challenges that both, teachers, and students, have encountered.

### **6.3 Theme2: Professional core qualities that influence novice teachers in their teaching**

The responsibilities associated with “being a teacher” means that they must act professionally by making professional decisions to achieve the outcome of learning. As Beijaard, et al (2004) put it “Teachers are expected to think and behave professionally” (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004, p. 122). Professional identity has been defined as “a teacher’s sense of their roles or relevant features of their profession” (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 118). As novice teachers assume their role, they build up profession-related qualities (Guseva, Dombrovskis, & Kokina, 2009). Those profession-related qualities have also been called professional qualities, for example “knowing students” was seen to be a professional quality in another study (Yost, 2006). In line with positive psychology and the concept of core qualities focused on “what works for the average person” (Sheldon & King, 2001, p.216) professional qualities that work for the teacher are therefore called professional core qualities. Under this theme I explore three subthemes that were identified from the participants’ narrative accounts of how they positively negotiate the responsibilities that being a teacher entail. These subthemes include knowledge, preparedness and reflections or alternatives.

#### ***6.3.1 Subtheme 1: Knowledge, a professional core quality that allows novice teachers to know their students and how to teach them.***

Through the narratives, knowledge as a professional core quality emerged in several instances across the participants teaching practices. Two kinds of knowledge were evident in the narratives of the novice teachers as they enculturated themselves into teaching at their respective schools. The first is knowledge of the students which assisted them to manage their students and to engage them into meaningful learning. The second relates to knowledge about teaching, more specifically teaching methods that allowed them to adapt both in what they taught and how they taught. These two kinds of knowledge are engaged with in this sub-theme.

### 6.3.1.1 Knowledge of their students

In a study by Yost (2006), one of the novice teacher participants, Kathy, got to know her student's background by spending a lot of time talking to her and this gave her a logical way to assist her in making progress towards an academic or behavioural goal. In a similar way, these novice teachers got to know their students in different ways.

Sweetie observed them for a week by doing little activities with them, Alvin attempted to get into their shoes to understand their ability level and Anita used activities such as LEGO to get to know them. Knowing students through observation and activities is consistent with literature on novice teachers. For example, He & Cooper (2011) in their study of novice teachers found that using assignments, observations and class discussions allowed them to get to know their students and their families.

Having a deeper sense of their students, Sweetie, Alvin and Anita learnt to manage their students in different ways. Sweetie used her sense of observation to observe their learners' behaviour and decided what to do with each one. *You need patience, sometimes you have to let them misbehave just to find out why they are misbehaving.*

Alvin had several assumptions about teaching, learning and learners' behaviours. He had a notion of a *model student*. *I don't know if it exists but someone who listens more, is disciplined, and can learn in class. The reality was that this ideal student does not exist. The notion of being a good teacher did not exist.* According to Alvin rapport building takes time but for the first few days discipline and being structured is more important. They must *conform first and then teaching and learning will take place*. Hence, he established routine and structure before he got to know his students more deeply. In getting to know more about his mixed ability students, Alvin claimed that he saw himself as still being a child. *In my head I am still a child. To put myself in their shoes is not difficult.* Alvin saw being a child as important because he believed that not all children develop at the same rate. *The child has to grow in his own time. When I entered the shoes of children, I have started to understand how they are, and therefore understood the pace at which they worked. I then had to adapt myself and become flexible.*

Anita got to know her students through activities, like using Lego and drawings. By using different approaches Anita understood her student needs and when one method worked, she kept using it *"I continued doing it here, up till now I do it.*

All three novice teachers were able to settle their students down into teaching and learning activities after getting to know their students through different strategies. All three agree that without knowing their students, they were not able to cope with the discipline issues, the concentration in class and their engagement in their learning processes. Hence, knowledge of their students became their



priority and a professional core quality to develop an enabling environment for teaching and learning to take place.

### 6.3.1.2 Teaching knowledge

Teaching knowledge has been a focal area of engagement over several decades and includes knowledge about the content to be taught, knowledge about teaching methods, knowledge about the teaching context and knowledge about the learners (Bisset Turner, 2013; Loewenberg Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008; Shulman, 1986). For the context of this study I focus on teacher knowledge in terms of content to be taught and teaching methods as these are the kinds of knowledges that the novice teachers have gravitated to in their initial years of teaching. The data speaks to such knowledge systems as professional core qualities that these novice teachers come to rely on as they negotiate their teaching spaces in their early part of their teaching career. Central to them negotiating their teaching spaces is their personal reflections on what and how they teach. Hence personal reflections by the novice teachers is considered as a professional core quality. Teacher reflections has been widely engaged with in the literature on teacher professional development and is the basis for on-going professional development (Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993; Howard, 2003; Valli, 1997). The teaching knowledge as constituted by the content knowledge, knowledge of a range of teaching methods and self-reflection are interdependent of each other as the data suggests. Through these interdependent facets of teaching, adaptation to the teaching environment was key to their survival. Hence the professional core quality that these teachers defaulted to was adaptation based on their professional knowledge.

Sweety, for example adapted to her teaching woes by reflecting on why she was not able to get through to her students:

*Sweety learned a lot of things during her training which she felt was a mismatch to the real classroom situation. She admitted that some of it was procedural but difficult to apply in practice. I won't say in training we did not learn procedural knowledge but its adult delivering to adult and they expect us adults to deliver to kids. In that sense there is a difference. Everybody understands each other. If you do the same thing with kids, it may not work.*

*I came here one day and did a class and it didn't work. I came to do alphabets, wrote it on the board and told them this is capital "A" the children got bored and so did I. Then I realized that it was wasn't working. Having introspected through her realization of her teaching methods, she adapted to a learner age appropriate strategy by looking for a drawing of Apple and finally taking out an apple from my lunchbox to show the learners.*

There are several other examples in her narrative that show her reflections, exploring options available to her and adapting her teaching methods in ways that worked for her in her class teaching.

Alvin' adaption centres around contextual variations and training that he received in teaching English:

*While not being prepared to teach in a variety of contexts, adaptation and improvisation are key to his teaching practices. Adaptation included moving at their pace and integrating learning across subjects. In training how I learnt I must say that I combined Health and Physical Education and English. When we did HPE in training it was mostly games. We did not really associate the languages such as teaching of words. Here I teach English while I engage the students in HPE.*

*The class was mixed and by the way they responded we knew if they went to kindergarten and we used the creole language until now. I have problems talking in English to them, but I always used creole to help the students to learn and understand. In std 1 it was mostly using Creole because the student does not have that background when you expose them to English and French. In training we were told that an English class should be done in English but in practice it doesn't work because at the end of the lesson the student must have grasped that concept.*

In this instance of adaption, he included a reflection on the outcomes of his teaching in that in order to achieve the desired learning outcomes from the students he had to reflect on his own learning (learning to teach English), reflect on the students' abilities and what might improve their learning, and on what teaching strategies would bring him the outcomes that he envisaged (learning to optimise outcomes).

Anita used her planning processes for reflections, thinking of alternatives and implementing teaching strategies that would resonate with the interest of the learners. For example:

*She adapted the syllabus to student needs. Let's say I did something, and the students did not understand, I was obliged to change because I know that say we did 1-5, I would ask them to bring objects and make them count these objects. Anita also used outdoor activities to reinforce her students' learning. She cited learning verbs such as dance, write and walk. She planned an outdoor activity to show them to do a circle and to show them dance and to write and walk. She thought that these outdoor activities work well because of prior planning and responding to how the student might learn better. These outdoor activities were one of her coping mechanisms of teaching with limited resources during her initial year of teaching.*

In this instance, Anita used lesson planning as her reflexive strategy, taking into consideration who her students were, what was needed to be taught and learnt and what appropriate strategies would best excite the students to engage in meaningful learning.

The professional core qualities displayed by these three novice teachers on teacher knowledge in line with Shulman's (1986) notion of pedagogical content knowledge in that their initial observations and experiences of teaching their students as novice teachers led them to realise that they were not getting through to their learners. This observation was followed by reflecting on what they were doing in class, who their students were and what would make them interested in learning, what teaching methods are available to them and how they would implement new strategies for teaching of the context expected on them. The reflections meant that these novice teachers would then go back to their baskets of knowledge on teaching methods and would then select the most appropriate teaching methods and adapt these to suit the needs of the learners taking into consideration the teaching and learning contexts and the diversity of their students. Hence the professional core quality related to teaching knowledge is rather a process that they follow that will eventually lead them to adapt their teaching strategies to optimise learning amongst their students. This process, therefore, has four steps – observation, reflection, selection and adaptation.

### **6.3.2 Subtheme 2: Preparedness, a professional core quality that allows novice teachers to be ready for challenges.**

Preparedness is often mentioned in the literature on novice teachers. It is listed as one of the professional qualities of a teacher (Raymond, 2008). Frequent references to preparedness in the literature leads one to believe that it is a sought after quality by teachers (Edwards-Leis, 2010; Fantilli & Mcdougall, 2009). Preparedness has been linked to the ability to deal with emotions as a person-teacher (Swart, 2013). Therefore, preparedness as a quality fits with the notion of identity of a teacher.

Through the narratives, preparedness as a professional core quality emerged in several instances across the participants teaching practices. These include use of the professional core quality of preparedness in preparing lessons and teaching aids, establishing preparing learners for exams.

Sweetie though that as a teacher it was important to be prepared:

*You have to know what to do. you can't come unprepared you can't go into a class and say hi to everybody and start to work because children need a different approach, I can't come here no one knows me and I start to work its logical. Taking cognizance of her novice teacher and the need to be prepared, she also had to adjust to her life at home. At home you have your life to go to and can't mix school and home life. So, you have to improvise I have already thought of what to do. And I jot it*

*down in a few bullet points. So, when I come to class I base myself on those notes so that she would remember it and be able to improvise if the need arises.*

For Sweetie writing long lesson plans was not practical for her. *The longer the lesson plan the more you waste time because you can't improvise and do a song for example because it defeats the purpose also, I must read a lot if I need to look at the lesson plan again. So, if I planned something to do today, I know what to do without looking at the lesson plan. It is just for the headmistress to sign generally you know what is supposed to do.*

In this case the novice teacher saw the need for planning what she needs to teach. The plan, however, is something that captures her deep thinking about how and what she should teach the next day and jotting points from her thinking sufficed for her. While accountability in the form of a detailed formal plan is needed, it was not central to her teaching as she relied more on her thinking and jotting down points that she can remember and through this process as able to be flexible and adaptable as she was finding her way in her initial years of teaching.

Alvin, on the other hand relies on detailed plans that guided his teaching. Recalling his upbringing in his home environment, discipline formed an important component of his growing up and therefore a pillar that he could rely on in accomplishing the goals that he sets. In the classroom he is quite clear that detail plans are needed and had to be adhered to in a discipline way for him to achieve his intended outcome in his teaching practice.

Alvin had to be prepared to face his ill-discipline students. *When I thought about how I was disciplined at home and compared it to the discipline here, I thought that I needed to instil discipline in these students. If I did not have decisiveness, I would not have courage to take materials from my place example coloured paper etc. to be a teacher and to buy a pack. Alvin believed that managing a class requires being structured and ensuring consistency. Structuredness met classroom management. How do you manage the class if it is not structured?*

In this case planning and discipline were interrelated processes and these two interrelated concepts brought structuredness to his class to manage his teaching. His planning provided the platform to enable learning and his disciplinary mechanisms allow the teaching and learning to proceed. Hence planning was an essential tool for Alvin, both to discipline his students as well as to enable learning by his students.

Anita had to adapt to the fact that the textbook was not available to her when she began teaching. The school had not received the new textbooks for teaching and *the headmistress told us not to use the old textbook that they had received instructions not to do what was in the previous textbook.* This was difficult for Anita as she was a novice teaching, teaching standard one for the first time. She reported

that *it was difficult for me to adjust*. Anita felt that by being a teacher she had to prepare in advance “I cannot come to class not knowing what to do. I used to prepare my class in advance. She *was obliged to plan; we cannot come to school and do nothing. The planning helped*. To create opportunities for planning, she stayed at school beyond 15h00 which was the end of the school day for this school. She used the additional time after school *to plan what I would have to do for the next day*.

In this case planning for teaching was essential and she had to find time outside her teaching time to do this planning. This was especially so as there were no textbooks available to her. Hence planning in advance was needed and she relied on this professional core quality that she had learnt in her training to becoming a teacher.

### **6.4 Theme3: Contextual core qualities**

Contextual core qualities emerged as a theme from the data and it relates to the accountability regimes that teachers are held accountable for, both in their professions as well as broader human rights discourses. Hence these contextual core qualities form a framework that guides teachers’ work.

While there are several contextual issues that teachers need to identify, engage with and inform their teaching practices, (for example, diverse learning contexts, diverse learner population, impoverished communities), the three contextual core qualities of accountability in an exam-based system, human rights discourse and abolishment of corporal punishment are legislative and professional guidelines that holds teachers accountable not only to their profession, but to society as a whole. Hence these three contextual issues are deemed core qualities that are fundamental to their teaching practices.

#### ***6.4.1 Subtheme 1: Accountability to the people of Mauritius***

According to Jeffrey a “performativity discourse currently pervades teachers’ work” (Jeffrey, 2002, p. 2). Performativity is defined by Ball as “technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organizations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of ‘quality’, or ‘moments’ of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organization within a field of judgement (Ball, 2003, p. 216). Performativity according to Jeffrey results from the importation of an economic market structure for schools in order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency for the outputs of learning (Jeffrey, 2002). This view is also supported by Jason and Hu who mention that performativity is a result of neoliberalist “free market” economic ideologies making inroads into the education system (Jason & Hu, 2014).

Performativity influences accountability in an education system as the focus became that of a discourse on performance where teachers see their roles as pedagogues reduced to that of a performer (Jeffrey, 2002). The participants in the study saw accountability to make their students obtain results in their examination as part of their role in what was expected of them by parents, students, and authorities in education. They found meeting those expectations challenging because their training and resources such as the textbook were not adapted to the needs of their learners and they were faced with the similar challenges of teaching students of mixed abilities who were often ill disciplined. In order to face those challenges, they committed themselves to persist with readapted resources, disciplining their students, being structured and meticulous in planning lessons and communicative with parents, students, and the school administration.

Sweety for example mentioned that *in Mauritius everyone expects only results, they judge the book by its cover. In school it is also the same thing they will judge a book by its cover, they will judge a teacher by what kind of results they brought. If they did not bring any results, they are not good.* Consequently, she came to the realization of her role as teacher as being accountable. Therefore, when she saw that her learners were difficult to monitor when she went according to her prescribed textbook to teach the concept colours for example *if you tell a child to put all the reds on one side sometimes it becomes difficult because you may go in a group and they are fighting.* She therefore decided to use her own resources and when that did not work, she persisted. *I brought other things, including Bristol paper and I've brought my materials and seen it hasn't worked again. I persisted and done it in the following week, and I went on my laptop and did PowerPoints and colours.*

According to Alvin obtaining results is important *I must be committed if I want results the way I want it.* For Alvin, the school context where he was posted was very different from where he did his induction therefore, he had to adjust *I had to adapt myself physically and psychologically.* His students consisted of mixed ability students of which he describes some who were extremely low in ability: *There is a category that is not low ability but the lowest ability, like Shalil who is autistic and who was of the lowest ability.* He mentioned that because his training did not prepare him to deal with his students he had to adapt. As his students were also ill disciplined, he thought he would have to instil discipline in them in order to get results at a later stage. *Normally you are not supposed to be so strict in standard 1 but I was because I anticipated problems later.* He saw his role as teacher being *dedicated and committed* to his work therefore in the first few weeks discipline was his major focus and he focused on developing habits and structure to make them conform. For example, he *told them hands on the table and raise your hands. I don't want anyone to speak without permission.*

Anita's showed her sense of commitment to her work when her students did not perform in class by communicating with their parents. *Some pupils don't give their best or are absent and then you see*

*that the commitment that I show in how I deal with parents and what I do every day, and this creates a bond with the parents, and they trust you. When she first began her job however Anita had to adapt to the parents in her school as they were not happy because a novice teacher was assigned to teach their children: When I first started given that I was new, there were parents who were not happy that a new teacher got standard one. Consequently, they checked on her work consistently and were quick to pick up on issues, in the sense that they tell you that you haven't done this. She was able to turn the situation in her favour when she showed commitment to her work given that I am committed to my work. I come on time every day and give my best in my class every day. By being structured and committed she became experienced and gained confidence. I can do research if a child has asked me something in class. Before I would not do it because other people would question me because it is not in the syllabus. Now I know why I am doing it.*

Therefore, accountability as a teacher in an exam-oriented education system that values examination results is seen as a core contextual quality guiding novice teacher to achieve their goals. This is in accordance with the view of a contextual core qualities as a framework that guides novice teachers in their role in an education system that is governed by laws, in which teachers are held accountable by their scheme of duties and expectations from different actors forming part of the education system.

#### ***6.4.2 Subtheme 2: Human Rights discourse influencing teaching practices of novice teachers***

Human rights, and more specifically, the right to quality education for all children, has been enshrined in the constitution of most countries. Article 26 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights says that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights (United Nations Children's Fund, 2007). The participants of the study saw it as their core responsibility of their teaching to include their students in the learning process, despite their challenges and their backgrounds, in order to create a context that would lead to the full development, both as a human as well as in the right to quality education. The experiences of these novice teachers as they account for the challenges that they had experienced in their teaching practices allude to their grounding focus on child development and inclusion. I say grounding focus in the sense that they drew on the own biographies, their resolve to overcome their challenges and to seeing some enlightenment in the faces of their student, in order to facilitate teaching and learning for quality education.

Sweety, who regards herself as a professional teacher, had to find ways overcome her challenges that she experiences in class as she says that she *is accountable*, suggesting that she is aware of her responsibilities as a professional teacher. Sweety learnt about her students through observation and

then made appropriate decisions about what to do about each of the learners. Taking these steps in getting to know each of her students, that early in her teaching career suggests that inclusivity has driven her teaching practices. She wanted to be inclusive of her teaching.

Anita, for example regards herself *by nature who likes to learn a lot of things*, suggesting that learning is an innate quality of being human. Drawing on the love of learning, she understands that her students want to learn, but that there may be challenges that her students would face. Her resolve would then be to identify these challenges in her students with a view to assisting them to transgress these challenges. She adapted the syllabus to student needs. *Let's say I did something, and the students did not understand, I was obliged to change because I know that say we did 1-5, I would ask them to bring objects and make them count these objects.* Adapting the syllabus would, therefore, constitute an initial response to her teaching, suggesting that an adherence to a structured curriculum would be compromised and that she could be accountable for not meeting the planned curriculum. Yet, in the interest of providing quality education, she adapted the syllabus to resonate with the needs of her students. Her students became the focal point of her teaching, rather than just delivering a syllabus.

Alvin saw being a child as important because he believed that not all children develop at the same pace. *The child has to grow in his own time. When I entered the shoes of children, I have started to understand how they are, and therefore understood the pace at which they worked. I then had to adapt myself and become flexible.* Recognising the difference amongst his students, Alvin undertook to know them deeply in order to understand them with a view to adapting his teaching to their needs. Once again, adaptation with a focus on accommodating the diversity amongst the students, were the primary interest of the teacher. The different kinds of engagement that he had with different students attests to Alvin's attempt to be inclusive in the learning process. Adaptation, for Alvin, included moving at their pace and integrating learning across subjects.

Hence being inclusive, knowing and understanding of their students and adapting to the needs of the student are in line with the fundamental discourse of quality education as a human rights discourse that is inclusive in nature and ensuring that each student has a fair chance of learning. Being inclusive and adapting to students' needs, therefore, seems to be core to them being professional teachers and as such constitute their core qualities that they deploy in managing their teaching responsibilities.



### **6.4.3 Subtheme 3: Abolishment of corporal punishment**

Through the narratives, abolishment of corporal punishment as a contextual core quality emerged in several instances across the participants teaching practices. The participants of the study recognized that there are limitations to how they can manage discipline in their classes to facilitate teaching and learning. All of the participants indicated that one of their challenges as a novice teacher was that of managing discipline in their classes. They spoke of how they were disciplined as a child and as students in school when they were growing up. They had to abandon some of the ways they were disciplined, especially those that involved corporal punishment, despite their strong belief that corporal punishment is needed to discipline their students. Recognising that discipline is one their big challenges in their teaching practice and that corporal punishment was an appropriate means of disciplining students in the past and that is it now illegal, they had to default to other ways of disciplining their students. Hence the contextual reality that corporal punishment has been abolished became their contextual core quality that compelled them to explore other options.

Sweety felt powerless as she could not use corporal punishment to control her students. She reflects on her school days and say: *It's still difficult because before when someone misbehaved, they were beaten when I was at school in my days all teachers were like that. I don't know a child in my generation who was not hit, and I can't say things when I did get a beating, but today you can't do anything, you can't shout, or you may be accused of verbal harassment a child doesn't react like an adult. I can tell them a few times to keep quiet, but they won't understand generally these are the kinds of problem that I get.*

*According to Sweety tolerance and patience allowed her to cope with her students by giving her the time to think how to manage them tolerance and patience comes in the sense that I know the child is like this and how will you manage for them to stop doing like that when you are teaching.*

Alvin, despite gaining control of his students through rigid disciplinary measure could not use corporal punishment and knowing this he referred students that he could not handle to upper management. *Although Alvin was able to maintain discipline in his classroom, one of his students Liliana frustrates him by raising her hands and blurts out the wrong answer and misguiding the whole class. I had to tell her not to blurt out answers and just to follow the lesson. If there is something, I will explain to you later but don't talk for the time being and until now she is like that. She does that to get attention and it is difficult because I had to do everything again. I control myself because sometimes that hits on my nerves. There comes a time when I don't know what to do and then I send her to the office. We don't have the right to use corporal punishment.*

Knowledge of the contextual limitation on disciplining students through corporal punishment forced these teachers to find alternate ways of coping. Knowing the implications for the teachers if they use corporal punishment also forces them to find alternate ways to discipline their learners as described in the three narratives presented in the last chapter.

### **Concluding comments on contextual core qualities**

While some might argue that the contextual framings of a teachers work through regulatory laws may not be considered as core qualities of a teacher, the limitations placed by the regulatory laws on teachers forces teachers to find alternatives as default actions, for example that of disciplining their students to promote teaching and learning. If corporal punishment was their default action against ill-disciplined students, then the search for alternate, more humane approaches to promote teaching and learning amongst ill-disciplined students may be more theoretical rather than practically possible and implementable. Hence contextual core qualities are essential to teachers work and keeps them alert so that alternatives and adaptation by teachers is made possible.

### **6.5 Key findings of the study**

Working through the data and arising out of the analysis of the data, the following have been distilled as key findings of this study:

1. A disjuncture between being theoretically prepared to teach and the reality of a classroom challenges novice teachers to find adaptive ways to manage their teaching practices and learner discipline
2. Novice teachers default to three kinds of core qualities: the humanistic core quality of empathy and compassion, the professional core qualities of knowledge and planning and contextual core qualities of committing themselves to adhering to regulatory frameworks that forces them to find alternate and more humane approaches to promote teaching and learning
3. The process followed by novice teachers in coping with their first teaching experience is reflection, going back to their basket of alternatives and adaptation of selected alternatives to their classroom context.

## **6.6 Discussion of key findings**

### ***6.6.1 Key finding 1***

The first key finding for my study indicated that there was a disjuncture between being theoretically prepared to teach and the reality of the classroom when novice teachers begin teaching. The literature provides possible answers to the question of why there is this disjuncture. For example, according to Schepens et al (2009, p. 4) “most teacher educators hold on to the positivist or academic tradition where teacher education institutions provide the knowledge through various often fragmented courses, while the school provides the settings where student teachers are expected to apply theories”. The often-fragmented courses offered to student teachers to develop their theoretical knowledge about teacher has been found to be different from the reality of teaching. This applied science notion of teacher development has been critiqued for its ineffectiveness in preparing student teachers for the teaching profession within a diverse milieu.

Korthagen and Kessels (1999) explain that one of the major causes of the ineffectiveness has to do with the nature of relevant knowledge described as “more abstract, systematized and general expert knowledge that teacher educators often present to student teachers” while teachers need “quick and concrete answers to situations in which they have little time to think” described as “action-guiding” knowledge (Korthagen & Kessels, 1999). According to Barone, Berliner, Blanchard, Casanova, & McGowan (1996), conditions such as “large enrolments and limited time for teacher educators to visit student teachers during their teaching practice are inhibiting factors in the traditional approach” (p. 1117).

Another cause for this disjuncture which adds to the limitations of the traditional approach could be a problem with teaching placement in schools that are described as “exemplary” by Schwartz (1996). The problem arises when they are subsequently posted in difficult schools described by Schwartz (1996) as a lonely experience, having access to few resources and having to deal with difficult students. As a result the new posting becomes a source of conflict where there is a mismatch between the culture of the school which is at odds with the pedagogic approaches instilled during initial teacher preparation, the mismatch “can be exacerbated by an unwelcoming approach on the part of existing staff” (Ashby et al., 2008, p. 29). Fry points out that novice teachers offered problematic postings can face greater challenges and in order to survive adopt traditional teaching methods instead of utilizing the innovative ones (Fry, 2007).

This disjuncture between what these novice teachers have learnt during their initial teacher education programme, therefore, compel them to cope with the realities of the classroom. The study has found

that the novice teachers, in attempting to address their challenges, then deploys their core qualities to manage their teaching practices. These core qualities work in integrated ways that takes into consideration who they are, the contextual realities that informs their teaching and the knowledge that they gained while learning to become teachers.

### ***6.6.2 Key finding 2***

Considering the challenges that novice teachers face and the fact that they have total responsibility of managing a class of diverse learners irrespective of their lack of experience, in a context in which they have not been fully inducted into, and therefore not been able to understand, the settling in process causes them to default to three kinds of core qualities, the humanistic core quality of empathy and compassion, the professional core qualities of knowledge and planning and the contextual core qualities of regulatory frameworks.

In order to explain how novice teacher default to the three abovementioned core qualities I employ Korthagen's onion model (Korthagen, 2004). Starting with the innermost layer which is the level of the mission we can say that those novice teachers have a mission which they can't escape. They have to teach a full class of diverse learners for a full day, across the entire week, month, and year. Their mission is therefore located in the responsibilities that they have been given. Being a teacher and to be effective, they have to be able to facilitate learning across all learners irrespective of who they are as they are accountable for their achievement.

The identity layer in the onion model is about who they are. What the teachers have done is that they have drawn from their own personality, their own upbringing, their own experience, biographies, and personal responsibilities in teaching and to facilitate learning. The identity layer of the onion model is about how they construct themselves as individuals based on the experience just mentioned. The humanistic core qualities of empathy can be taken as an example of how novice teachers construct themselves. Alvin, for example, a novice teacher who is empathetic developed his empathy through a constructive process while taking care of his grandfather and the same empathy could have been triggered in class when he faced students from disadvantaged families. Using the lens of positive psychology which is the study of "what works" for the individual I can infer that empathy facilitated learning in his students as he began to understand their background and therefore how to teach them (Sheldon & King, 2001).

The other layer is the belief layer and those novice teachers have the belief that they can overcome the challenges that come their way. For example, some novice teachers believe that they need patience in order to cope with their behaviour or they may believe that knowing students is the key to knowing

how to manage their students. Other novice teachers have the belief that in order to make a child learn you have to discipline them first or that empathy is important to understand other people. According to Korthagen (2004) the belief layer influences the outer competency layer “if a teacher believes that attention to pupils’ feelings is just ‘soft’ and unnecessary, he or she will probably not develop the competency to show empathic understanding” (p. 81). The reverse of the above statement could also be true, for example if a teacher believes that empathy is important to understand other people, she may develop the competency to show empathetic understanding to her students by being more attentive to what they say. This belief that empathetic understanding is important is in line with the field of positive psychology in understanding “what works” for the individual.

The humanistic core qualities are related to the three inner layers of the onion model. The competency layer of the model relates to the professional core qualities of knowledge and planning. This layer is also tied to the inner three layers of mission, identity and belief and the outer behaviour layer. So, getting personal information about students through different activities and various behaviour that novice teachers manifest in the classroom are what they can do and are represented by the behaviour layer.

The competency layer of the onion model according to Stoof, Martens, & Van Merriënboer (2007) is conceived as “an integrated body of knowledge skills and attitudes”. Korthagen mentioned an example of competencies as subject matter knowledge and provided another example of a novice teacher Judith’s constructive response to an irritating student as a competency. In the same way the professional core qualities of knowledge of student and teaching knowledge can also be said to be competencies because they are in line with “what works” for the novice teacher as knowledge of students allowed them to manage students and teaching knowledge allowed them to adapt to teaching their students.

According to Korthagen, “the environment layer is the outermost level of the onion model and represents the class, students and the school and seems to attract the most attention from student teachers who often focus on problems in their classes and how to deal with those problems” (Korthagen, 2004). In this study the environmental core competence is framed by the way in which teachers act with ethics and with boundary (e.g. human rights discourse) and they act within the regulatory framework (e.g. abolishment of corporal punishment) of the teaching profession. Ethics and regulatory frameworks governing the teaching profession are also seen in this study as represented in the environment layer because they are external influences on the teacher. The findings of this study show that contextual core qualities are in line with “what works” for the teacher as the limitations placed by ethics and regulatory frameworks forces the novice teacher to look for

alternatives. For example, to use discipline and more humane approaches instead of corporal punishment.

### ***6.6.2 Key finding 3***

In the settling in process of novice teachers they have to cope with their first teaching experiences and the beginning of that settling in process involves getting to know their students. The narratives indicates that is a necessary step and knowing students is seen in this study as a professional core quality because when viewed from the lens of positive psychology it works for the teacher in developing an enabling environment for the student by understanding who they are and therefore how to manage their behaviour and also what their pedagogical needs are. The process of getting to know their students happens by trial and error as novice teachers are often unprepared as they do not always have many teaching opportunities in training. Trial and error during the settling in process is discussed in other studies such as Dickson et al., who report that “Although most described classroom management as a challenge, there was a clear sense of the novice teachers’ developing identity and confidence as they experimented with various classroom management strategies in a trial and error approach” (Dickson et al., 2014, p. 4).

While getting to know their students novice teachers start to manage their behaviour and can then settle them into learning activities which involves the professional core quality of teaching knowledge involving observation, reflection, going to the basket of alternatives and adaptation of selected alternatives to the classroom context. Novice teachers claim that although they learn the procedural knowledge required in teaching during their training, they claim that they do not have the opportunity to exercise it with pupils either because they had limited teaching opportunities during induction where they are “attached” to a fully-fledged teacher and do not always have ownership of their classroom. The importance of classroom ownership is supported by Swart (2013, p 154) who explains that “Independent opportunities to practice strategies, allow for a shift from observation-of- practice to learning-within-practice.” Novice teachers also have problems applying their procedural knowledge of teaching because some of them are posted in difficult schools very different from the schools they experienced whilst training to become a teacher and their methods don’t work. Their limitations, therefore, causes them to default to reflection on why their teaching methods do not work and if they do not get the support from the school, they resort to finding alternatives through trial and error (Hebert & Worthy, 2001). Adaptation of the alternatives to their learners is the crucial step in this process and allows novice teachers to survive. This adaptation is in line with the theoretical lens of positive psychology on “what works” for the average novice teacher and offers a possible explanation

on how they adapt and survive. This is elaborated in a proposed model called the evolutionary adaptation model in the next section.

## **6.7 Inserting a theoretical lens to the key findings of the study**

In this section I propose a model (see Figure 6 below) called the evolutionary adaptation model which explains the key findings discussed in the previous sections. The words “evolutionary” and “adaptation” in the model means that because of the disjuncture between being theoretically prepared to teach and the reality of classroom challenges, novice teachers adapt and survive by evolving their own personalized ways of teaching in response to the sometimes-challenging contexts they find themselves during the settling in process. The evolution of their personalized ways of teaching by defaulting to their core qualities is summed up by Massimi and Delle Fave’s (as cited in Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi 2000) proposition which is so essential to the argument of positive psychology that “psychological selection is motivated not solely by the pressures of adaptation and survival, but also by the need to reproduce optimal experiences” (p. 9), this means that people choose their behaviours that make them feel fully alive, competent and creative based on the pressures of adaptation, survival and optimal experiences.

This above argument for positive psychology can be applied to understand why novice teachers default to their core qualities. The humanistic core qualities, for example, not only allows novice teachers to adapt by allowing them to understand and know their learners but also provides them with a feeling of fulfilment which are experienced as optimal. Korthagen related the core qualities of teachers to the mission and identity layers of the onion model as core qualities as beyond helping them face adversity they also fulfil an individual. The identity level therefore is related to the personal singularity of the individual whereas the mission layer is about “what moves us to do what we do” and “the role we see for ourselves in relation to our fellow man” (Korthagen, 2004). Hence, a novice teacher feels competent and fulfilled when experiencing humanistic core quality of empathy for example, while getting to know a learner’s troubled background. This is in line with Deci and Ryan’s self-determination theory according to which “most people show considerable effort, agency, and commitment in their lives appears, in fact, to be more normative than exceptional, suggesting some very positive and persistent features of human nature”(Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 68). Self-determination theory explains that people are intrinsically motivated by the need for self-determination which is subdivided into the need for autonomy, the need for competence and the need for affiliation. Self-determination can be likened to a teacher’s agency which as discussed earlier in this chapter, allows the teacher to renegotiate their teacher identity which causes them to deploy their core qualities.

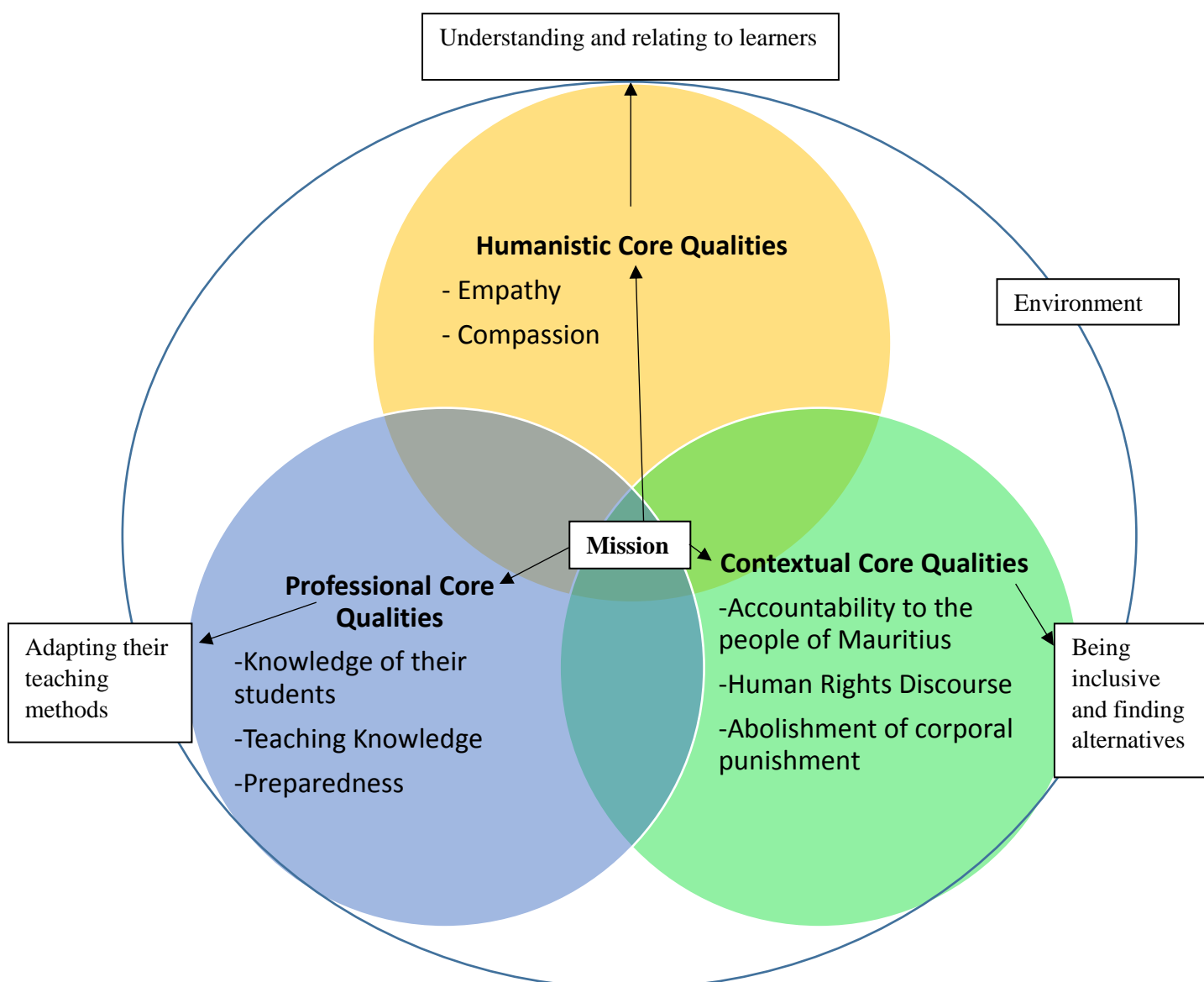
Importantly, Deci and Ryan (2000) support the explanation from positive psychology and psychological evolution of why the average novice teachers adapt and survives using their ubiquitous and ordinary core qualities.

The evolutionary adaption model (Figure 6) is explained as follows; the average novice teacher settles into their profession not totally prepared to teach but cannot escape their mission located in the responsibilities they have been given which is to facilitate learning across all learners irrespective of who they are, as they are accountable for their achievement (see mission core in Figure 6). Ownership and responsibility of their own classroom provides them with the self-determination which is more normative than exceptional to explore “what works” for them. This sense of agency despite their unpreparedness causes them to renegotiate their identity and default to and deploy their core qualities in personalized ways. Each novice teacher therefore deploys their humanistic core qualities of empathy and compassion to understand and relate to their learners (see Humanistic Core Qualities and understanding and relating to learners in Figure 6). They thus also deploy their professional core qualities of knowledge of their students to help manage their behaviour and settle them into learning activities (represented by knowledge of their students and adapting teaching in Figure 6). During this process they also deploy their contextual core qualities in response to the limitations placed by the regulatory laws upon them by being inclusive and finding alternatives such as discipline instead of using corporal punishment (See contextual core qualities and being inclusive and finding alternatives in Figure 6). Other contextual core qualities such as accountability to the people of Mauritius for their learner’s achievement causes them to deploy their professional core qualities of teaching knowledge. They also default to professional core qualities of teaching knowledge after finding out that the methods they learnt in training don’t work through observation, reflection and selecting their own methods from their basket of alternatives and adaptation. During the whole process from taking ownership of their classroom to adapting their own teaching methods they evolve personal ways of fulfilling their responsibilities and this allows them to adapt and surmount their challenges (challenges faced by novice teachers are represented by the environment layer in Figure 6). The whole process and how it works for my participant Sweetie are described below.

Sweetie felt unprepared on her first day of class as she said she was prepared to teach subjects but not to manage children as she found young children difficult to control. Sweetie recalled not having ownership of her class during her induction period and her tolerance and patience with her learners allowed her to gain ownership by getting to know her learners through her professional core qualities. Her contextual core qualities of tolerance and patience helped her to cope with them by giving her the time to think how to manage them, as corporal punishment was against the law. After knowing the background of some of her more difficult learners, Sweetie empathized with them through her



humanistic core qualities by developing rapport to get to know them on a more personal level and build trust, this made them more attentive to her. Knowing her learners through little activities, a professional core quality, helped to settle them down. Her first attempts at teaching her students did not work as she recalled how her students got bored and so did, she! Other difficulties she had with them was their mixed ability level and their difficulties with English. Recognizing that she is a professional teacher Sweetie felt accountable and deployed her contextual quality of accountability to the people of Mauritius who expect only results and judge a teacher by what kind of results they bring. She therefore exercised her professional core quality of knowledge of teaching as she reflected and used the internet to select alternative ways of teaching and adapted her resources and her approach by using the local language creole. She also adapted the resources of the prescribed textbook when she did not get results. In line with the theory of positive psychology, she was able to adapt her teaching and found “what works”. *The courage made me grab the laptop and search on Google courage brings perseverance and when that works you get the motivation to persevere that now I must do this.*



**Figure 6: The Evolutionary Adaptation model showing the deployment of core qualities of novice teachers in their teaching practice**

### 6.8 Synthesis of chapter

In this chapter I elaborated on the three themes identified from the analysis of narratives of my three participants. The three themes identified were humanistic core qualities, much of which resonate with my theoretical framework that guided this study, professional core qualities that delve into the knowledge and training received in their training programme to become a teacher and contextual core qualities that I introduce as framing their teaching practices. Key findings that emerged from the analysis in the chapter revealed that because there is a disjuncture between being theoretically prepared to teach and the reality of the classroom, novice teachers default to three core qualities

namely the humanistic core quality of empathy and compassion, the professional core qualities of knowledge and planning and contextual core qualities of regulatory frameworks that forces them to find alternate and more humane approaches to promote teaching and learning. Furthermore, the findings also revealed that the process followed by novice teachers in coping with their first teaching experience is reflection, going back to their basket of alternatives and adaptation of selected alternatives to their classroom context. Those finding were theorized with respect to the theoretical framework and pertinent literature and an evolutionary adaptation model was proposed.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **SUMMARY OF THESIS**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

In the last chapter I presented the key findings which were theorized by discussing in relation to pertinent theories and the theoretical framework. In this chapter I restate the focus, purpose and research questions and present a narrative response to each research question based on the key findings of the study. I then discuss the importance of the study and make recommendations based on the research findings before concluding in relation to the background and purpose presented in chapter 1.

#### **7.2 Focus of my study**

The aim of my study was to explore the core qualities that influences the pedagogical practice of Mauritian primary school novice teachers. The study intended to explore what core qualities were deployed and how they were deployed when novice teachers were confronted with challenges in their first year as credentialed teachers. In Mauritius and around the world novice teachers are often unprepared for the common challenges that they have to face. Their training which is often more theoretical than practice based is irrelevant for the context dependent problems that they encounter and many studies show that attempts by training institutes or universities to offer practice-based solutions through portfolios and teaching practice do not prepare trainees to overcome their challenges (Kessels & Korthagen, 1996). The next section presents the purpose statement of the study.

#### **7.3 Statement of purpose and research questions**

The purpose of this study was to explore what and how core qualities were deployed, in the first year of novice teachers teaching. During this exploratory study, the core qualities of teachers that were deployed were illuminated and contributed to an understanding of how novice teachers adapt to challenges when they are unprepared for teaching. When forced to adapt to unexpected challenges, novice teachers deployed some of the anticipated core qualities but also other core qualities which contributed to the understanding of how they evolved and eventually survived their first year.

The overarching research question that guided the purpose of the study was as follows:

How do “core qualities” of novice teachers influence their pedagogical practice during their first year as credentialed teachers?

Three sub questions were generated from the above questions and are as follows:

1. What “core qualities” influence the pedagogical practice of novice teachers?
2. How do the “core qualities” of novice teachers influence their teaching?
3. Why do these novice teachers deploy these core qualities in the way they do?

The three research questions beyond guiding the study also helped to produce the narratives that follow in the next section.

#### **7.4 Narrative response to research questions based on key findings**

The key findings in the previous chapter generated narrative responses to the above three research questions which are discussed in this section.

Novice teachers deploy their core qualities in the way that they do in order to survive their first year of practice because they are unprepared. One of the major reasons for their unpreparedness is a disjuncture between being theoretically prepared to teach and the reality of the classroom which can be exacerbated by the type of school that they are posted in. The disjuncture is rooted in their preparation for teaching which is more theoretical than practical. Novice teachers find that their theoretical knowledge is irrelevant to meet the teaching challenges that they encounter which require more situated context-based knowledge of how to teach learners of mixed abilities coming from diverse and sometimes disadvantaged backgrounds. Novice teachers soon realize that they are also unprepared to deal with students as their training emphasized knowledge of how to teach but not how to face the students and their various needs. Faced with a mission that they cannot escape of taking the responsibility for teaching those learners irrespective of their own limitations, they initially deploy their contextual core qualities to help them cope with the students and the school environment. Novice teachers resort to contextual core qualities such as tolerance and patience as a result of the limitations placed by regulatory laws on corporal punishment. Those contextual core qualities alongside improvised trial and error activities to sustain their learners’ attention marks the beginning of the settling in process.

Taking responsibility of their own classroom fosters a sense of agency in them and renegotiating their teacher identity in this new role makes them reveal their humanistic core qualities. Thus, empathy and compassion are deployed to identify and understand learners having behavioural difficulties and this allows them to better relate to the students and fosters the trust that makes teaching those students less behaviourally challenging and motivate their students to be more attentive during lessons. According

to Hughes (2017) empathy allows novice teachers to understand what they're going through and why they behave the way they do. Understanding learners in this way allows novice teachers to reflect on themselves and identify the reasons why initially they were not able to get through to those students. Novice teachers also deploy the professional core quality of knowledge of their students after getting to know them through different strategies. Knowing students therefore allowed the teachers to settle their learners down into teaching and learning activities as they were able to cope with discipline issues, sustain the attention of the students and therefore engage them in the teaching and learning process.

After the initial period of settling down, novice teachers deploy the professional core quality of teaching knowledge which is knowledge systems such as content to be taught and teaching methods when they find out that they are not getting through to their learners. This core quality is deployed in a four-step process which starts with observation followed by reflection on who their learners are, what they were doing in class, what would make them interested in learning, what teaching methods are available to them and how they would implement new strategies. The third step in the process is selection where they would select the most appropriate method from their repertoire and lastly adapt these to suit the needs of the learners taking into consideration the teaching and learning contexts and the diversity of their learners.

## **7.5 Significance of my study**

This exploratory study has shown the importance of core qualities in the survival of novice teachers. This finding alert teacher educators to help trainees become aware of their core qualities during teacher development so that they can deploy them in useful ways to better cope with challenges that they encounter. Korthagen's research on core reflection will be beneficial to guide teacher trainers on how to help trainees become aware of, and actualize their core qualities (Kim & Greene, 2011; Korthagen, 2004; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2003, 2005).

Trainee teachers will benefit from the results of this study as it offers a guide on where to focus their preparation. An awareness of the contextual difficulties of the participants in this study and the core qualities they deployed in surviving them will help them realize how crucially important the qualities are, and why it is important to develop their inner potential during their teacher development.

This study by virtue of being exploratory, draws attention to the survival value of core qualities. Researchers in the field of teacher education will therefore be able to extend the findings of this study to other contexts or generate new findings from insights on core qualities that this study provides. In

this way the knowledge based on core qualities and their significance for teachers and teacher educators can be increased.

## **7.6 Recommendations based on research findings**

The first key finding of this study was the disjuncture between novice teachers being theoretically prepared to teach and the reality of classroom challenges which forces them to adapt. Although this finding cannot be generalized it raises important questions on our teacher education system in Mauritius and implies that teacher educators should help trainees construct knowledge that is relevant to their practice by focusing on theories that are relevant to the school context. This is consistent with recommendations made in another study on novice teachers by Dickson et al., (2014) according to whom “institutions should take care to better prepare students for teaching by aligning training more closely to the realities of teaching” (p. 9).

Although theory is important to prepare trainees, survival skills are also important especially when novice teachers are confronted with situations in which they don't have a repertoire. This happens very often when novice teachers obtain postings in schools that are very different from where they conducted their teaching practice. Senom et al., (2013) point out that novice teachers have recourse to survival strategies “through trial and error of theories and ideas, understanding the challenges, being determined, persistent and perseverant” (p. 123). In order to minimize trial and error, teacher educators can help increase the repertoire of novice teachers by the way of case-based instruction and learning through role play that provide exemplars mimicking the unique situations in schools located in high needs areas.

The second key finding indicates that novice teacher default to their core qualities because they have total responsibility of managing a class, in a context to which they have not been fully inducted into. This finding implies that lack of an induction into school makes it more difficult for trainees to adapt and suggests the implementation of formal induction in our teacher development. According to Swart (2013), formal induction is a mandatory structured programme that guides the trainee teacher at a specific school. During formal induction which takes place in their first year, trainees benefit from guidance from a trained mentor and a reduced workload (Uugwanga, 2010). As pointed out in chapter 1, well designed induction helps trainees survive as compared to what she calls “Sink and swim” induction in which they fall back on traditional methods of teaching (Fry, 2007). Currently during teacher development in Mauritius trainees benefit from one immersion phase and two six-week phases of school-based experience where they are attached to a practicing teacher. Although they are provided teaching opportunities, they do not develop the feel of their real classroom or “ownership” which only takes place in their first year. According to Swart (2013) “the process of acquiring

professional skills and knowledge to teach independently requires the student teacher to personally own such knowledge” (p. 154).

## **7.7 Conclusion in relation to background and purpose**

My experience as a teacher educator provided me with the opportunity to embark in this study. I was also interested by “the person” in the teacher but had difficulties to reconcile how the professional role of a teacher is influenced by their personal side. Korthagen’s Onion model and core qualities (Korthagen, 2004) provided a way to link the two and the methodology used in this study allowed the understanding of the phenomenon. By illuminating what core qualities were involved and what their roles were in the lives of three novice teachers, we gained an appreciation of how they faced sometimes seemingly insurmountable challenges. This study adds to findings from other studies on how core qualities allow novice teachers to cope but beyond that it provides a way of understanding how they adapt and survive using their taken for granted core qualities. Sheldon and King (2001) raise an important question as to why the majority of humans around the world are very satisfied with their lives? According to the researchers, resilience and being happy are part of the answer. A more complete answer to that question is provided by Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000) “Perhaps, however, people are blinded to the survival value of positive emotions precisely because they are so important. Like the fish who is unaware of the water in which it swims, people take for granted a certain amount of hope, love, enjoyment, and trust because these are the very conditions that allow them to go on living” (p. 13).

## **7.8 Synthesis of chapter**

This chapter began by explaining the purpose of the study on core qualities of novice teachers in relation to their unpreparedness rooted in teacher development. The research question emerged from the focus and purpose of the study and guided the study into finding answers to them. The narrative response to the research questions provided a picture as to how the core qualities are deployed and why. The chapter ended with the significance, recommendations, and conclusion to the chapter.



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## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix A: Ethical Clearance



22 October 2013

Mr Vikash Baichoo (212559031)  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0726/013D  
Project title: The influence of core qualities of novice primary school teachers on their pedagogical practice

Dear Mr Baichoo,

**Expedited Approval**

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully



Dr Sheruka Singh (Acting Chair)

/ms

cc Supervisor: Dr Rubby Ramrath  
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr MN Davids  
cc School Administrator: Mr Thoba Mthembu

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### **Appendix B: Interview questions**

1. How long did it take you to adapt to this school?
2. What did you do on the first day?
3. Ok so when you went to your desk on the first day. You thought you should do math's first, there was no planning?
4. You said earlier that when you came here it's as if they threw you into a class then you went into standard 1 after 3 weeks what did you find the most difficult despite as you said, not being shown anything or not getting the teaching aids?
5. You told me you had a depression during the first six weeks, how did that happen?
6. What were the things that helped you?
7. What were there personal qualities that you think have helped you?
8. Other than patience when you have to teach those words what qualities do you think you need?
9. You mentioned perseverance and I asked you critical incidents where there was perseverance and you have told me about your school life, but in this school are there instances where perseverance has worked?
10. When you teach the topic time, which you just mentioned what relationship does that have to do with perseverance?
11. Tell me about perseverance now, what does that word tell you?
12. You told me you persevere otherwise you would not do the mehndi course. How does that help you in school?
13. So you adapted it and you use perseverance when you didn't get the results that you were expecting?
14. You said last time you had to persevere to get results as the school expects only results, where does that come from?
15. What situations have made you develop perseverance?